



# INVESTING IN **TEACHER LEADERSHIP**

*A Better Way to Make Job-Embedded  
Professional Learning a Reality in Every School*



# Table of Contents

3	Introduction .....
4	SECTION 1 Investing in Effective Professional Learning .....
6	SECTION 2 Recommendations for District Leaders .....
13	SECTION 3 Recommendations for State Policymakers .....
15	SECTION 4 Recommendations for Federal Policymakers .....
16	Conclusion
17	Appendix A   Using Federal Funds for Teacher Leadership .....
18	Appendix B   ESSA Title I and II Support of Teacher Leadership .....
19	Endnotes



## Introduction

Every year we invest billions in professional development to build teachers’ capacity to better address the diverse academic needs of every student. Yet student learning continues to fall short of expectations in too many places. We must ask the question: **Is there a better way to invest in the professional learning of teachers across America?**

**Our answer is an emphatic yes.** NIET has spent 20 years building the capacity of teachers and school leaders. We have seen that professional learning is best led by teachers and leaders within the school building. In fact, engaging teacher leaders in the development of their colleagues provides a highly effective and sustainable form of professional learning. Instructional teacher leader roles can become an engine for professional development that incorporates central elements of effective, job-embedded professional learning and improves the effectiveness of teachers. Such roles also allow principals to lead distributed leadership teams, which increases their capacity to effectively carry out instructional improvement strategies and raise student achievement.

Despite the demonstrated impact of investments in teacher leadership on classroom instruction,

current policies and funding practices do not yet fully recognize opportunities for teacher leaders to provide an effective form of professional learning. Teacher leadership is alluded to in numerous policies and allowable under many funding streams, but the lack of explicit guidance on how to shift funding from external providers and services to investing in building capacity within the teaching faculty continues to prove a barrier to progress.

Funding flexibility under Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) offers a renewed opportunity to fund teacher leadership as a strategy for schoolwide instructional improvement. In this report, we provide recommendations that leaders at district, state, and federal levels can use to align funding and practices to invest in building the instructional capacity of teachers through professional learning led by teacher leaders.

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## SECTION 1:

## Investing in Effective Professional Learning

### What are the qualities of effective professional learning?

A strong consensus has emerged about what high-quality, effective professional learning looks like. In 2017, the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) reviewed 35 methodologically rigorous studies that demonstrated a positive link between teacher professional development, teaching practices, and student outcomes.<sup>1</sup> LPI found that effective professional development: is content focused; incorporates active learning; supports collaboration; uses models of effective practice; provides coaching and expert support; offers feedback and reflection; is of sustained duration.

NIET's report *Beyond Job-Embedded: Ensuring That Good Professional Development Gets Results* highlights the importance of collaborative learning teams and instructional coaching as two strategies that research shows can lead to teacher growth.<sup>2</sup> However, the success of these strategies depends on the conditions under which they are delivered. The most effective professional learning approaches teaching as a practice — one in which good teaching habits must be practiced regularly and supported by expert coaches in classroom settings and through job-embedded tasks.

ESSA recognizes this consensus on the best conditions for teacher learning and followed these lessons to make key changes to how Title II-A funds can be used to provide high quality, job-embedded professional development. ESSA offers a new definition of professional development that ensures

activities are “sustained (not stand-alone, 1-day, or short term workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused.” Additionally, the updated definition specifies that professional development activities should be integral to local strategies for teacher improvement and inclusive of the full range of instructional staff and school leadership. The law also eliminates No Child Left Behind's requirement that professional development activities be directed towards teachers of “core academic subjects,” thus expanding the use of professional development funds to teachers of every subject.

ESSA offers a new definition of professional development that ensures activities are “sustained, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused.”

Finally, ESSA requires that professional development activities be “evidence-based,” which means that activities should, at a minimum, be based on a “well-specified logic model that is informed by research or an evaluation.” Taken as whole, ESSA's updated definition of professional development continues to move the conception of professional development away from one-off workshops and sit-and-get lectures toward job-embedded activities that are informed by student and teacher need and designed to support strong curriculum and content.



### Why teacher leaders are best positioned to lead effective professional learning

In order to consistently provide the kind of professional development that leads to sustained improvements in classroom practice, schools need structures and systems that facilitate a continuous improvement process, instructional leadership positions with responsibility and authority to oversee this process, and teacher leaders who are trained to support adult learning and build trust with the teachers they serve.<sup>3</sup>

commensurate titles, compensation, release time, and professional authority and accountability to effectively lead instructional improvement. When teacher leaders are empowered in this manner, they become essential drivers of high-quality, outcomes-oriented professional learning. (See *Teacher Leader Roles in Collaboration and Professional Learning* below.)

In NIET’s partner districts and schools, teacher leaders serve as either master teachers, who are expert teachers that take on full-time instructional leadership roles, or mentor teachers, who serve in a hybrid role wherein they maintain their role as a “teacher of record” in their own classroom and devote several hours a week to

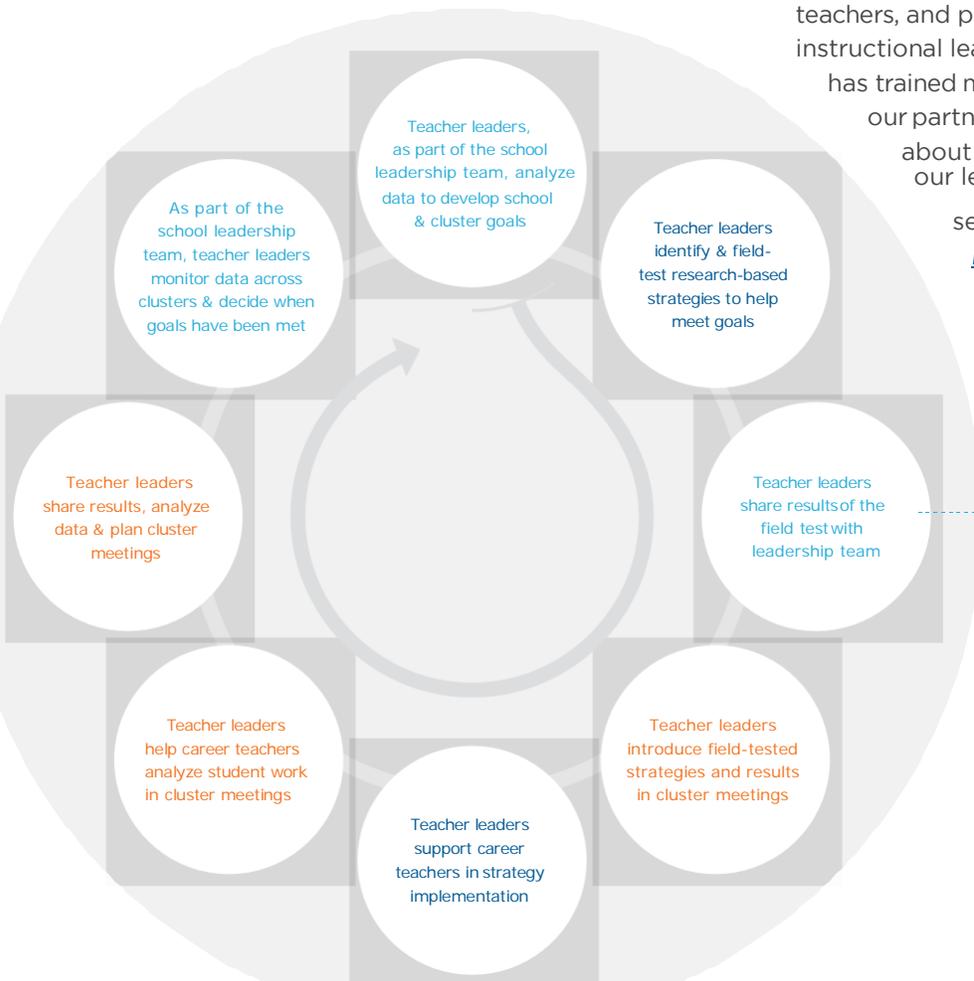
NIET has found that instructional improvement efforts are best led by teacher leaders who are given defined leadership responsibilities in collaboration with principals.

Working in partner districts across the country, NIET has found that instructional improvement efforts are best led by teacher leaders who are given defined leadership responsibilities in collaboration with principals, along with

instructional leadership. Teacher leaders in these two kinds of positions are responsible for leading weekly collaborative learning teams, formally observing lessons and providing feedback to teachers, providing individualized coaching and support to classroom teachers, and participating on the schoolwide instructional leadership team. Over 20 years, NIET has trained more than 30,000 teacher leaders in our partner districts and schools. To learn more about the work of these teacher leaders and our lessons learned from supporting them,

see NIET’s report: [Unleashing Teacher Leadership: How Formal Teacher Leader Roles Can Improve Instruction](#)

### TEACHER LEADER ROLES IN COLLABORATION AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING



- Schoolwide Leadership Team
- Teacher Collaborative Teams
- Classrooms



## SECTION 2:

## Recommendations for District Leaders

Empowering teacher leaders to lead professional learning with colleagues enables principals to ensure that every teacher is part of a collaborative learning team and receives individual classroom coaching. However, this approach represents a significant change from how most districts carry out professional development activities. Building a professional development infrastructure led by teacher leaders takes careful planning, thoughtful shifting of resources, and the intentional seeking of stakeholder buy-in. In working with districts to implement teacher leadership systems, NIET has found that teacher leadership functions best not as an add-on, but as an integral part of a school's professional development cycle. When viewed this way, districts find a variety of funding resources to implement and sustain teacher leadership roles that replace existing professional development efforts that were not yielding results for students.

NIET's partner districts that have engaged in the process of building sustainable teacher leadership structures say the transition clarified their priorities, which led to improved student outcomes and increased teacher satisfaction and retention. In this section, we provide four key recommendations for district leaders, including superintendents and principals, to create and invest in job-embedded professional development structures led by teacher leaders.

### Articulate a vision for teacher leadership and build political will to support it

Teacher leadership will only be successful to the extent that it's supported by teachers and school leaders and seen by other stakeholders as a key mechanism for improving student achievement. Communicating a vision for teacher leadership that is aligned with demonstrated teacher and student needs will form a strong foundation to advocate for a new approach to professional learning with stakeholders. In many cases, the district's vision

for teacher leadership is at the core of its plans for advancing equitable access to effective educators and helps set measurable goals for building the skills of teachers, especially those with students who have the greatest academic needs. While district leaders will largely be responsible for articulating this vision, it is important that district leaders develop it alongside the teachers and principals who would mostly likely be affected.

District leaders are most effective in this effort when they build support from a wide range of relevant stakeholders including — but not limited to — the local school board, parents, community members, the teachers union, principals, and teachers.

### **POSSIBLE OBSTACLES TO BUILDING TEACHER LEADERSHIP INFRASTRUCTURE**

Even though teacher leadership is built to benefit teachers and provide them with greater influence over their own professional development, both teachers and principals can be initially hesitant to adopt a teacher-led system of instructional improvement. Teachers might be reluctant at first to receive coaching from their peers, while principals may fear that their leadership role will be reduced by including teacher leaders. NIET's report *Unleashing Teacher Leadership* shares lessons learned in a range of districts and schools around how formal instructional teacher leadership roles enhance, rather than limit, opportunities for all staff to engage in leadership.

Another potential obstacle is a concern that teacher leadership takes the best teachers out of the classroom. In fact, enabling effective teachers to take on leadership positions brings them into many more classrooms, and in contact with many more students, as they work with their peers to improve instruction. Teacher leaders can “field-test” student

strategies in classrooms, enabling them to focus more intensive support on classrooms with teachers who need the most assistance or students with the most learning challenges. A district leader might explain how leveraging a great teacher's expertise to support all teachers in the building will help ensure there is an effective teacher in every classroom.

There are often strong constituencies that form around certain resource pools or spending practices. For instance, a district may have a long-tenured Title I coordinator who has a favorite literacy program or relationships with community members and former teachers who have long-standing arrangements to provide professional development for the district. Other stakeholders, such as school board members or union leaders, may have certain spending preferences for professional development dollars, such as spending Title II dollars on class-size reduction. District leaders have addressed these stakeholder concerns and preferences by providing concrete evidence of the impact that job-embedded professional learning has had on teacher classroom practice and student academic growth, particularly in contrast to the impact of other strategies.



**Coordinate funding streams to invest in schoolwide systems of instructional improvement by taking advantage of funding flexibility**

Districts partnering with NIET use a wide range of funding sources to invest in teacher leadership, including state and local general funds, federal dollars, and federal competitive grants like the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program (TSL). While each blend of funds will look unique based on district context and needs, districts should consider how federal funding streams, particularly Title I and II, can be utilized to invest in teacher leadership as a core strategy for improving classroom instruction and student learning. While many federal funding streams can be used to support the activities of teacher leaders, ESSA's statutory language and regulatory guidance from the U.S. Department of Education clearly specify that teacher leader roles and responsibilities can be supported by these funding streams. [See Appendix A: Using Federal Funds for Teacher Leadership for more detail; Appendix B: ESSA Title I and II Support of Teacher Leadership.]

Districts that have used teacher leadership to improve professional learning in their schools find that teacher leaders have the greatest impact when they are engaged in schoolwide instructional improvement strategies, in addition to providing targeted support to students with the highest academic needs. To ensure that schools have the greatest flexibility to invest in whole school approaches to instructional improvement, districts can support Title I schools in adopting the Schoolwide Program approach for using Title I funds, rather than the Targeted Assistance approach. Under the Schoolwide approach, Title I dollars can be used to implement systemic schoolwide interventions to improve academic outcomes for students, whereas the Targeted Assistance approach focuses on targeted support for only the students who meet the qualifications for Title I support.

Schools can take two approaches to implementing the Title I Schoolwide Program: coordinating federal, state, and local funds or consolidating

all funds into a single pool. Using a coordinated Schoolwide approach, Title I funds are freed up to support overall instructional and academic goals and work in concert with other funding streams to create a teacher leader infrastructure. For example, a principal might use Title I dollars to fund the salary of a teacher leader role and use Title II funds to pay for release time for career teachers to engage in trainings run by the teacher leader. Similarly, Title III funds could support the salary of a teacher leader who provides support to teachers with English Learners in their classrooms, instead of being limited to pull out or supplemental services for English Learners. (See *Title I Schoolwide Program* on page 9.)

Alternatively, the consolidation approach allows schools to combine all state, local, and most federal dollars into a single pot of money and provides the most flexibility when using funds to create job-embedded professional learning led by teacher leaders. Rather than slicing up funding streams to fund various parts of a teacher leadership infrastructure, all available instructional funds can be allocated towards activities that promote whole-school improvement. When consolidating funds, a school is neither required to meet the statutory or regulatory requirements of specific federal programs nor is obligated to maintain separate fiscal accounting records for each federal program.<sup>4</sup> The simplification or streamlining of compliance barriers and accounting measures could allow a school administration to spend more time and energy on planning and implementing a teacher leadership infrastructure.

While the Targeted Assistance approach could fund aspects of job-embedded professional learning led by teacher leaders, the Schoolwide Program approach, especially when leading to consolidation, is ideally suited to building a robust, job-embedded and collaborative system of professional learning across a school. District leaders are in a unique position to remove district-level barriers to consolidation or to advocate for the removal of state-level barriers in order to support schools in taking a comprehensive approach to building effective school-based professional learning systems.

## Title I Schoolwide Program

### PURPOSE

To support whole-school instructional needs as identified by a comprehensive needs assessment

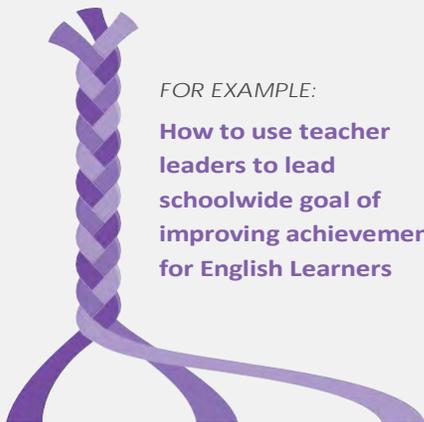
### ELIGIBILITY

- Any Title I school with more than 40 percent of its students living in poverty
- Any Title I school that receives a waiver from the state

How to use the Schoolwide Program to support teacher leadership:

### COORDINATED OR BRAIDED APPROACH

Federal funds work in concert to support schoolwide goals but maintain separate identity



**Title I**  
Salaries for teacher leaders

**Title II**  
Release time for collaborative learning

**Title III**  
Training for English Learner instructional strategies

### CONSOLIDATION APPROACH

All funds are combined into a single pool to support schoolwide goals



- Salaries for Teacher Leaders
- Release time for all collaborative learning activities and meetings
- Training that supports professional learning

For more information on operating a Title I schoolwide program, see the U.S. Department of Education's Non-Regulatory Guidance [Supporting School Reform by Leveraging Federal Funds in a Schoolwide Program](#).

## Shift resources toward evidence-based practices and away from professional learning and school improvement activities that are not effective

While all districts want to support effective professional learning, this often requires taking a hard look at existing professional development activities that do not have evidence of effectiveness or impact. With the growing availability of methods to measure impact, districts can better evaluate whether particular approaches or structures are evidence-based. To do this effectively, districts need

a process for tracking current professional learning activities and spending, determining if the activities are evidence-based, and evaluating their impact on student achievement. The process of examining the effectiveness of existing professional learning activities and instructional improvement strategies is challenging, but necessary for making a compelling case for a more effective approach.

In many cases, the process of reviewing current professional development is the turning point for building support for a more effective system. Below are five steps that districts and schools can take to identify resources for school-based, job-embedded professional learning.

### 1 Track spending on professional development and schoolwide improvement activities

A first step would be to categorize the different types of professional development and improvement activities provided by the district. Some districts may already have an online management tool to track and categorize PD activities, whereas others may have to create categories for the first time. Once these categories have been established, districts can determine the dollar amounts spent on each category of PD expenditures and their proportion of total spending on professional development. To the extent possible, districts should determine how many teachers are participating in each type of PD activity and the amount of hours teachers are spending

on each activity. Districts may also choose to examine these data points at the school level and compare how the participation rates in various forms of PD are distributed across the district. This same process can be repeated for instructional expenditures that are not directly spent on professional development activities. Districts can create categories for these uses of funds, which could include spending on: full-time teaching positions for the purposes of class size reduction or direct instruction for Title I students, part-time support positions such as paraprofessionals, extended school days, student support services, technology, and instructional supplies and materials.

### 2 Analyze whether activities and strategies are evidence-based or meet the criteria of high-quality professional development

As standards and expectations are rising, districts are re-examining their professional learning systems. For example, ESSA's definition of professional development is based on what researchers have found is *effective*, which includes activities that are sustained, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused. In their report *Bridging the Gap*, Frontline Research & Learning Institute analyzed these six qualities of effective professional development in ESSA's definition and used them to evaluate the professional development offerings of

districts.<sup>5</sup> LPI's criteria for effective professional development (mentioned on pg. 1 of this report) mirror these elements and could provide districts with guidance on how to evaluate the effectiveness of their current offerings. Where clear evidence of impact on student learning is difficult to establish, districts can review whether activities and strategies have a sufficient research or evidence base to indicate a strong likelihood of success, and identify those that do not meet high standards of evidence.

### 3 Evaluate impact of professional learning strategies and activities on student achievement

Where possible, districts should evaluate their instructional improvement efforts by connecting student achievement data to professional development activities. This is especially true for professional development activities that have been deemed high-quality in research, but need additional analysis to determine the activity's effectiveness in practice. Districts may choose to use formative or summative assessments to track the effectiveness of strategies or interventions in a given school. If a particular activity did not produce noticeable gains by the end of a school year, district and school leaders might ask:

- Was the current professional development program or activity aligned to specific goals?
- Was the program given sufficient duration and intensity to lead to instructional improvements?
- Was this program successful in any contexts, such as subject area, grade level, or school type? If so, why?
- If it was not successful, should it be eliminated?

### 4 Phase out ineffective activities and use funds for school-based professional learning

After collecting information on current professional learning activities and evaluating their impact, some activities will likely be identified as ineffective. For instance, some NIET partner districts and schools have cut expensive pullout programs that showed no positive effect on student achievement. Others have reduced expenditures on one-off professional development activities that were too expensive or disconnected from daily classroom instruction. Given the mixed

evidence base for class size reduction, some districts that spent a significant share of instructional dollars on class size reduction decreased their spending in order to free up funds for professional learning led by teacher leaders. Finally, districts and principals have repurposed existing roles. For example, a teacher in a current leadership or coaching position can be transitioned into a teacher leader role with more clearly defined responsibilities, expectations, and resources.

### 5 Analyze expenditures in non-instructional categories

While districts usually start by analyzing whether they are spending instructional dollars in the most effective ways possible, freeing up money from non-instructional sources can provide more fuel to power systems of instructional improvement. NIET and partner districts have found that every dollar matters when instructional improvement is a priority and, as a result, have found

innovative ways to reduce non-instructional spending while maintaining the same quality of services and operations. For instance, some districts have freed up money by eliminating underutilized school equipment or software programs. Another district identified money for teacher leadership positions by installing energy-efficient light bulbs to reduce spending on utilities.

## Create a strategy for moving to job-embedded, school-based professional learning

Important considerations driving the scope of this strategy include the degree of student academic need across schools, the ability of the district and school to build the support necessary to create and sustain a teacher leadership infrastructure, and the amount and

type of funding available to fund teacher leadership. When taking these factors into account, some leaders might start by proposing an ambitious overhaul of professional learning expenditures and structures in all of their high-need schools, while other leaders may choose to start slow and build proof points for a new approach in selected schools or even within a school.

Districts that receive school improvement or other federal grants are in a stronger position to fund a broad overhaul of professional learning systems.

In contrast, a district leader who is not under immediate pressure to improve or has adequate, but not overwhelming community and school board support or financial resources, may choose to begin in one particular high-need school and expand to other schools as that school's success provides a compelling proof point for expansion. This enables districts to select schools that want to go first, and to identify potential teacher leaders who want to pilot the role and lead the way. Success in selected schools then enables them to expand the work to additional schools over time. Alternatively, a principal may choose to work at a smaller scale by developing professional learning structures supported by teacher leader roles within an academic department or grade level in their building.

***DEVOTE SUFFICIENT RESOURCES TO ENSURE IMPLEMENTATION IS SUCCESSFUL***

Rather than spreading resources thinly across a district, district leaders have found it more effective

to focus them on their highest-need schools. While there is no one-size-fits-all strategy for adequately funding the components of professional learning systems led by teacher leaders, there are some general guidelines that NIET and partner districts have found that have led to success. Leaders should ensure that enough teacher leader roles are funded so that teacher leaders can support a manageable number of teachers. For example, a teacher leader released full time and charged with leading weekly professional learning as well as coaching individual teachers might lead a team of approximately 15 other teachers. A teacher leader released for 3-5 hours a week might provide individual coaching and feedback to a smaller group of six to ten teachers. Teacher leader roles also require additional compensation that is commensurate with the position's responsibilities and additional time commitments. To the extent that they do not yet have time set aside for weekly collaborative teams, schools should also fund release time for teachers to engage in professional development meetings that are of appropriate duration and intensity to move student achievement. ■





## SECTION 3:

## Recommendations for State Policymakers

### Use ESSA Title I and II-A Set-Asides to support formal teacher leadership roles

While districts can use existing funds for instructional teacher leadership roles, states could use ESSA Title I and II-A set asides to encourage district investment in teacher leadership. For instance, states must set aside 7% of their Title I allocation for school improvement activities in low-performing schools and have the discretion to allocate these funds through competitive or formula grants, or a combination of both. Since using instructional teacher leaders to drive schoolwide

Since using highly effective instructional teacher leaders to drive schoolwide improvement has proven an effective and impactful strategy for long-term student learning gains, states may consider prioritizing improvement activities that leverage teacher leader roles for job-embedded professional learning.

improvement can be an effective strategy for producing student learning gains, states may consider using trained teacher leaders to lead job-embedded professional development for their peers. For example, Texas is using school improvement funds to offer a competitive grant for selected schools identified for school improvement. These grant funds enable districts to put in place innovative locally designed systems of instructional improvement led by teacher leaders.

States may also consider using set-aside funds in Title II-A to support investments in instructionally focused teacher leader roles. These set-asides include the allowed 5% set-aside for educator development and the additional 3% set aside for investments in principals and school leaders, which can include teacher leaders. According to a 2018 analysis of ESSA state plans by New Leaders, 36 states included plans to invest in teacher leadership in their ESSA Title II-A plans.<sup>6</sup>

Given the broad allowable uses of these Title II-A set-asides, states may consider using this money to incentivize districts to set up pilot programs for teacher leadership in high-need schools that could surface the most effective practices to inform statewide models. States could also provide training and support for principals and teacher leaders to support ongoing teacher leadership initiatives. For example, Minnesota indicates that it will use Title II-A state activity funds to enable districts to improve the design and implementation of career advancement or teacher leadership opportunities that include instructional coaching, mentoring and program leadership.

### Create sustainable, dedicated funding streams to support teacher leadership

In addition to supporting districts to identify or repurpose funding streams for instructional teacher leadership, states can create dedicated funding streams that provide adequate and stable resources for instructional teacher leader roles. States should also consider ways to evaluate the effectiveness

of the teacher leader models they are funding. An example of a dedicated teacher leadership funding stream is Iowa's Teacher Leadership and Compensation System (TLC), which was enacted in 2013 and provides \$150 million annually to support teacher leadership in every Iowa district. The state created a competitive process for awarding initial funds that challenged districts to set high standards for their systems. The state has also played a role in supporting information-sharing and dialogue across districts around best practices and lessons learned.

### Ensure maximum flexibility on use of funds for schoolwide improvement activities

States are in a unique position to clear the path for building school-based professional learning systems for districts. ESSA and guidance from the U.S. Department of Education make it clear that many federal funding streams, especially Title I and II, can support instructional teacher leader roles. However, district leaders and principals may still face state requirements that restrict certain funding streams to more narrow purposes or pose significant reporting and accounting barriers that constrict flexibility.

Despite the ESSA requirement that State Education Agencies modify or eliminate state fiscal or accounting barriers to consolidation, close to half of districts surveyed by the U.S. Department of Education noted that state accounting rules were

a moderate to major challenge when considering consolidation.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the U.S. Department of Education reports that only 6% of surveyed principals using the Schoolwide Program approach have consolidated all funding streams, while 50% indicated they use a coordinated approach.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) found that some state-imposed restrictions limit the academic subjects that can be supported by federal funds or prohibit those funds from being used for comprehensive interventions.<sup>9</sup>

One action states can take to increase access to consolidation as an option is to expand eligibility for operating a schoolwide approach using Title I funds. While schools that meet the 40% eligibility poverty threshold can choose the schoolwide approach, states have the discretion to set their own requirements for granting waivers to operate a schoolwide approach to any Title I school. For example, Indiana now allows all schools eligible for Title I to choose a schoolwide approach. ■





## SECTION 4:

## Recommendations for Federal Policymakers

### Provide technical assistance to states on how ESSA policies and funding support formal teacher leader roles and school-based professional learning

Since formal instructional teacher leadership roles directly impact student achievement, many ESSA funding streams can be utilized to support teacher leadership. However, many districts have not yet adjusted their budgeting to take advantage of

ESSA's increased flexibility to use federal title funds strategically, and continue to treat them as separate and distinct funding streams. The Department of Education issued non-regulatory guidance in 2016 on how to use Title II-A funds, which included a short section on using funds for teacher leadership.<sup>10</sup> Going forward, the Department could issue additional guidance and technical assistance to show how a combination of federal funding streams can be used to support formal instructional teacher leadership roles that drive professional learning and student growth.

### Prioritize formal instructional teacher leadership roles in competitive grants

Formal instructional teacher leadership roles can be supported by the four major competitive grants aimed at improving teacher and school quality: Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program (TSL), Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED), Education Innovation and Research (EIR), and School Leader Recruitment and Support Program (SLRSP). Teacher leadership, when focused on improving instruction, fulfills the primary intent of each of these grant programs, which gives the Department a compelling

and clear rationale to make teacher leader roles that facilitate professional development a priority in these competitive grant programs. For instance, while the Notice Inviting Applications (NIA) for the 2018 SEED competition mentioned supporting professional development for "principals and other leaders" as one of the absolute priorities under the grant, the NIA did not explicitly define what school-level positions could qualify as "other leaders." In the future, the Department could specifically enumerate teacher leaders as one of the positions considered as "other leaders" or make teacher leaders an outright absolute priority. Prioritizing teacher leaders in this way is a particularly effective strategy for creating pipelines that prepare highly effective teacher leaders to become principals.

### Create a dedicated funding stream to support innovation and research in teacher leadership

While there are many federal formula and competitive grants that could be used for teacher leadership, there is no current funding stream

dedicated to teacher leadership. Congress should pass the *Teachers Are Leaders Act*, co-sponsored by Senators Coons (D-DE) and Ernst (R-IA). Under the existing Teacher Quality Partnerships grant in the Higher Education Act, the legislation would authorize an allowable use of funds to create teacher development programs/partnerships between high-need schools and colleges to develop innovative teacher leader roles and practices. ■

## Conclusion

Over the last 20 years, teacher leaders in innovative districts across multiple states have taken on a central role in school improvement. This has been accomplished by making great classroom instruction the centerpiece of improvement efforts, and providing teacher leaders with the authority, resources, and training to lead these efforts in partnership with school leaders. Providing teacher leaders with a lead role in designing and delivering professional learning has led to significant and sustained improvements in academic achievement for high-need students. Principals in high-need schools have also found that professional learning systems led by teacher leaders in partnership with principals increase teacher retention and improve their ability to recruit effective teachers.

Flexibility in ESSA offers a tremendous opportunity to improve professional learning and classroom instruction. It is up to leaders and policymakers at the district, state, and federal level to take advantage of policy opportunities that help schools transition from ineffective to highly effective professional learning systems. By investing in building the capacity of teachers and principals to lead professional learning in their schools, we can better ensure that every student is taught by an effective teacher.



**APPENDIX A:**

# Using Federal Funds for Teacher Leadership

ACTIVITY	EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT						INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT Early Intervention
	TITLE I			TITLE II	TITLE III	TITLE V	
	PART A:	1114	1115	PARTS A & B	English Learners	State Innovation	
Salary for Master Teachers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stipends for Master and Mentor Teachers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Master and Mentor Performance Pay	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cost of Release Time for Mentors	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cost of Release Time for Career Teacher PD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Training Costs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

**APPENDIX B:**

# ESSA Title I and II Support of Teacher Leadership

FUNDING STREAM	ESSA (STATUTORY AND REGULATORY REFERENCES)	USES
<b>TITLE I</b>		
<b>Schoolwide Program</b>	<b>1114(b)(7)(A)(ii)</b>	“professional development and other activities for teachers, paraprofessionals, and other school personnel to improve instruction and use of data from academic assessments, and to recruit and retain effective teachers, particularly in high-need subjects”
	<b>1114(b)(7)(A)(iii)(IV)</b>	“use methods and instructional strategies that strengthen the academic program in the school, increase the amount and quality of learning time, and help provide an enriched and accelerated curriculum, which may include programs, activities, and courses necessary to provide a well-rounded education”
<b>Targeted Assistance Program</b>	<b>1115(b)(2)(B)(i)</b>	“using methods and instructional strategies to strengthen the academic program of the school through activities, which may include — expanded learning time, before- and after-school programs, and summer programs and opportunities”
	<b>1115(b)(2)(D)</b>	“providing professional development to teachers, principals, other school leaders, paraprofessionals, and, if appropriate, specialized instructional support personnel, and other school personnel who work with eligible children”
<b>TITLE II</b>		
	<b>2101(c)(4)(B)(vii)(I)</b> <b>2103(b)(3)(B)</b>	“career opportunities and advancement initiatives for effective teachers that promote professional growth and emphasize multiple career paths. This includes creating hybrid roles that allow instructional coaching of colleagues while remaining in the classroom, as well as assuming other responsibilities such as collaborating with administrators to develop and implement distributive leadership models and leading decision-making groups”
	<b>2101(c)(4)(B)(v)</b> <b>2103(b)(3)(E)</b>	“may be used to support “time banks” or flexible time for collaborative planning, curriculum writing, peer observations, and leading trainings; which may involve using substitute teachers to cover classes during the school day”
	<b>2101(c)(4)(B)(vii)(I)</b> <b>2103(b)(3)(B)</b>	“may be used to compensate teachers for their increased leadership roles and responsibilities”
	<b>2101(c)(4)(B)(v)(I)</b> <b>2103(b)(3)(E)</b>	“supporting peer-led, evidence-based professional development in LEAs and schools”
	<b>2101(c)(4)(B)(v)</b> <b>2103(b)(3)(B)</b>	“recruiting and retaining talented and effective educators, including mentoring new educators”
	<b>2101(c)(4)(B)(viii)</b> <b>2103(b)(3)(B)</b>	“partner with organizations to provide leadership training and opportunities for principals and other school leaders to hone their craft and bring teams together to improve school structures”

## Endnotes

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5. Combs, E., & Silverman, S. (2016). *Bridging the Gap: Paving the Pathway from Current Practice to Exemplary Professional Learning*. Frontline Research & Learning Institute. <https://www.frontlineinstitute.com/reports/essa-report/>
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10. U.S. Department of Education. (2016). *Building Systems of Support for Excellent Teaching and Leading*. Washington, D.C.