

Six Elements of Strategic Staffing

A Reflection Tool for District and School Leaders

NIET's report, [Achieving Better Results: How Effective Strategic Staffing Increases Teacher and Student Outcomes](#), describes how school systems establish and implement strategic staffing, teaming, and compensation systems that leverage the skills of teacher leaders working with school leaders to improve instruction.

Whether your school or district already has elements of strategic staffing in place or you are interested in exploring new approaches, these reflective questions can spark meaningful discussion among district leaders, principals, teacher leaders, and classroom teachers.

1. Distributed leadership

Instructional leadership capacity is built across a team of school and teacher leaders who inform data-driven decision-making, goal setting, and regular progress monitoring. Teacher leaders become members of the school instructional leadership team.

Reflect:

1. Are teacher leaders a part of your school's instructional leadership team, contributing to data analysis, goal setting, and instructional decisions?
2. How could you create more opportunities for collaboration between administrators and teacher leaders to ensure shared ownership of student achievement goals?

2. Innovative teaming structures

To successfully lead collaborative teams in ways that change instruction and improve learning across classrooms, teacher leaders need to engage in strategic thinking and both short- and long-range planning. Teacher leaders “in source” professional learning by field-testing student strategies in classrooms, planning and facilitating professional learning, and following up in individual classrooms to support effective application.

Reflect:

1. Are your teachers supported by a teacher leader in a professional learning team? If so, what does this look like?
2. How well are teacher leadership roles designed to improve instructional practice, follow up on professional learning, and support teacher growth across classrooms?

3. Extended teacher reach

In NIET's TAP System, teacher leaders impact students across the school. Master teachers spend about 75% of their time coaching, modeling, co-teaching, and leading professional learning to strengthen instruction. Mentor teachers provide 3-4 hours each week supporting classroom instruction, observing, and giving feedback.

Reflect:

1. In what ways are teacher leaders bringing their expertise into different classrooms through coaching, modeling, or co-teaching?
2. How are teacher leaders currently using their time to extend instructional support across the school?

4. Staffing structures that intentionally cultivate teacher pipelines

Master and mentor teachers differentiate their support for teachers based on need, creating a system that benefits teacher candidates and paraprofessionals as they observe expert teachers coaching in classrooms and participate in professional learning teams. Many teacher leaders later move into school and district leadership positions.

Reflect:

1. How does your structure of professional learning and mentoring support new teachers?
2. How does your school ensure long-term talent development and create career opportunities?

5. Compensation structures differentiated by role

Districts offer additional compensation to teachers who take on leadership roles and demonstrate strong performance, based on an evidence-based rubric that measures classroom instruction and student learning growth.

Reflect:

1. Does your district or state offer differentiated compensation for teacher leadership roles?
2. In what ways could your compensation structure more strongly incentivize retention of highly effective teachers?

6. Technology that optimizes educator roles/time

Technology makes it easier for educators to watch and analyze classroom lessons, as well as see the pre- and post-conference between the teacher and their coach. This helps share effective teaching practices and build a culture of reflection and continuous learning.

Reflect:

1. Do you leverage video libraries or digital resources to help your teachers observe other teachers, analyze instructional strategies, or identify ways to enhance their own practice?
2. What opportunities exist to use technology to strengthen coaching conversations, and optimize educator roles and time?