

#InvestToLead

HOW TO STRUCTURE AND FUND MEANINGFUL,
IMPACTFUL TEACHER LEADERSHIP ROLES

NIET

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING



Nearly every state has adopted learning standards that have required teachers to change their instructional practices in significant ways, and many states are moving forward with new curriculum adoption and implementation cycles to complement those standards. Yet, American education has been unable to reliably improve instruction across classrooms. We know what could work based on research: structured collaborative learning, job-embedded coaching, and feedback based on observations of classroom practice. But these effective practices require significant time and energy from expert instructional leaders, and principals cannot shoulder this responsibility alone.

TEACHER LEADERSHIP CAN BRIDGE THIS GAP—
WHEN IT IS GROUNDED IN PROVEN PRINCIPLES AND PROPERLY STRUCTURED AND FUNDED.

Improving Student Achievement through Formal Instructional Teacher Leadership Roles

NIET's report, *Unleashing Teacher Leadership: How Formal Teacher Leader Roles Can Improve Instruction*, shares lessons learned from districts across the country in creating and implementing teacher leadership roles that result in improvements to student learning. It offers 10 recommendations built around these two key principles:

- **Create and expand formal instructional teacher leadership roles.**

While many forms of teacher leadership can be beneficial, policymakers and school system leaders need to pay particular attention to creating and expanding *formal* instructional teacher leadership roles. Today's teachers want these more structured leadership roles, which can provide the capacity needed to improve teaching and learning in our schools.

- **Professional learning is best led by teachers and leaders within the school building.**

Engaging teacher leaders in the development of their colleagues provides a highly effective and sustainable form of professional learning. Instructional teacher leader roles can facilitate research-based professional learning strategies such as structured collaborative learning, job-embedded coaching, and feedback based on observations of classroom practice. 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.

Funding Teacher Leadership for Maximum Impact

With the passage of ESSA, districts and states are taking a new look at how they are using funds to support improvements in professional learning, classroom instruction, and student learning. NIET's new report, *Investing in Teacher Leadership: A Better Way to Make Job-Embedded Professional Learning a Reality in Every School*, illustrates how districts and schools can fund school-based teacher leader roles that are sustainable and focused on instruction to support improvements in teaching and learning.

Based on our 20 years of experience working with thousands of practitioners across multiple states, we have identified steps that district leaders, state and federal policymakers can take to design, implement, and fund effective, job-embedded professional learning led by teacher leaders.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

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

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

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

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

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATE POLICYMAKERS

Use ESSA Title I and II-A set-asides to support formal teacher leadership roles

Create sustainable, dedicated funding streams to support teacher leadership

Ensure maximum flexibility on use of funds for schoolwide improvement activities

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

Prioritize formal instructional teacher leadership roles in competitive grants

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



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ABOUT NIET

NIET's mission is to build educator excellence to give all students the opportunity for success. Over the past two decades, NIET's work has impacted more than 250,000 educators and 2.5 million students and has helped our nation's schools and districts earn historic results in student achievement.