



ROOSEVELT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Identify Great Teachers and Give Them a Leadership Role

The Roosevelt Elementary School District (RSD) in Phoenix, Arizona, is creating powerful teacher leadership roles and a more effective system for supporting and growing teacher practice and student learning.

Before the pandemic, students in Roosevelt scored, on average, 24% lower in math and 23% lower in English language arts than students across the state, and these gaps widened during the pandemic. Roosevelt had pockets of excellence in schools and classrooms, but needed a system of support that raised the effectiveness and consistency of teaching in every school. To meet this challenge, RSD decided to invest in teacher leaders. Each school has five to eight teachers who take on leadership roles, working

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MEGAN GESTSON | Roosevelt’s Executive Director of Leadership and Learning

with principals to build a system of professional learning and coaching at the school level. “I believe it begins with making intentional space at the table for teacher leaders,” said Megan Gestson, Roosevelt’s Executive Director of Leadership and Learning. “When teachers are honored and

included, they naturally become more comfortable and confident in sharing their knowledge and talents.”

RSD worked to formalize teacher leadership roles through the establishment of a “learning cabinet” in each school. Creating a role for teacher leaders in the learning cabinet



brings the classroom teacher voice and perspective into the decision-making process. “Teacher leaders have direct experience ‘living’ campus initiatives in the classroom,” said Gestson. “They are able to provide some of the most valuable feedback on the effectiveness of initiatives.”

Use teacher leaders to create an effective, coherent professional learning and coaching system

Learning cabinets provide opportunities for members to engage in professional, peer-to-peer learning while working with school leaders to elevate effective teacher practices and contribute to student success.

“One example that comes to mind is at J.R. Davis School,” said Gestson. “After school leaders presented achievement and observational data to the learning cabinet, the team made some very intentional decisions to move ELA learning forward. This included all staff engaging in a full day of district-adopted ELA curriculum training in order to use the program consistently, with fidelity. They also learned how to use data to predict outcomes and plan accordingly. The result was Davis having the highest



“By elevating teacher leaders, RSD is doing tremendous work to support great classroom teaching and impact students.”

DR. RUHI KHAN | NIET Senior Specialist

scores in the district for ELA on this past spring’s Arizona’s Academic Standards Assessment.”

RSD has made a commitment to school improvement initiatives by establishing learning cabinets on each of their 20 campuses to provide

teachers with opportunities to take on formal leadership roles. Although the work at individual schools looks and sounds different, teacher leadership roles support steady improvement in classroom instruction and student learning across the district.