

Arizona Teacher Leader Professional Standards

Table of Contents

Contents

Table of Contents 1
Arizona Teacher Leader Professional Standards 3
Introduction 4
Domain I 1
Domain II 1
Domain III 2
Domain IV 2
Domain V 3
Domain VI 4
Domain VII 4
Acknowledgments 6
References 8

Arizona Teacher Leader Professional Standards

The Arizona Teacher Leader Professional Standards and the accompanying document are intended to provide Arizona Local Education Agencies (LEAs) with guidance in establishing the role and responsibilities of a teacher leader, as well as provide guidance in their development and professional learning.

The standards introduced here are presented as Domains, or realms of knowledge, action, and leadership. They are written in ideal language meant to provide a target to work in alignment with other educator development guidance provided by the state including teacher induction standards, professional standards, and instructional leader standards. It is expected that the interpretation and enactment of these domains will vary to best meet the needs of each community.

DOMAIN I: *Fostering a Collaborative Culture to Support Educator Development and Student Learning*

DOMAIN II: *Accessing and Using Research to Improve Practice and Student Learning*

DOMAIN III: *Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement*

DOMAIN IV: *Facilitating Improvements in Instruction and Student Learning*

DOMAIN V: *Using Data and Assessments to Drive School and District Improvement*

DOMAIN VI: *Improving Outreach and Collaboration with Families and Community*

DOMAIN VII: *Advocating for Student Learning and the Profession*

Introduction

Why Teacher Leadership Standards for Arizona?

The Teacher Leader Standards are a framework to facilitate a teacher's next steps on their career trajectory. There is no common definition for teacher leadership, however, it provides the opportunity for educators to have input in the school decision-making process. When teachers have a greater role in school leadership, students perform better, teachers stay longer, and schools are more successful overall[1].

Purpose of Teacher Leadership

Teacher leadership is an effective way for school systems to address academic, administrative, and workforce challenges. Teacher leadership has been shown to be associated with student success[2], and it is also a necessary component of modern district leadership and school management. In addition to benefits of overall school operations, teacher leadership opportunities increase educators' job satisfaction, sense of ownership, and, as a result, teacher retention.

Like the development of new teachers and instructional leaders, teacher leaders need systematic guidance and support to become *highly effective*. An aligned set of standards, guiding teacher leader development, creates a clear continuum for how educators in Arizona will be supported and developed throughout their careers.

Path of Teacher Leadership

Becoming an effective teacher leader--one that has the knowledge and skills to help all students achieve their maximum potential and can provide critical guidance from the classroom--takes time to develop and support. Teacher leadership begins with highly effective educators, and then intentional and ongoing professional learning that explicitly supports the development of the mindsets, knowledge, and skills that are necessary to be an effective leader. However, as of 2018, Arizona had the highest rate of teacher turnover in the country[3]. If Arizona's teachers are not staying long enough to become experts and leaders in their schools, the state's students and communities suffer.

Educational leadership is a challenging task requiring administrators to know, understand, and be responsible for a diverse set of topics including building operation, curriculum and assessment, school climate, personnel oversight, and community outreach. Knowledgeable principals employ a collaborative leadership structure that create important roles for highly effective teachers to contribute to decision making and influence instructional practice.

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[1] Ingersoll, R., Sirinides, P., and Dougherty, P. (2017). School Leadership, Teachers' Roles in School Decision Making, and Student Achievement. Working Paper (#WP 2017–2). Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania

[2] Ingersoll, R., Sirinides, P., and Dougherty, P. (2017). School Leadership, Teachers' Roles in School Decision Making, and Student Achievement. Working Paper (#WP 2017–2). Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania;

[3] Education Resource Strategies, (2018, May). A*rizona State Funding Project: Addressing the Teacher Labor Market Challenge*. Arizona Community Foundation. https://www.azfoundation.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/ACF_TeacherLaborMarket2018-0910_14x8.5-Report-PR.pdf

Developing Teacher Leader Standards for Arizona

Creating opportunities for highly effective and culturally representative teachers to take on leadership roles is a crucial strategy in a school's toolbox to improve teacher retention, instructional quality, and student outcomes[4]. In the fall of 2020, a committee of education experts, leaders, and stakeholders came together to explore the research, draw on field experience, and refer to national standards[5] to design professional teacher leadership principles that address the unique needs and circumstances of Arizona educators. To fully realize the power of the teacher leadership model, the set of standards developed by the committee is outlined in the following document. These standards are intended to provide LEAs with guidance in the development of their teacher leaders and the programs that will support their professional learning.

It may take time to develop and grow programs that encompass all the elements contained with these standards thus, they are written in ideal language intended to provide a target. These standards are meant to work in alignment with other teacher development guidance provided by the state including beginning teacher induction standards, professional standards[6], and instructional leader standards to create a seamless continuum of teacher development from year one to retirement. It is also important to highlight that each locality is unique and, therefore, it is expected that the interpretation and enactment of these standards will vary to best meet the needs of each community while ensuring teacher leaders receive rich and appropriate supports as they work to learn and develop the knowledge and skill sets contained with these standards. By focusing on teacher leadership, we can work together to improve teacher retention, instructional quality, and outcomes for all students across Arizona.

Arizona Teacher Leader Domains

The Arizona Teacher Leader Professional Standards are aligned with national standards developed by the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium in 2011. Like the original source, the **Arizona Teacher Leader Standards** follow the format of the national standards in which model benchmarks are presented as seven defined **Domains** that clarify the extent and expectations of teacher leadership. Accompanying each domain are **Functions** that expound on the standard definitions.

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[4] Behrstock, E., & Clifford, M. (February, 2009).Leading Gen Y teachers: Emerging strategies for school leaders. Washington, DC; National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, (2009). Retrieved from http://www.tqsource.org/publications/February2009Brief.pdf; ; Sutcher, L., Darling-Hammond, L., and Carver-Thomas, D. (2016). *A Coming Crisis in Teaching? Teacher Supply, Demand, and Shortages in the U.S.* Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

[5] Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium (2015). Teacher Leader Model Standards. Retrieved from https://www.ets.org/s/education_topics/teaching_quality/pdf/teacher_leader_model_standards.pdf.

[6] Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, (2011). InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards: A Resource for State Dialogue. Retrieved from https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/InTASC_Model_Core_Teaching_Standards_2011.pdf

Arizona Teacher Leader Professional Standards

Domain I: Fostering a Collaborative Culture to Support Educator Development and Student Learning

The teacher leader understands the principles of adult learning and knows how to develop a collaborative culture of collective responsibility in the school. The teacher leader uses this knowledge to promote an environment of collegiality, trust, and respect that focuses on continuous improvement in instruction and student learning.

Functions

The teacher leader:

a. Utilizes group processes to help colleagues communicate effectively and work collaboratively to develop goal-oriented solutions, solve problems, make decisions, manage conflict, and promote meaningful change;
b. Models effective skills in listening, presenting ideas, leading discussions, clarifying, mediating, and identifying the needs of self and others in order to advance shared goals and professional learning;
c. Establishes an open and welcoming environment with colleagues as members of a team, sharing their knowledge and skills while contributing to the ongoing development of strong schools. Employs facilitation skills to create trust among colleagues, develop collective wisdom, build ownership and action that supports student learning;
d. Strives to create an inclusive culture where diverse perspectives are welcomed in addressing opportunities to support faculty and students challenges; and
e. Uses knowledge and understanding of different backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, and languages to broaden collective understanding and appreciation of promoting effective meaningful interactions among colleagues.

Domain II: Accessing and Using Research to Improve Practice and Student Learning

The teacher leader understands how research creates new knowledge, informs policies and practices, and improves teaching and learning. The teacher leader models and facilitates the use of systematic inquiry as a critical component of teachers' ongoing learning and development.

Functions

The teacher leader:

a. Assists colleagues in accessing and using research in order to select appropriate strategies to improve student learning;
b. Facilitates the analysis of student learning data, collaborative interpretation of results, and application of findings to improve teaching and learning;
c. Supports colleagues in collaborating with the higher education institutions and other organizations engaged in researching critical educational issues and teaching practices

d. Supports colleagues to collect, analyze, and communicate data from their classrooms to improve teaching and learning; and
e. Conducts and supports colleagues in creating and implementing action research projects within the classroom and the school, including writing summaries and presenting results.

Domain III: Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement

The teacher leader understands the evolving nature of teaching and learning, established and emerging technologies, and the school community. The teacher leader uses this knowledge to promote, design, and facilitate job-embedded professional learning aligned with school improvement goals.

Functions

The teacher leader:

a. Collaborates with colleagues and school administrators to plan professional learning that is team-based, job-embedded, sustained over time, aligned with content standards, and linked to school/district improvement goals;
b. Uses information about adult learning to respond to the diverse learning needs of all colleagues by identifying, promoting, and facilitating varied and differentiated professional learning;
c. Facilitates and promotes professional learning among colleagues;
d. Identifies and uses appropriate technologies to promote collaborative and differentiated professional learning;
e. Works with colleagues to collect, analyze, and disseminate data related to the quality of professional learning and its effect on teaching and student learning;
f. Advocates for sufficient preparation, time, and support for colleagues to work in teams to engage in job-embedded professional learning;
g. Provides constructive feedback to colleagues to strengthen teaching practice and improve student learning; and
h. Uses research-based information about emerging education, economic, and social trends in making changes, planning, and facilitating professional learning.

Domain IV: Facilitating Improvements in Instruction and Student Learning

The teacher leader demonstrates a deep understanding of the teaching and learning processes and uses this knowledge to advance the professional skills of colleagues by being a continuous learner and modeling how to deliberately think about their practice and learn from classroom experience and student success. The teacher leader works collaboratively with colleagues to ensure instructional practices are aligned to a shared vision, mission, and goals.

Functions

The teacher leader:

a. Facilitates the collection, analysis, and use of classroom-, school-, and community-based data to identify opportunities to improve curriculum, instruction, assessment, school organization, and school culture;
b. Engages in cognitive coaching and reflective discourse with colleagues based on observation of instruction, student work, assessment data and reflective dialog that supports teachers use of research-based practices to meet the needs of students;
c. Supports colleagues' individual and collective reflection and professional growth by serving in leadership roles (e.g. mentor, coach, team leader, specialist, etc.) to harness the skills and knowledge of colleagues to meet student needs.
d. The teacher leader uses knowledge of existing and emerging technologies to guide colleagues in helping students skillfully and appropriately navigate the universe of knowledge available on the Internet, use social media to promote collaborative learning, and connect with people and resources around the globe; and
e. Promotes instructional strategies that actively address issues of diversity and equity in the classroom and ensures that individual student learning needs remain the central focus of discourse surrounding instruction.

Domain V: Using Data and Assessments to Drive School and District Improvement

The teacher leader applies knowledge of current research to classroom-, school-, and district-based data and research to design and select appropriate formative and summative assessments. The teacher leader shares this knowledge and strategically collaborates with colleagues to use information in order to improve student learning. This will help guide and inform school and district improvement strategies.

Functions

The teacher leader:

a. Increases the capacity of colleagues to identify and use multiple assessment tools aligned to state and local standards;
b. Collaborates with colleagues in the design, implementation, scoring, and interpretation of student data to improve educational practice(s) and student learning;
c. Creates a climate of trust and critical reflection in order to engage colleagues in challenging conversations about student learning data that leads to solutions to identified issues and for academic progress; and
d. Works with colleagues to use assessment and data findings to promote changes in instructional practices or organizational structures to improve student learning.

Arizona Teacher Leader Professional Standards

Domain VI: Improving Outreach and Collaboration with Families and Community

The teacher leader understands that families, cultures, and communities have a significant impact on educational processes and student learning. The teacher leader works with colleagues to promote ongoing systematic collaboration with families, community members, business and community leaders, and other stakeholders to improve the educational system and expand opportunities for student learning.

Functions

The teacher leader:

a. Uses knowledge and understanding of the different backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, and languages in the school community to promote effective interactions among colleagues, families, and the larger community;
b. Models and supports successful communication and collaboration skills with families and other stakeholders as a means to build a sustained partnership focused on attaining equitable success for students of all backgrounds;
c. Facilitates colleagues' and their own self-examination of bias as a means to better understand and appreciate community culture and diversity
d. Facilitates colleagues' self-examination of their own understandings of community culture and diversity and how they can develop culturally responsive strategies to enrich the educational experiences of students and achieve high levels of learning for all students;
e. Supports colleagues' ability to develop culturally responsive strategies to enrich the educational experiences of students and achieve high levels of learning for all students;
f. Develops a shared understanding among colleagues of the diverse educational assets and needs of families and the community; and
g. Collaborates with families, communities, and colleagues to develop comprehensive strategies to empower families and the community.

Domain VII: Advocating for Student Learning and the Profession

The teacher leader understands and shares with colleagues how educational policy is made at the local, state, and national level as well as the roles of school leaders, boards of education, legislators, and other stakeholders in formulating those policies. The teacher leader uses this knowledge to advocate for student needs and for appropriate resources and working conditions to support effective teaching and increase student learning, and serves as an individual of influence and respect within the school, community, and profession.

Arizona Teacher Leader Professional Standards

Functions

The teacher leader:

a. Shares information with colleagues within and/or beyond the district regarding how local, state, and national trends and policies can impact classroom practices and expectations for student learning;
b. Works with colleagues to identify and use research and data to advocate for teaching and learning processes that meet the needs of all students and advances appropriate expectations for teachers;
c. Collaborates with colleagues to select appropriate opportunities to advocate for the rights and/or needs of students and teachers, to secure additional resources within the building or district that support student learning and the teaching profession, and to communicate effectively with targeted audiences such as parents and community members;
d. Advocates for access to professional resources, including financial support and human and other material resources, that allow colleagues to spend significant time learning about effective practices and developing a professional learning community focused on school improvement goals; and
e. Represents and advocates for the profession in contexts outside of the classroom.

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Arizona Teacher Leader Professional Standards

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