PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSION GUIDE

By Lois Brown Easton
Using this guide

This discussion guide is intended to assist Kappan readers who want to use articles in staff meetings or university classroom discussions.

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Going to scale with teacherpreneurs

By Barnett Berry

*Phi Delta Kappan*, 95 (7), 8-14

**OVERVIEW OF THE ARTICLE**

Expert classroom teachers today can contribute as leaders in their school, districts, and states in powerful ways.

**KEY POINTS**

- In an earlier *Kappan* article, the author introduced the idea of a *teacherpreneur*, the person who teaches for a career and also has important leadership roles in education.

- Teacher leadership has a number of benefits:
  - Student learning increases, especially when educators collaborate.
  - Dynamic collaboration results in successful schools.
  - Principals who cannot alone address all the challenges inherent in today’s schools have teacher leaders to help.
  - Countries around the world whose systems are effective have strong teacher leaders.


- These teacher leaders face a number of barriers, including insecure principals, irrational school schedules, and inflexible district organizations.

- Teacher leaders can be characterized as *boundary spanners*, a phrase that describes people in organizations who cross boundaries between groups and link people across these groups.

- A system that supports teacherpreneurs would:
  - Make them more public and visible, relying on them to connect people and advocate for educational improvement
  - Customize evaluation and pay to recognize teacherpreneurs.
  - Help new teachers become teacherpreneurs through mentoring by current teacherpreneurs.
  - Work with unions and other associations to recognize and honor the work of teacherpreneurs.

**DEEPEN YOUR THINKING**

1. What comes to mind when you think about the word *entrepreneur*?

2. What have been your experiences as a leader? Did you assume leadership roles when you were teaching? If not, did you want to assume leadership roles? In either case, what happened?

3. What kinds of leadership roles are typically given to teachers?

4. What does it mean to treat a teacher like “an endowed chair at a research university”? (Berry, 2011).

5. To what extent should teachers “spread and market their pedagogical and policy ideas across organizational and geographical boundaries”? (Berry, 2011).

6. What do you think about Lori Nazareno’s estimate that about one-third of teachers could be teacher leaders?

7. What skills does a teacher leader need to be a *boundary spanner*, especially across competing groups? To establish links among groups?
8. To what extent should preservice education focus on teacher leadership? In what ways?
9. What are the upsides and downsides of a teacher leadership track in a school district?
10. Why might unions and professional organizations support teacher leadership? Why not?
11. The author asks, “Are we ready to blur the lines of teaching and leading so that those who work with students most closely can incubate and execute their ideas in the best interests of the communities they serve?” What do you think?

Extend your thoughts through activities for group discussion

What would have to change for teacherpreneurs to thrive and benefit educators in your district? Work with colleagues to think through the mind map Possible Teacher Leadership Roles. Consider the roles provided in the mind map, change or delete them, and add your own roles.

Then, work with the Challenges Chart below (perhaps putting it onto a large piece of chart paper so everyone in the group can contribute to it and see what’s being written or drawn on it) to consider how to address the barriers to teacherpreneurship in your district or a district you know well.

### CHALLENGES CHART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired role</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>How to overcome barriers</th>
<th>Assets and how to use them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: Organizational development</td>
<td>Time to engage in organizational initiatives</td>
<td>Job sharing</td>
<td>Develop own school as an organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reference

Five goals for teacher leadership

By Celine Coggins and Kate McGovern

*Phi Delta Kappan, 95 (7), 15-21*

**OVERVIEW OF THE ARTICLE**

Explicit links between teacher leadership and student achievement demonstrate that teacher leaders positively affect students, schools, and the teaching profession as a whole.

**KEY POINTS**

- Engaging teachers as teacher leaders has not become widespread because the role and its benefits have not been clearly defined.

- The authors describe two efforts to install teacher leadership in schools and districts in a way that is "genuinely influential," mattering "more than other strategies for improving schools."

- TeachPlus provides school- and system-level programs that help teachers become leaders.

- The Turnaround Teacher Teams Initiative (T3) works with teachers in low-performing schools in Massachusetts and the District of Columbia.

- The Teaching Policy Fellowship helps urban teachers work with policy makers and others involved in system-level change.

- The goals of these programs are to:
  - "Improve student outcomes across a school."
  - "Improve access of high-need students to effective teachers."
  - "Extend careers of teachers looking for growth opportunities," especially at a time when teacher attrition is high.
  - "Expand influence of effective teachers on peers."
  - "Ensure a role for teachers as leaders in policy decision affecting their practice."

- Citing Maria Fenwick, the authors note that the conditions for working in challenging schools include having enough (20-25% of the staff) teachers engaged in leadership, having a principal committed to their leadership, a support network, and extra compensation.

- Unions have not unilaterally endorsed teacher leadership, sometimes asserting that leadership roles should be determined by years experience rather than performance and viewing those roles as quasi-administrative.

- The authors maintain, “Leading from within the ranks of teaching is still a countercultural act,” but cite data showing that teacher leaders do not divide a staff.

- Teachers not only take on different roles as leaders, they also may decide for a variety of reasons not to become leaders in their schools or districts.

- Teachers who are likely to want to be leaders are purpose-driven, effective leaders of professional learning, good decision makers, learners, and change agents.

**DEEPEN YOUR THINKING**

1. What has sustained you through your own career in education? What attracted you and keeps you involved in education?

2. How important is it for teachers to take a leadership role in their schools? In their districts? In their states?
3. To what extent should teacher leadership go beyond sharing best practices?

4. In what ways can teachers be leaders and still be effective in the classroom?

5. In your experience, how do peers who do not engage as leaders view those who do?

6. What conditions need to prevail in schools and districts in order for teachers to engage as leaders?

7. The authors suggest that reforms attain “staying power” when they can be shown to “matter more than other strategies for improving schools.” What examples come to mind as you think about this assertion?

8. To what extent would teacher leadership opportunities attract and retain good teachers in a school or district? Would these opportunities attract teachers to challenging schools?

9. What personal skills do teachers as leaders need? What kinds of professional learning opportunities do they need?

**EXTEND YOUR THOUGHTS THROUGH ACTIVITIES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION**

Working with colleagues, explore the leadership roles of some of the best teachers you know. If you don’t know the same teachers, describe the teachers you have in mind and listen to others’ descriptions of teachers they have in mind when they think of “best teachers.”

Then, for each teacher, go through the list of possible leadership activities, awarding points according to the importance of the activity in your environment. Check the leadership activities each teacher engages in. Then, place each teacher along a continuum from low to high leadership contributions. Consider how the teacher leaders you discuss can be helped to be more effective leaders in their schools and districts.

**Step #1**

Identify teachers you consider leaders in your school or district. If everyone in your group knows these teachers well — for example, you’re in the same school — you do not need to describe them (although it wouldn’t hurt to remind everyone about their contributions).

If people don’t know the teacher leaders you have in mind, introduce them and spend some time describing them. Refer to these teachers through pseudonyms if identifying them would be a problem.

Put this list aside.

**Step #2**

Award points (from 1 to 5, with 1 being low priority and 5 being high) to each of the possible leadership activities below, and add and rate activities of your own.

**Step #3**

Start with one of the teacher leaders you identified, and check each activity that applies to what that person does. Add the points you awarded, and then go on to the next teacher leader you identified.

**Step #4**

Put each teacher leader along a continuum, below, from low to high leadership activity. Then discuss the following questions:

1. How public is this teacher’s leadership contributions? (See the article by Barnett Berry in this issue.)

2. How well do the school and district support this teacher leader?

3. What incentives are there (monetary and other) for leadership in this school and district?

4. What other leadership activities might appeal to this teacher leader?

5. How well is the teacher leader doing — physically, emotionally, and mentally — with combined leadership and teaching roles?
6. What other kinds of leadership do the school and district need to support student learning?

**Possible teacher leadership activities**

Rate from 1 to 5 in terms of importance of the activity in your own environment (school, district, or both).

- Innovating within his/her own classroom
- Sharing best practices within the school
- Sharing best practices within the district
- Sharing best practices outside the district
- Developing curriculum (including units of instruction and lessons)
- Developing assessments (formative, benchmark, summative, other)
- Developing materials and software
- Addressing student needs, especially students who need special help
- Addressing logistics within a school or district, such as the school schedule
- Leading data collection and analysis
- Observing and providing feedback to — or asking reflective questions of — other teachers
- Mentoring new teachers
- Working with preservice teachers
- Coaching
- Leading professional learning (including a professional learning community)
- Assisting building or district administrators
- Participating in evaluating peer teachers
- Linking with professional associations, including unions
- Having a voice in policy making
- Working with policy makers to develop policy
- Advocating for policy
- Linking communities within and outside the school (see “boundary spanners” in the article by Barnett Barry in this journal)
- Working with the public (including parent groups)
- Working with media
- Serving on school committees, such as a leadership team
- Serving on district committees, such as a curriculum writing team
- Serving on state committees, such as a testing consortium
- Writing and publishing/blogging/forming networks online
- Presenting at conferences in person or online
- Teaching classes to other educators online or in person
- Teaching a university course
- Other
- Other
- Other
- Other
- Other
- Other
A continuum of leadership

Add up the possible points you awarded to important teacher leadership activities in your own environment. Make the total the high end of the continuum; make one-half of the total the low end of the continuum. Then consider each person you suggested as a teacher leader in Step #1. Check the activities that person engages in and place the teacher leader on the continuum. Finally, consider the questions in Step #4.

The teacher leader you are considering: ____________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Half the total points</td>
<td>The total points</td>
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</table>
Send this to your legislator!

By Nancy Flanagan

*Phi Delta Kappan, 95 (7), 37-38*

**OVERVIEW OF THE ARTICLE**

The author provides 10 ways for legislators to improve their work on education issues.

**KEY POINTS**

- Legislators may have had some experience in education, besides being a student themselves, but they need a guide for policy making related to education.

- The author provides 10 considerations for legislators, including “You don’t know education just because you went to school.”

- She suggests that policy makers visit schools to engage with students and educators — rather than just for photo ops — and that they take the tests students take.

- Policy makers need to be careful about what the media broadcasts and examine their own assumptions, looking at how a policy benefits students.

- The author encourages legislators to remember that they represent all of the people in their districts, not just special interest groups.

- She praises policy makers who can change their minds as long as they do so publicly and based on core values.

- It’s also OK for policy makers to admit when they don’t understand.

- Mega-changes may grab headlines, but policy makers need to realize that real differences occur in education through carefully planned steps over time.

- Finally, she admonishes legislators to honor public education as the democratic foundation of the United States.

**DEEPEN YOUR THINKING**

1. Have you been a policy maker at any level? What was your experience in terms of educational issues?

2. Have you known a policy maker and in what capacity (for example, as a constituent, as an educational advisor, or as a friend)? How would you characterize this person’s knowledge of educational issues?

3. What is the role of a person’s own educational experience (K-16) in terms of making educational policy?

4. What do you think are today’s legislators’ top policy issues in education?

5. What assumptions do policy makers in general have about schools, teaching and teachers, and learning?

6. Do you think policy makers have a good understanding of how people learn, especially how children learn?

7. What might challenge policy makers in terms of visiting students and interacting with them and educators? How can those challenges be overcome?

8. How do policy makers get information that leads them to formulating educational policy?

9. What examples do you have of policy makers passing legislation that they hope will have a positive result, only to see it have a negative result in education? In what ways are legislators “systematically destroying the infrastructure of public education”?

10. How do you think legislators you know would react to being given a guide to making educational policy?
**EXTEND YOUR THOUGHTS THROUGH ACTIVITIES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION**

With colleagues, discuss legislators to whom this article might be sent or delivered. Consider both the state and national levels. Select at least one legislator to approach, and create a profile of this person. Consider the following characteristics:

- K-12 education: Site and characteristic of district(s)
- University/college education: Site and characteristics of institution(s)
- Representative district and demographics of the population in that district
- Previously supported educational policy
- Previously supported related policy
- Committees and task forces the legislator serves on
- Known values and priorities

Then, consider the 10 recommendations for legislators. How do you think the legislator you selected might respond to the recommendations? How can you present the recommendations in a way that appeals to the legislator’s history, values, and priorities?

**Legislator: __________________________________________________________**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guideline</th>
<th>Likely response</th>
<th>Appeals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. You don’t know education just because you went to school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Plan to pay many nonphoto op visits to lots of schools.</td>
<td>Interact while there.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Take the tests that kids have to take.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Be picky about what you read, listen to, and believe.</td>
<td>Beware the media.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Examine your assumptions. Check biases; represent everyone in your district.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Follow the money, not the party. Who really benefits — or not — from educational policy?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Remember you were elected to represent your constituents’ goals and desires, not some special interest group.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Be like Rob Portman. Change your mind publicly when necessary; admit you don’t know something.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Big and bold gets headlines, but tinkering around the edges gets results</td>
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Now, stratagize your conversation with this legislator. Consider involving his or her staff, especially those working on education policy. Also, consider involving staff from the education committees, even if the legislator you will be working with is not on those committees. And, take the boldest step of all, set up and meet with your legislator, this article in hand and your strategy customized to the person.

Good luck!
Meeting the educational challenges of income inequality
By Greg J. Duncan & Richard J. Murnane

*Phi Delta Kappan, 95 (7), 50-54*

**OVERVIEW OF THE ARTICLE**
In this second part of a two-part article, the authors describe how three programs — in Boston, Chicago, and New York City — have provided the interventions needed to help low-income children succeed.

**KEY POINTS**

- The three programs are the Boston preK program, the campuses of the University of Chicago charter School, and New York City’s small schools of choice.
- These three programs share these features:
  - They are founded on the latest research evidence about good education.
  - They emphasize school support for the work of teachers and leaders.
  - They have effective accountability systems.
  - They focus on high standards for achievement.
- Advances in knowledge relate to curricula and pedagogical strategies and effective professional development.
- Support includes access to technical expertise and resources related to curriculum, pedagogy, professional development, dealing with children's needs, and the use of assessment results.
- The authors say American education lacks institutions that provide effective support, like that provided in the example schools but describe some organizations such as New Visions for Public Schools that are filling the gap.
- Accountability remains a challenge because NCLB failed to consider it in terms of high-poverty schools and the necessity of teachers working collaboratively to address student needs.
- The authors see the Common Core as an important move toward having high standards for all students as well as high-quality assessments, but they’re concerned about clarity of grade-level expectations and the need for professional development related to the standards.
- They maintain that “strong supports and well-designed accountability must go hand in hand.”
- Schools need to focus on creating conditions that bring talented educators into their schools, allow them to work with each other effectively, and encourage them to stay long enough to make a difference.
- These conditions include “strong leadership, a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility, and resources” (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012).
- Finally, the kinds of changes the authors recommend have implications for school funding.

**DEEPEN YOUR THINKING**

1. What was the American Dream when you were growing up? To what extent has your generation accomplished the American Dream? Is this true for most people in your generation, including those from low-income families?
2. How would you describe the American Dream for today’s young people?
3. To what extent do you see income inequality in your community? To what extent does income inequality threaten education in your community? How are educational outcomes different for children from poverty?
4. What kinds of changes are being made in your community and its schools to address unequal opportunities for children in poverty?

5. What is the role of accountability in supporting the learning of children in poverty?

6. What is the most important action that schools, districts, and states can take to support equality of education for all students?

7. What incentives would bring high-quality teachers to challenging, high-poverty schools?

8. What is the role of standards in terms of supporting the learning of children in poverty?

9. Think about the authors’ question, “Can the nation’s schools meet today’s challenge of providing all students with the skills they will need to thrive in the rapidly changing economy and society of the 21st century?” What is your response to this question?

**EXTEND YOUR THOUGHTS THROUGH ACTIVITIES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION**

**Step #1**

With colleagues, consider these quotes related to the American Dream. In what ways would equal and quality education for all, especially those in poverty, result in achievement of the American Dream?

I ask you to join in a re-United States. We need to empower our people so they can take more responsibility for their own lives in a world that is ever smaller, where everyone counts. . . .We need a new spirit of community, a sense that we are all in this together, or the American Dream will continue to wither. Our destiny is bound up with the destiny of every other American. (Bill Clinton)

Success is somebody else’s failure. Success is the American Dream we can keep dreaming because most people in most places, including 30 million of ourselves, live wide awake in the terrible reality of poverty. (Ursula K. Le Guin)

The American Dream is really money. (Jill Robinson, novelist)

I think the American Dream for most people is just survival. (Sandy Scholl, owner of a small business)

What is the American Dream? The American dream is one big tent. One big tent. And in that big tent you have four basic promises: equal protection under the law, equal opportunity, equal access, and fair share. (Jesse Jackson)

Americans have so far put up with inequality because they felt they could change their status. They didn’t mind others being rich, as long as they had a path to move up as well. The American Dream is all about social mobility in a sense — the idea that anyone can make it. (Fareed Zakaria)

I was born on the other side of the tracks, in public housing in Brooklyn, N.Y. My dad never made more than $20,000 a year, and I grew up in a family that lost health insurance. So I was scarred at a young age with understanding what it was like to watch my parents lose access to the American Dream. (Howard Schultz)

I have spent my life judging the distance between American reality and the American dream. (Bruce Springsteen)

Everybody in America started to define themselves by all these things they had around them. And all of a sudden it came tumbling down. So the old American Dream has died, and that is a good thing. (Suze Orman)

The American Dream, the idea of the happy ending is avoidance of responsibility and commitment. (Jill Robinson, novelist)

**Step #2**
With colleagues, consider how people in your community would define the American Dream. Draft a statement and then ask yourselves how well schools in your community are supporting that dream:

**The American Dream in** ________________________________

In our community, the American Dream can be defined as:

Our educational system supports the community’s definition of the American Dream by:

___ Operating according to the latest research evidence about good education.
   *Examples:*

___ Emphasizing school support for the work of teachers and leaders.
   *Examples:*

___ Having an effective accountability system.
   *Examples:*

___ Focusing on high standards for achievement.
   *Examples:*

**Reference**

Applications

This Professional Development Guide was created with the characteristics of adult learners in mind (Tallerico, 2005):

- Active engagement
- Integration of experience
- Choice and self-direction
- Relevance to current challenges
- Learning style variation

As you think about sharing this article with other adults, how could you fulfill the adult learning needs above?

This Professional Development Guide was created so that readers could apply what they have learned to work in classrooms (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001):

- Identifying Similarities and Differences
- Reinforcing Effort and Providing Recognition
- Nonlinguistic Representations
- Setting Objectives and Providing Feedback
- Cues, Questions, and Advance Organizers
- Summarizing and Note-Taking
- Homework and Practice
- Cooperative Learning
- Generating and Testing Hypotheses

As you think about sharing this article with classroom teachers, how could you use these strategies with them?

References


About the Author

Lois Brown Easton is a consultant, coach, and author with a particular interest in learning designs — for adults and for students. She retired as director of professional development at Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center, Estes Park, Colo. From 1992 to 1994, she was director of Re:Learning Systems at the Education Commission of the States (ECS). Re:Learning was a partnership between the Coalition of Essential Schools and ECS. Before that, she served in the Arizona Department of Education in a variety of positions: English/language arts coordinator, director of curriculum and instruction, and director of curriculum and assessment planning.

A middle school English teacher for 15 years, Easton earned her Ph.D. at the University of Arizona. Easton has been a frequent presenter at conferences and a contributor to educational journals.

She was editor and contributor to Powerful Designs for Professional Learning (NSDC, 2004 & 2008). Her other books include:

- The Other Side of Curriculum: Lessons From Learners (Heinemann, 2002);
- Engaging the Disengaged: How Schools Can Help Struggling Students Succeed (Corwin, 2008);
- Protocols for Professional Learning (ASCD, 2009); and
- Professional Learning Communities by Design: Putting the Learning Back Into PLCs (Learning Forward and Corwin, 2011).

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