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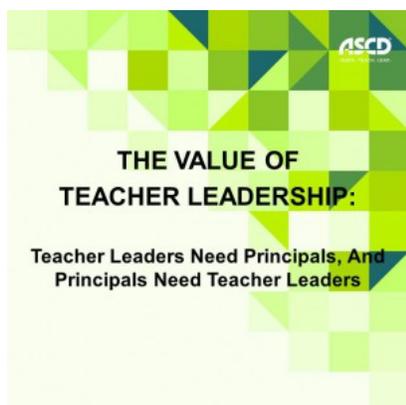
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January 26, 2015 by Inservice Guest Blogger (http://inservice.ascd.org/author/admin/)

One Of The Many Factors That Lead To School Improvement

By: Iris Jones, ASCD Member, Teacher Leader, Washington, D.C.



Teachers must engage in leadership roles to positively affect their school's culture of learning. It is often difficult, however, for teachers to get involved in leadership roles outside of their classroom environment. Without collaboration and support from principals, teacher leadership will not flourish and teachers will lose a valuable opportunity to further contribute to student growth and development.

It is my belief that teachers have the ability to demonstrate informal or formal leadership because I have seen teachers display such abilities in their classrooms daily. With constant changes in their daily schedules, frequent district and schoolwide initiatives and deadlines

to meet, and the interruption of yearlong testing, teachers must ensure that their students are meeting learning standards while promoting practices that result in measureable student learning outcomes. The ability to handle a miscellany of responsibilities and educate our learners at a steady pace is a definitive form of leadership.

While principals exercise leadership schoolwide, teacher leaders also distribute their expertise and collaborate on a more personalized level with their fellow team members. Through team efforts, teacher leaders discuss diverse matters both within and outside of the classroom. They collaborate with their administrators and principal to develop and implement support systems for their team members.

A connected educator is committed to team development and leadership, and they must have effective communication skills. When an effective continuous improvement system is in place schoolwide, teacher leaders must make sure that their team members are just as involved as they are. Student performance is connected to the collaborative effort of the entire team. Colleagues are resources and team accountability is vital to student development and improvement.



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As a former teacher/team leader, our team would engage in activities to learn more about one another as well as our teaching and learning styles. We created scenarios, engaged in role-play related to classroom situations, and built our relationships as we learned each other's personalities, similarities, and differences of opinion. These activities were not always the easiest, but we worked through them and strengthened our relationships. This allowed us to examine the importance of instructional dialogue regarding our students.

As a leader, you learn that the best response to intervention is being aware of a student's performance. With the implementation of teaming, we were able to discuss student work, skills, strengths, weaknesses, and areas of development. We dedicated an ample amount of time to instructional foci, curriculum, and academically focused team building. Most importantly, these team meetings did not conflict with our professional learning communities. We were able to dedicate a common planning period, once a week, to meet about our students.

These reasons, among many others, are why I suggest that principals need teacher leaders and vice versa. Without peer collaboration, teams will not thrive. Teachers tend to view delegation from leadership as added responsibility or even micromanagement. But when a principal actively engages in team development by supporting teacher leaders and teaming, the focus shifts to continuous professional development for teachers and adequate time beyond instruction for students.

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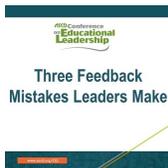
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