

NOVEMBER/
DECEMBER
2015



THIS ISSUE:

| | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Teacher Leadership..... | 1 |
| Bibliography | 4 |
| App Recommendations..... | 4 |
| Learning Tools Update..... | 4-5 |
| Other News..... | 5 |
| Quotes..... | 5 |

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT BOOSTER

Thinking about Teacher Leadership

An e-newsletter provided by Iowa School Finance Information Services (ISFIS)

THINKING ABOUT TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Mike Schmoker recently posed these questions in the Education Week article, “It’s Time to Restructure Teacher Professional Development.”

1. “Are we training teachers in methods that are among the very best practices that exist today—those with the strongest, most enduring evidence base and pedigree?”
2. “Are we observing those principles most essential to effective training—in particular, for example, that even rough mastery requires a sustained focus on a severely limited number of practices, with multiple opportunities for frequent monitoring, feedback, and follow-up training?”

These are great questions for all of us to consider as the Teacher Leadership and Compensation System is implemented across the state. The guidance from the Iowa Department of Education states, “Districts must develop and use measures of effectiveness and professional growth to determine suitability for teacher leadership roles.” We applaud the policy’s intention that teachers chosen for these leadership positions are among those teachers who have gotten great results for students. But now their jobs are not to deliver education to students, but rather to support classroom teachers as they implement new instruction. This seismic shift in the work of teacher leaders (TLs) will require the system to provide direct support to them as they support classroom teachers.

Jim Knight in his book *High Impact Instruction* notes the elements necessary for instructional coaches to effectively support teacher learning:

- **Precise Explanation:** Since the beginning of the Iowa Professional Development Model, the issue of describing the moves of the instructional strategy or model being learned has been an important component. For instance the “Read Aloud,” an often used instructional strategy, has three moves: 1. Activate listening by telling students what you want them to listen for. 2. Read aloud the selected text to the students. 3. Provide a follow up activity related to what asked students were asked to listen for. Additionally, the explanation of the strategy should include some theory about when and why it’s appropriate to use the strategy and how often it must be implemented to achieve the desired effects.

CONNECT



facebook.com/isfisinc



@isfisinc

- **Modeling:** No matter how concise the explanation provided, nothing compares to seeing the strategy or model demonstrated either in a professional learning context or in front of students. Joyce and Showers say teachers must see 20-40 models of an instructional strategy or model of moderate complexity in order to gain executive control. Executive control is demonstrated when the teacher can use the new strategy or model habitually, fluently, and appropriately to spur student learning.
- **Deliberate Practice and Progress Toward the Goal:** While this element is found in Jim Knight’s list, it is also a principle in the work of Joyce and Showers. They suggest it takes 20-40 practices both in front of students and in professional learning environments to reach executive control of a strategy or model of moderate complexity. Additionally, Knight adds feedback into this element. He notes, “Turning ideas into habits takes practice, feedback and reflection (Syed, 2010). Thus, during the process of instructional coaching, teachers try out a new way of teaching...and instructional coaches gather data on how the new practice is being implemented...” Joyce and Showers call the feedback strategy “coaching” and suggest that it come in the form of demonstrations of the new model or strategy rather than verbal, corrective feedback. Our experiences indicate that teachers ask for verbal, corrective feedback, but providing it isn’t an idea with much support in the research base. More high-quality demonstrations of the strategy or model for the teachers to observe and learn from IS supported.

Imagine how overwhelmed teacher leaders (TLs) might feel as they read the previous list and consider what needs to be done to improve classroom instruction! And it’s particularly overwhelming as they realize this isn’t a complete list, just a sampling. If the TLs are to accomplish all of the elements above (which is the very least of what it takes for the instruction to be implemented into classroom practice), the TLs must be allowed and encouraged to FOCUS their work. As schools consider these ideas and what it takes to improve instruction, the job of the teacher leaders begins to take shape. Are the TLs in your district taking these sorts of actions?

- The TLs focus on leading instructional improvement that the research says results in high levels of student learning. The TLs must be able to implement this instruction with fidelity and at the executive control level; this means the TLs must either use instruction they already have executive control of or they must learn highly effective instruction to the executive control level by implementing it in classrooms.
- The TLs develop a written list (Jim Knight calls it a “playbook”) of the instruction that is to be learned. This playbook includes an explanation of the moves of each new instructional strategy or model.
- The TLs model the new instruction in the classroom and at professional learning sessions.
- The TLs support deliberate practice of the new instruction by classroom teachers. They observe classroom teachers as they practice.
- TLs provide demonstrations of the strategy or model after they have observed teachers implementing in their classrooms and seeing which moves of the strategy need additional support or are being left out. For instance, using the example of the “Read Aloud” strategy, if the TLs observe classroom teachers omitting the “activate listening” move, when the teacher leaders provide their demonstrations (or support other classroom teachers who do this well to provide demonstrations), they will be sure to have a clear and strong emphasis on the “activate listening” part of the strategy.
- Teacher leaders help develop agendas for collaborative team meetings that focus primarily on planning effective instruction with classroom teachers, analyzing student work so the teachers know where to go next in instruction, rehearsing lessons, and other instructionally related activities.

Over time, as we’ve worked with schools across Iowa, we’ve heard both wonderful descriptions of what’s going on in Iowa schools and some that give us pause. We thought a rubric for some self-reflection on your school’s implementation of the TLC System might be helpful. We have developed a rubric, which we are calling the Teacher Leadership Reflection Rubric. It is focused in the areas below, but certainly does not include all the actions that arise as you work through the teacher leadership implementation. This is just a start. We assume others could come up with different categories and different actions, but these worked for us and we hope they will help you think about your system and what’s working and what might need a bit of improvement.

- Leadership
- Instruction
- Work with the Principal
- Data, Goal Setting, and Monitoring
- Professional Learning of Teacher Leaders

Below is the “Teacher Leader Work with the Principal(s)” section of our Teacher Leadership Reflection Rubric. We hope a sample might inspire you to look at the [entire rubric](#). Put a check in the boxes in front of the practices that you believe are the norm in your building.

| Element | 1-Beginning | 2-Growing | 3-Effective |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Teacher Leader Work with the Principal(s)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Principal(s) and TLs work separately from one another, with little interaction. <input type="checkbox"/> TLs are assigned managerial duties by the principal(s), such as discipline, bus or lunchroom duty, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Principal(s) assign teacher leaders responsibility for all teacher learning in the building and the principal no longer focuses on instruction- that function taken over by the teacher leaders. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Principals and teacher leaders meet regularly, but the meetings often veer from the clear focus of improving classroom instruction. They are occasionally or regularly dominated by individual student problems, managerial issues, and other topics unrelated to classroom instruction. <input type="checkbox"/> Principals and teacher leaders are having conversations to define their joint work related to improving classroom instruction. Additionally, they are discussing their individual roles in that joint work. However, they don't address this topic regularly nor have they come up with clear definitions <input type="checkbox"/> Both principal and teacher leaders receive training and support, but rarely together. There isn't a clear plan for sharing their learning with each other. <input type="checkbox"/> Principals and TLs are in classrooms. However, focus on what instruction will be implemented hasn't been established, so the observation process is very difficult. It sometimes isn't clear to the classroom teachers what the principals and TLs are looking for when they're in classrooms. Sometimes it isn't clear to the principals and TLs either! | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Both principals and TLs can clearly describe their role in improving instruction, which is their joint work. <input type="checkbox"/> Principals and TLs meet regularly and work in tandem to create a culture of learning and instructional improvement. They also constantly clarify expectations for the staff and each other. They receive substantial training and support together focused on improving instruction. <input type="checkbox"/> The principal(s), TLs, and leadership team develop agendas for professional learning using data. These agendas address the learning needs of the staff and are followed virtually all of the time. Principal(s), TLs and whole leadership teams debrief when staff meetings are over to determine what worked and what didn't. Commitment to ongoing improvement paramount. <input type="checkbox"/> Principals and TLs are in classrooms observing and looking for the instructional expectations that have been established with the leadership team and staff and shared with everyone. |

In this new system, teacher leaders are asked to move their colleagues, classroom teachers, to full and willing participation in improving instruction, to overcome what some may view as an interruption in their teaching autonomy. There is amazing potential in the work ahead of us, and it will require constant learning and reflection on the part of teacher leaders, principals, central office staff, and classroom teachers. In future publications, we're going to feature schools that are working hard to implement the Teacher Leadership Program and share with you what they're doing. In the meantime we congratulate all of you on your efforts, whether you're in the implementation phase or just finishing up your plan. We look forward to the good work ahead and all the stories there will be to tell.

And just for a little inspiration related to coaching, here's an [example from Maurice Cheeks of the NBA](#).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Knight, Jim. *High Impact Instruction*. 2013. Corwin Press. Pp. 8-12.

Joyce, Bruce and Showers, Beverly. *Student Achievement Through Staff Development*. Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development; 3 edition (January 1, 2002).

Schmoker, Mike. "It's Time to Restructure Teacher Professional Development." Ed Week. October 20, 2015. <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/10/21/its-time-to-restructure-teacher-professional-development.html>

Showers, Beverly and Joyce, Bruce. "The Evolution of Peer Coaching." *Educational Leadership*. March 1996, Volume 53. Number 6. <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar96/vol53/num06/The-Evolution-of-Peer-Coaching.aspx>

Showers, Beverly and Joyce, Bruce. "Student Achievement through Staff Development." 2002, *Designing Training and Peer Coaching: Our needs for learning*, VA, USA, ASCD. <http://literacy.kent.edu/coaching/information/Research/randd-engaged-joyce.pdf>

APP RECOMMENDATIONS

iCivics

iCivics, founded and led by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, provides students with the tools they need for active participation and democratic action, and teachers with the materials and support to achieve this. The free resources include print-and-go lesson plans, award-winning games, and digital interactives.

<http://www.icivics.org>

LEARNING TOOLS UPDATE

We currently support two web-based technology learning tools.

edifyAssess™

This tool for students in grades 3-12 can support not only your second assessment responsibilities in math, science and reading but also has a myriad of other functions that can be used throughout the school year. The content in reading and math is aligned to the Core and in science is aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards. We offer benchmarks in reading and math and assist you in writing your own science benchmarks that align with your scope and sequence. edifyAssess can be used all year long for teachers, schools and districts to write their own assessments – benchmarks aligned to local pacing, end of unit or common formative assessments, quick checks on how students are progressing in the middle of the unit, standards-based grading, algebra qualification, and any other function deemed appropriate by local users. We have several new additions to edifyAssess:

- A new item bank from ReadBank is available for purchase. This bank, written specifically for the Core and Next Gen Science, includes technology enhanced items in science, literacy and math as found in the Smarter Balanced Assessments.
- edifyAssess now has the functionality for teachers and administrators to write their own items.
- The Iowa Social Studies Standards were entered this year. While we don't have social studies questions, social studies teachers (and others) can use the system to author questions and create social studies assessments.

WritetoLearn™

This 4th grade through 12th tool electronically scores student writing, thus allowing the teacher to assign more writing as demanded by the Core in not only ELA, but also in the content areas, without being overwhelmed by the responsibility of responding to and scoring all of the student writing. Two forms of writing are offered, summary and essay. Summary writing supports improved reading comprehension and the scoring is aligned to the accuracy of the student summaries. Essay writing scoring is aligned to the 6 Traits of Writing and/or the Common Core. Writing, as with golf and the piano, requires practice and this tool makes that possible.

If you are interested in learning more about either of these tools, contact Susie (susie@iowaschoolfinance.com or 641-745-5284) or Josie (josie@iowaschoolfinance.com or 515-229-9808).

OTHER NEWS

Iowa Council on Educator Development

The Iowa Council on Educator Development has spent the past two years studying teacher and administrator evaluation practices and professional development. [This document represents their preliminary recommendations](#). The council now needs feedback on these recommendations from Iowa's education community before December 18, including superintendents, principals, teachers and school board members. Provide feedback [here](#).

QUOTES

“Good leaders make people feel that they’re at the very heart of things, not at the periphery.” – Warren Bennis

“Talent wins games but teamwork and intelligence win championships.” – Michael Jordan

“When teachers stop learning, so do students.” – Jim Knight

*If you have any questions about the School Improvement Booster or suggested future topics,
please contact Susie Olesen at susie@iowaschoolfinance.com*

Iowa School Finance Information Services | 1201 63rd Street | Des Moines, IA 50311 | www.isfis.net