Growing Teacher Leadership

Teacher Leadership Academy
Teaching and Learning
Denver Public Schools

TLA Vision
The TLA will build a strong network of teacher leaders who will collaborate with colleagues, Principals, and Assistant Principals in cultivating and empowering highly effective school-based teams, and promote a culture of equity, learning, and accountability for improved student success and academic achievement.

Theory of Action
If DPS builds the capacity of our most effective teachers to lead their colleagues in implementing school-specific improvement strategies (aligned to their UIP), then schools across the district will achieve increased student academic success.

Why Teacher Leaders Now?
- Teachers are an essential part of the school improvement solution. Teachers do not need to leave the classrooms to advance school improvement.
- Teacher leaders will take us from classrooms of excellence to a system of excellence.
- Teacher Leaders provide opportunities for our effective teachers to expand their impact outside of their classrooms.
- Teachers are uniquely poised to support, guide, challenge, and lead their peers in support of increasing effective practices.
- Our district challenges are significant and we need everyone to be leaders in support of improved outcomes for students.
- The new standards require a shift not only in what we teach and how we teach, but the way schools work together to meet their students’ needs against the rigor of the new standards.
TLA Expectations

- Schools identify specific roles/responsibilities for teacher leaders and the system targets teacher leadership for key system priorities.
- Principals nominate teacher leaders by completing an application.
- Teacher leaders and principals map out their work for the year.
- Teacher leaders attend monthly after-school sessions in differentiated streams of study. Teachers participate in same stream of study for the entire year.
- Teacher leaders complete their own leadership project that demonstrates their impact at their schools.

What do teacher leaders do currently?

- Teach in their own classrooms in the majority of cases
- Engage in deep-dive study of content of new Standards
- Plan and facilitate site-based professional learning in support of the new Standards and the Framework for Effective Teaching
- Mentor and coach teachers to improve practice using the Framework for Effective Teaching
- Lead data team discussions
- Host hard conversations about data, student performance and expectations
- Participate on the School Leadership Team

Model what is best about the teaching profession!

Teacher Leadership Academy

2010 –2011
- 275 Teacher Leaders
- 110 Schools
- 5 differentiated streams of study
- Teacher leaders developed an action plan aligned to their school’s Unified Improvement Plan

2011 –2012
- 325 Teacher Leaders
- 117 Schools
- 6 differentiated streams of study
- Leadership role in school site rollout of LEAP
- Year-long leadership project capturing teacher leader work and alignment to UIP
- Online professional learning network connecting 300+ teacher leaders districtwide

2012 –2013
- 600 Teacher Leaders
- 140 Schools
- 5 differentiated streams of study (Literacy Standards Lead, Mathematics Standards Lead,Leading Teams, Coaching and Mentoring, Student Engagement/Voice)
- Leadership role in school site rollout of LEAP
- Implementation strategy for the new Standards
- Year-long leadership project capturing teacher leader work and alignment to UIP
- Online professional learning network connecting teacher leaders districtwide
- DPS Aspire: values-based leadership development program
DPS Aspire

- DPS Aspire is one part of a suite of values-based, culture-building leadership development programs (DPS Together: Aug 2nd, Creating Connections, DPS Aspire, DPS Management, DPS Leadership)
- Two-day values-based leadership program that is designed for DPS employees leading at the school, project or initiative level. This includes all 13-17ILLA Teacher Leaders, student advisors, Teacher Effectiveness Coaches, Peer Observers, central office managers and coordinators. Participation is entirely voluntary.
- DPS Aspire provides participants with skills and tools that support their personal AND professional growth.
- Program Objectives:
  - Discussing the DPS shared values
  - Reflecting on personal leadership
  - Examining Sphere of influence
  - Gaining skills in building teams
  - Leading through mission and values
  - Building relationships
  - Town hall with Superintendent

Lessons Learned

- Principals, principals, principals…
- Support school leader with learning and understanding how to build and implement systems and structures that support the work of their teacher leaders
  - Formalize role given unique context (contracting and mapping the work)
  - Consistently communicate teacher leader roles and responsibilities to staff to achieve goals
  - Schedule and prioritize meetings
  - Communicate, Communicate, Communicate