



TO: Dr. Nikolai Vitti, Superintendent
FROM: Jacksonville Public Education Fund, on behalf of Teacher Roundtable Steering Committee and Participants
DATE: April 5, 2017
RE: Results from the Teacher Leadership Teacher Roundtable Follow-Up Event

To address the growing need to retain the district's best teachers in the classroom, this year's Teacher Roundtable series has been focused on the topic of teacher leadership. During the third of four events in this series, the teachers met with you to share the results of their previous conversations, and left excited about the idea of a new role that would allow teachers to stay in the classroom while helping their fellow educators improve their practice. From this discussion, you asked the teachers to reflect on what the job description should be for a teacher leader, what their schedule should look like, how they would be selected, and how they should be compensated.

The teachers met for a follow-up session to respond to these questions on March 28, and their collective responses are included below, categorized by question.

What should be the job description of a teacher leader?

- Serves as an instructional leader.
- Spends 50% of time in a teaching role and 50% of time in his/her role as teacher leader.
- Is not an administrative or evaluative role; does not report back to the principal with specific information about a teacher they are supporting.
- Mentors and models for other teachers.
- Leads professional development and Professional Learning Communities.
- Makes regular visits to other classrooms and provides to teachers non-evaluative feedback on observed lessons.
- Has an open door policy so other teachers can come and observe his/her classroom.
- Works with other teachers who want their help.
- Demonstrates cultural competence.
- Is involved with vertical planning with other teachers in the school.
- Is not assigned to work with particular teachers through a contract.
- Builds relationships with other teachers and helps those who want to be supported.
- Uses research and is data literate.
- Has experience as a leader and demonstrates the ability to work with adults.
- Involved with the school and community (such as serving as a SAC member).
- Is school-based, but those serving in this role should have the opportunity to interact with teacher

leaders from other school through district-wide meetings and events.

- Is a brand new type of position — not the same as a coach or a MINT mentor.
- Is a strong time manager, able to plan and document their schedule, balancing their work in their own classroom teaching and the time they will be supporting other teachers during the school day.

What should the schedule look like for a teacher leader?

A teacher leader's time should be split in half — 50% teaching and 50% in the teacher leader role, and the schedule for a teacher leader looks different at the elementary and secondary level.

Secondary

The group found the secondary level schedule for a teacher leader easier to plan given the A/B day structure of the schedule. Teachers could split their teaching and leading responsibilities across days (teach on "A" days, lead on "B" days) or within days (teach for half of every day, lead for half of every day). Secondary teacher leaders in subjects, like some electives, with few teachers, could lead teachers across multiple schools, as necessary.

- A day should consist of teaching three classes and one prep period.
- B day should consist of Teacher Leader work across the four periods.
- This schedule could be switched for some teachers so A day would be the time for Teacher Leader work. This would ensure there would always be a Teacher Leader available for other teachers to observe regardless of whether it was an A or B day.
- If necessary, teacher leaders can determine a one day equivalent to perform his/her teacher leader role (i.e. A day - Teach 2 class, Teacher Leader role for 2 periods, B day - Teach 1 class, Prep Period, and Teacher Leader role for 2 periods).
- A secondary teacher leader who is representing a subject area (elective) with limited teachers in the same school would go to other schools during their teacher leader time.

Elementary

The elementary level schedule was more complicated due to the differences in K-2 and 3-5, when departmentalization typically begins. For the elementary schedule to be successful teachers suggested:

- 50% of the teacher leader's time should be spent teaching, while the other 50% should be spent in his/her teacher leader role.
- Teacher leaders at the elementary level should be placed in a classroom with another teacher-leader and work with their principal in making a purposeful pairing, such as pairing one teacher-leader in reading/ELA and one in math/science together.
- The classroom — which would be approached like a job-share rather than a co-teach classroom — would allow for an ideal schedule and a model classroom for other teachers to observe.
- Should teacher leaders not be able to be paired together, partner teachers for a job-sharing arrangement should be teachers with demonstrated instructional success.
- The elementary group emphasized class size for the teacher leader's classroom should be between 18-24 students, and if possible, a paraprofessional.
- The teacher leader's schedule would need to be flexible at the elementary level and would vary by day given there is significant variability in when elementary teachers are not with students, unlike the regular planning period at the secondary level. A flexible schedule is needed to account for resource schedules, different lunch times across teachers, etc.

- Ideally, there would be at least one teacher leader for K-2nd grade and another for 3rd-5th grade. Regardless of school size, teachers believe there would need to be at least two teacher leaders per school.

What should the selection process look like for a teacher leader?

Both secondary and elementary level teachers agree that the selection process should involve phases:

- The first phase would be an application process that would include:
 - A current resume indicating at least five years of teaching experience and effective or highly effective teaching
 - Letters of recommendation
 - Responses to written scenario-based open-ended questions (i.e. use of data, cultural competence, adult learning, etc.)
- The next phase would involve an interview, potentially with the use of a panel.
- The application process should happen before the end of the school year to allow time for selection, scheduling, and summer professional development.

There was consensus that ideally teachers should be selected as teacher leaders at their current school, given their understanding of the school climate and culture and the respect they would have already established with colleagues. The group had different perspectives as to who should be involved with the selection process — whether it should be internally reviewed at each school or at the district level.

Finally, there was consensus that the role of a teacher leader should last at least two years, giving the teacher leader time to learn and be successful in the role.

How would teacher leaders need to be compensated to motivate them to take on the position?

Although teacher leaders may be intrinsically motivated to take on the role of teacher leader, significant financial compensation must be provided. If this teacher leader position is indeed going to be a new and powerful role for teachers to occupy, then the compensation must match the responsibility. In addition to a stipend, other incentives could include as a financial grant for their classrooms and/or funding to attend a professional conference each semester.

Participating teachers responded to a questionnaire asking how much would be needed in a stipend and through other forms of compensation. Nearly all proposed amounts were near or exactly \$10,000 from the teachers as the minimum stipend that they would need to consider pursuing such a position.

Additional Reflections and Questions

In addition to responding to the questions you asked, they were eager to share thoughts on a number of facets of this emerging concept of teacher leadership.

The teachers recognized even across four sessions they were not able to address every detail necessary to flesh out the selection process for example, but would be willing and interested in reviewing any proposals made by the district and providing feedback and insight to how that would work in their particular school settings. Some additional questions and comments include:

- The teachers involved in the conversations do not feel teacher leaders should be limited to core subjects (math, language arts, and science). However if this does occur, members of the group proposed that if teacher leaders are not selected from elective areas, the district explore other ways for these subject area teachers to help each other improve their practice.
- The current approach of using early release days for professional development is not working. The structure for school-wide professional development should be reimagined as dedicated days for professional development each month and many of those should be led by teacher leaders.
- The group also recommended that this teacher leadership model be piloted at a small group of schools prior to launching district-wide to identify the differences between schools, especially as it pertains to school size.

While the teachers feel strongly that the teacher leader role should not be evaluative, they left the conversation wondering the following:

- What is the protocol if a principal expects the teacher leader to report on teachers they are supporting?
- What is the protocol for teachers who need to be supported but are not responsive to the teacher leader's offer to help?

Next Steps

With a better understanding of priorities public school teachers share, it is our hope that local leaders will see these ideas and the Teacher Roundtable as a resource as they work together to bring about improvements to our public schools with a goal of ensuring that all students and teachers meet their full potential. The Teacher Roundtable Steering Committee and Jacksonville Public Education Fund staff would welcome any opportunity to meet to share more findings or discuss opportunities for next steps.

Our hope is that this is the beginning of a broader conversation about how to make teacher leadership as effective as possible while also seeing it as an opportunity to contribute to the district's broad priority of recruiting, retaining and developing the best teachers and leaders. As our nation and district are facing a growing teacher shortage and at a time when many teachers already in the classroom are feeling the strain of change and lack of support this is an opportune time to consider the opinions of highly engaged teachers who are ideal candidates for the teacher leader role in the district.

For more information about the Teacher Roundtable, including past memos, visit jaxpef.org/TeacherRoundtable.

The Teacher Roundtable Participants and Steering Committee, along with the staff and board of Jacksonville Public Education Fund, would like to commend you for your efforts to engage public school teachers around this important work. We offer our support in any way possible to continue building on this positive relationship between the school district and its outstanding teachers.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts on this report.