Unite, Inspire, Lead
Our Students, Our Union, Our Future

Empowering Teachers
To Become Leaders

Melissa Collins, Ph.D., NBCT
William O’Donnell, M.A.T., J.D.
NEA Goal: Strong Affiliates for Educator Voice and Empowerment

NEA Organizational Priorities
  – Early Career Educators
  – Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Additional Session Focus:
  • Explore different pathways for teacher leadership based on the experience of teacher leaders.
  • Reflect on our own teacher leadership paths.
  • Learn about and consider concrete strategies and supports to further teacher leadership in education policy.
ADVOCACY, COMMUNICATION, AND ORGANIZING

• **Advocacy:** Leads public education policy advocacy reforms
  - Level 1 *Foundational:* Understands and reports on national, state, and local public education policy and reforms

• **Communication:** Uses current media, technology, and social networks to communicate
  - Level 1 *Foundational:* Understands the communication value of current media, technology, and social networks

• **Organizing:** Engages in collective action to identify and address pivotal issues
  - Level 1 *Foundational:* Identifies and engages in high impact and actionable organizing opportunities
• Teacher voice is crucial in education policy decisions.

• From your perspective, what activities best describe teachers having their voices heard in education policy?
Melissa’s Story

• Peer Teacher mentor
• Awards for Teaching
• Local Leadership—MSCEA
• National Policy Fellowships
  – Teach Plus
  – America Achieves
• NEA Foundation Senior Advisory Board
  – Global Fellowship
Bill’s Story

• Taught at elementary, middle, and high school level in Massachusetts and North Carolina
• English, Language Arts, Social Studies, and English as a Second Language
• Government Relations Specialist (NCBSA)
• Grassroots Political Activist (NCAE)
• Coordinator of Instructional Advocacy (TEA)
  - Professional Development Cadre
  - Teacher Leader Organizers (TLOs)
  - Every Student Succeeds Act Cadre
What is Teacher Leader?

“Teacher leadership is the process by which teachers, individually or collectively; influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of the school community to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement.”

York-Barr & Duke
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York-Barr & Duke
Teacher Leadership

• Three High-Leverage Strategies
  – The Opportunities: Inside/Outside School, Informal and Formal roles
  – The Foundation: Fantastic Classroom
  – The Support: Mentor
Teacher Leadership Opportunities

- Formal Roles in School
- Formal Roles beyond School
- Informal Roles in School
- Informal Roles beyond School
Outside of School

INFORMAL LEADER

These leaders do not have formal titles but work to advance instruction or the profession in meaningful ways outside of school.

✓ Blogging, social media
✓ Participation in school board meetings
✓ Inviting policymakers into your classroom
✓ Organizing school support with community organizations

FORMAL LEADER

These leaders participate in formally organized or established activities, usually with the help of outside organizations.

✓ Task forces with the Department or school district
✓ Curriculum or assessment development activities
✓ Fellowships
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In School

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These leaders do not have formal titles but educators recognize the leaders’ work.

✓ Trip organizers
✓ Curriculum sharers
✓ Informal mentoring/coach
✓ “Problem” solvers
✓ Questioner, with solutions

FORMAL LEADER

These leaders have formal appointments or titles, usually selected by other leaders within the school or through volunteering.

✓ Head coaches
✓ Team leaders
✓ School representatives
✓ Department chairs
✓ Committee members
In School

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### What do you do now?

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Innovation in the Classroom

• Be a risk taker
• Flip Classroom Model
• Project-Based Learning
• Try Something New
• Listen to your students
• Think outside the box
• Think about what is missing from your classroom
• Be unique and creative

Do Not Be Afraid of Being Different from other Teachers
Classrooms and Policy

• Education policy isn’t just made in legislatures or at the Tennessee Department of Education.

• It’s also made as teachers influence decision makers through sharing what they are doing in their classrooms.
Teacher Leaders Need

• Supporters

• Critical Friends

• Professional Development

• Success stories in and outside the classroom
Teacher Leaders Need Teacher Leader Self-Assessment, from Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession

WORKING WITH ADULT LEARNERS

Teacher leaders who successfully work with adult learners build trusting relationships and facilitate professional learning environments in order to empower their colleagues. They understand the development and inter-relationship of teacher knowledge and practice and believe that teacher learning is grounded in student learning.

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<tr>
<th>Knowledge and Skills: Building Trusting Relationships</th>
<th>Consistently</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Evidence/experience used to determine ratings.</th>
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<td>I foster group membership for all participants so that all perspectives are valued.</td>
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<td>I listen intentionally to all participants to fully understand what is communicated.</td>
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<td>I take an ethical stance and support others in operating from an ethical perspective.</td>
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<td>I take a caring stance to ensure that all participants feel valued.</td>
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<td>I create a safe environment so that each participant feels safe to risk, learn and share.</td>
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<td>I am aware of and set on the cultural needs and interests of my participants.</td>
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What does this tell me about my strengths when working with adult learners? What knowledge and skills do I need to develop to be more effective when working with adult learners?
Mentors

• **Three Types of Mentors**
  
  – **Peer**: Who is giving me encouragement and feedback to sustain my work?
  
  – **Career/Leader**: Who is the leader who has the perspective to help me see what I might not see?
  
  – **Life**: Who is helping me think about the longer term, about the whole picture of what I want to be as a teacher leader?

Adapted from source:
Teacher Leaders Need

• Mentoring Dos and Don’ts
  – Do:
    • Build a cadre of people you can turn to for advice when you need it
    • Nurture relationships with people whose perspectives you respect
    • Think of mentoring as both a long-term and short-term arrangement
  – Don’t:
    • Assume that because you are successful or experienced in your field that you don’t need a mentor
    • Rely on one person to help guide you in your career
    • Expect to receive mentoring without providing anything in return

Adapted from source:
Mentors: Activity

• Inventory your professional network
  – List your professional network—people whom you work with, seek advice from, or can be otherwise helpful to your work as an educator.
  – Ranges:
    • 1-5 years of experience = ~15-25 names
    • 5+ years of experience = ~30-50 names

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<th>Daily/Sometimes/Rare</th>
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Mentor: Activity

• Evaluate your professional network
  – What types of people are in your network?
    • Senior
    • Peer
    • Junior

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Mentor: Activity

• Evaluate your professional network
  – How often are you engaging with each?
    • Daily
    • Sometimes
    • Rare

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Mentor: Activity

• Discuss:
  – What trends do you notice in the types of people in your network?
  – What surprised you? What was obvious?
  – Who are the “peer” mentors?
  – Who are the “career/leader” mentors?
  – Who are the “life” mentors?
Mentor: Activity

– Think about the **diversity** of your network:
  • Experiences and backgrounds
  • Different professions
  • Age ranges

– Think about the **overlap** and **density** of your network:
  • Does everyone know everyone?
  • What types of people are missing?
Teacher Leaders Need to be:

- Accessible and approachable
- Initiators
- Risk Takers
- Informed
- Connectors
- Coaches
- Mentors
Teacher Leader Standards

• Foster a Collaborative School Culture
• Effectively Integrate Current Educational Research
• Continually Pursue Professional Development
• Constantly Improve Classroom Instruction
• Productively Utilize Assessments and Data
• Partner With Families and Communities
• Advocate Publicly for Education and the Teaching Profession

**Read these standards in full at [http://www.teacherleaderstandards.org/](http://www.teacherleaderstandards.org/)**
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Create a Teacher Leadership Pathway

• Students First (Always the FOCUS)
• Knowledge of content
  – Familiarize yourself with the standards
  – Stay current with best practices
    • Classroom visits
    • Research
• Find your match
  – Mentor
• Join Advocacy Groups
• Build relationships with all stakeholders
• Find your niche
Creating a Path to Teacher Leadership

• Relationship Building

• Professional Development Opportunities

• Innovative Classroom

• Fellowships

• NBCT
Professional Development

• Advanced Degrees
• National Board
• Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching
• Reading Research
• District and State Training
Why Policy Fellowships

• Advocate for Students and Your Profession

• Learn how to converse with policy makers

• Develop leadership skills

• Teacher leadership opportunities at the district, state, and national level
Who is a Local Association Teacher Leader Organizer (TLO)?

AN INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER WHO IS.....

✓ Recognized for instructional expertise by colleagues, parents, and community.

✓ Willing to speak to various stakeholder groups on instructional practices.

✓ Connected to instructional leaders within the school district and possibly the state.
62 Teacher Leader Organizers were trained in the following areas:

- Organizing techniques
- Presentation skills
- Presentation practice and feedback
- Community Building
- Content-specific professional development
- Test Security
- Hot Education Topics
Participants were asked to:

✓ Deliver a presentation on Test Security in local association and a presentation of their choosing by the end of the school year

✓ Identify two instructional leaders to share in their Teacher Leader Organizer duties

✓ Share resources received through weekly e-mail communication from the TEA Teacher Leader Network

✓ Mentor or assist teachers with instructional needs

✓ Provide feedback on statewide public policy issues through surveys, webinars, and online platforms.
Key Issues

✓ Testing Transparency
✓ National Board Professional Development Support
✓ Licensure
✓ Standards and Assessments
✓ Professional Development Funding and Quality
✓ Evaluation
✓ School Improvement
✓ Every Student Succeeds Act
TLO Tactic: Develop a Plan for Local Impact

What instructional issues are most pressing?

What are some possible solutions?

Should you survey local members?

How will TLOs and local leaders work together for change?

Should you establish a local IPD Commission?
TLO Tactic: Work Collaboratively with Local Leadership

✓ Collaborate with current TLOs

✓ Identify a TLO for at least 50% of the schools in your local

✓ Determine your role to support TLOs
TLO Tactic: Compile and Share Instructional Resources

What resources will you share?

What platform will you use?

How frequently will you share?

Will you lead groups on edCommunities?
TEA Professional Development Cadre Training (2015 and 2016)

Participants were trained in the following areas:

✓ Classroom Management (I Can Do It)
✓ Professionalism
✓ Cyber Safety
✓ Collaborating with Families
✓ PRAXIS
TEA Every Student Succeeds Act Training (2016)

Participants were trained in the following areas:

✓ Key policy changes and opportunities under ESSA in comparison to current Tennessee law
✓ Priorities established by TEA’s ESSA Implementation Team
✓ ESSA success stories from local associations in Tennessee
✓ Organizing tactics for local implementation
✓ An ESSA Advocacy Toolkit
After the completion of the training, participants:

- Delivered ESSA awareness sessions
- Involved local stakeholders in district ESSA implementation
- Provided feedback on the new accountability plan
- Conducted one-on-one conversations with members about key ESSA priorities
ESSA Cadre Training
In September, The Montgomery Institute in Maryland hosted 15 teams (3 state teams and 12 locals teams) from 10 different state affiliates. TEA assembled a team from Washington and Greene Counties.
Tennessee Teacher Leadership Collaborative

• **Current State:**
  - A lot of teacher leadership opportunities throughout the state, but no coherent vision
  - Many teachers aren’t aware of existing opportunities or support structures
  - Potential for duplicating efforts across networks

• **Goal State:**
  - Collectively build an overarching network structure for teacher leadership and collaboration
Vision Statement:
Every Tennessee teacher has knowledge of and access to multiple, sustainable teacher leadership pathways that lead to improved teaching and learning.

Mission Statement:
The TTLC will support the development and/or sustainability of exemplary and innovative teacher leader networks through curation and dissemination of key information, sharing of impactful practices, and purposeful collaboration.
TTLC Goals and Outcomes

1. Ensure teacher leadership efforts are coordinated, working toward a common vision, and have impact.

1. Expand the role of teacher leadership in attracting, retaining, and supporting highly effective educators.

1. Amplify educator voice and support empowered educators.

1. Identify and expand access to teacher leadership opportunities in Tennessee.

1. Prioritize teacher leadership as a long-term strategy statewide that is supported by a network of partners.
Teacher Leaders

“BE the Change
You wish to see in the world”

- Mahatma Gandhi
Stay In touch

• Questions
  – melissascollinsnbct@gmail.com
  – bodonnell@tnea.org
Session Outcomes

• The content from this session can be used in the following ways in your current position/role:
  – Develop teacher leadership programs within your local association
  – Explore teacher leadership pathways in your state
  – Engage key teacher leadership stakeholders
Empowering Teachers to Be Leaders

• Please complete the evaluation for this breakout session!
• Please visit the Leadership Development Resources website at www.nea.org/leadershipdevelopment