



UNLEASHING TEACHER LEADERSHIP

A **Toolkit** for Ensuring Effective
Instruction in Every Classroom

JOSHUA H. BARNETT



2800 Shirlington Road, Suite 1001 • Arlington, VA 22206 USA
Phone: 800-933-2723 or 703-578-9600 • Fax: 703-575-5400
Website: www.ascd.org • Email: member@ascd.org
Author guidelines: www.ascd.org/write

Richard Culatta, *Chief Executive Officer*; Anthony Rebor, *Chief Content Officer*; Genny Ostertag, *Managing Director, Book Acquisitions & Editing*; Susan Hills, *Senior Acquisitions Editor*; Mary Beth Nielsen, *Director, Book Editing*; Liz Wegner, *Editor*; Thomas Lytle, *Creative Director*; Donald Ely, *Art Director*; Katelynne Vizcayno/The Hatcher Group, *Graphic Designer*; Circle Graphics, *Typesetter*; Kelly Marshall, *Production Manager*; Shajuan Martin, *E-Publishing Specialist*; Christopher Logan, *Senior Production Specialist*; Kathryn Oliver, *Creative Project Manager*



7333 E. Doubletree Ranch Road, Suite 250 • Scottsdale, AZ 85258
Phone: 800-575-NIET
Website: www.niet.org • Email: info@niet.org

Copyright © 2024 National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET). All rights reserved. It is illegal to reproduce copies of this work in print or electronic format (including reproductions displayed on a secure intranet or stored in a retrieval system or other electronic storage device from which copies can be made or displayed) without the prior written permission of the publisher. By purchasing only authorized electronic or print editions and not participating in or encouraging piracy of copyrighted materials, you support the rights of authors and publishers. Readers who wish to reproduce or republish excerpts of this work in print or electronic format may do so for a small fee by contacting the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC), 222 Rosewood Dr., Danvers, MA 01923, USA (phone: 978-750-8400; fax: 978-646-8600; web: www.copyright.com). To inquire about site licensing options or any other reuse, contact ASCD Permissions at www.ascd.org/permissions or permissions@ascd.org. For a list of vendors authorized to license ASCD ebooks to institutions, see www.ascd.org/epubs. Send translation inquiries to translations@ascd.org.

ASCD® is a registered trademark of Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All other trademarks contained in this book are the property of, and reserved by, their respective owners, and are used for editorial and informational purposes only. No such use should be construed to imply sponsorship or endorsement of the book by the respective owners.

Gallup®, CliftonStrengths® and the CliftonStrengths 34 Themes of Talent are trademarks of Gallup, Inc. All rights reserved. The non-Gallup® information you are receiving has not been approved and is not sanctioned or endorsed by Gallup® in any way. Opinions, views and interpretations of CliftonStrengths® are solely the beliefs of Joshua H. Barnett, the author of this publication.

All web links in this book are correct as of the publication date below but may have become inactive or otherwise modified since that time. If you notice a deactivated or changed link, please email books@ascd.org with the words “Link Update” in the subject line. In your message, please specify the web link, the book title, and the page number on which the link appears.

PAPERBACK ISBN: 978-1-4166-3276-4 ASCD product #123031 n2/24
PDF EBOOK ISBN: 978-1-4166-3277-1; see Books in Print for other formats.
Quantity discounts are available: email programteam@ascd.org or call 800-933-2723, ext. 5773, or 703-575-5773. For desk copies, go to www.ascd.org/deskcopy.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
[to be inserted]

UNLEASHING TEACHER LEADERSHIP

A Toolkit for Ensuring Effective
Instruction in Every Classroom

Preface _____ ix

Acknowledgments _____ xi

Introduction _____ 1

1. Examining Teacher Leadership in Your Context _____ 5

2. Understanding Your Approach to Leadership _____ 19

3. Developing Expertise in Evidence-Based Instructional Practice _____ 26

4. Supporting the Implementation of High-Quality Curriculum _____ 52

5. Building an Effective Classroom Learning Environment _____ 64

6. Using Data to Support Student Learning _____ 81

7. Coaching for Impact _____ 95

8. Leading Effective Collaboration _____ 111

9. Using Your Voice _____ 141

Conclusion _____ 149

References _____ 151

Index _____ 154

About the Author _____ 155

Preface

In 1999, the work of the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) began. My goals at the outset were to identify teacher effectiveness as the key to effective comprehensive school reform and to put in place on the ground a system to achieve meaningful and sustained improvements in teacher practices and student learning. That year I introduced a bold new initiative called the Teacher Advancement Program (now TAP: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement). TAP was based on years of substantial research showing that the most important school-related factor affecting student achievement is the quality of the educator in the classroom. From that starting point, we developed a comprehensive system to address aspects of traditional schools that limited the opportunity for teachers to grow in their profession, be supported with relevant and daily feedback and professional development, be compensated competitively for their roles and responsibilities, and be evaluated in a fair and comprehensive manner. Hundreds of educators stepped out of their comfort zones to become leaders in this school improvement endeavor. And once the journey took hold, we began to see statistically significant growth in teacher practices and student achievement.

A key component to our success has been the focus on teacher leadership. Teacher leaders are too often an untapped resource for improving our nation's schools, yet we have seen again and again that the establishment of formal teacher leader roles elevates the profession and attracts effective educators to our schools. It is time for the importance of teacher leadership to be recognized and used by a wider audience, and for schools and districts

to know that with strategic effort, teacher leaders will have a sustainable and substantially positive impact on educator quality and student outcomes.

Our work has developed more than 35,000 teacher leaders (and growing), who are using proven strategies and structures to improve learning and instruction for all teachers in their schools, leading to student achievement gains. We have seen in our work throughout the country that the most successful learning gains are evident in states, districts, and schools that invest in teacher leaders. A specific focus on creating formal leadership roles with clear responsibility, accountability, and authority drives improvement in teaching and learning and helps to address challenges faced by schools to maximize student learning.

Throughout this book, we share the strategies and systems that have been implemented successfully in partner schools to establish formal teacher leader roles that expand instructional leadership; provide consistent, frequent, and relevant feedback opportunities for teachers; improve the relevance and effectiveness of professional learning; and support a growing number of effective teachers. As teacher effectiveness improves, so does student learning. Indeed, great teacher leaders are about more than what they impart. They represent the fact that there can be great teachers. Legions of them. But this will happen only if we enlist the teacher leaders we *do* have to develop the teacher leaders we *can* have.

—Lowell Milken, Founder,
National Institute for Excellence in Teaching

Acknowledgments

At NIET, we could not do our work without the tens of thousands of outstanding educators leading instruction in classrooms throughout our nation. In addition, we appreciate the leaders in our partner districts and schools who elevate the role of teacher leaders. Their experiences, feedback, and outcomes inform our work on a daily basis and served as a foundation for tools and strategies we share in this book.

The guidance provided throughout the book relies on the contributions of numerous NIET team members who have worked to develop the knowledge, strategies, tools, and resources to support teacher leadership over the past two decades. Although every single team member and partner have helped add to our body of knowledge, I greatly appreciate the significant contribution of several key team members who provided extensive leadership and support in the creation of this book, including Nicole Bolen, Vicky Condalary, Lindsey Parker, Ann Shaw, and Kristan Van Hook. Finally, thank you to Tamara Schiff and Amy Wooten, who guided the development of the book from beginning to end.

Introduction

For more than two decades, the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) has partnered with thousands of teachers through TAP: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement—as well as hundreds of schools, districts, and states—implementing improvement initiatives to support and develop effective teacher leaders. Based on these experiences and outcomes, we have identified specific teacher leader practices that result in the effective scaling of high-quality instructional work in schools. Our experiences are supported by an extensive body of research that has examined the significant value of teacher leadership and the qualities that effective teacher leaders have or need. This book, *Unleashing Teacher Leadership: A Toolkit for Ensuring Effective Instruction in Every Classroom*, allows us to share these practices and the practical ways to use them to unlock the power of teacher leadership in your school and district.

This book is also grounded in the understanding that teacher quality is the most important within-school factor in determining student achievement. For this reason, the most critical work schools can do to support equitable outcomes for students is to make certain that every student is taught by an effective teacher. Teacher leaders provide the strongest engine for accelerating teacher effectiveness in a school setting.

As teachers grow their knowledge, skills, and practices in how to teach, students also grow. Simply put, the best path toward equity in student outcomes is effective teaching—and we need to pursue this aim at a far greater rate than we have to date. This means that teachers must develop their

abilities to provide effective instruction and develop environments that engage all learners. Teachers must also broaden their abilities to implement high-quality curriculum with fidelity and use student data to reflect on their own practice and adjust instruction. And finally, it means that teachers must be provided ongoing feedback, coaching, and professional learning embedded in their daily and weekly practices to maximize their growth in order to serve all students. We have seen the results of these practices across the nation and know that the impact of teacher leadership can be achieved in all schools.

Teacher learning supported and facilitated by expert teacher leaders creates scale and buy-in that is far greater than any other professional learning model. Unlike traditional professional development, teacher leadership uses capacity that exists within schools and districts to support sustained and ongoing growth and development of teachers that is tightly aligned with student needs and school and district goals. Teacher leaders offer support from within the school system and engage teachers in authentic learning and reflection; therefore, teachers they work with appreciate the knowledge and value of localized teacher leadership. In well-designed implementations, teachers seek out and welcome support from teacher leaders rather than be anxious or reluctant to engage in feedback cycles.

Further, teacher leadership provides attractive career opportunities for effective teachers who might otherwise leave the classroom. Having defined teacher leadership roles not only results in the retention of expert teachers who become teacher leaders themselves, but also increases the retention of teachers and school leaders who feel supported. Most important, more students benefit from having access to effective teaching and learning.

Why This Book?

The challenge of scaling teacher effectiveness is not due to a lack of knowledge about what works to improve instruction. It is a challenge of a lack of capacity to get the job done. Schools need more energy to fuel instructional leadership, and teacher leaders are the most obvious energy source. When viewed through this lens, it is clear that teacher leaders are the most efficient and effective resource for improving and continuously upgrading the quality and consistency of instruction in our schools. More than that, teacher leaders can be a super-fuel offering many overlapping benefits at once. They can meet the increasing demand for hybrid leadership roles in schools, expand instructional and distributed leadership in schools, coach other teachers and provide more frequent and actionable feedback, improve the relevance

and impact of professional learning, and increase teacher retention. All of these factors culminate with the acceleration of student learning.

This toolkit provides a unique opportunity for school leaders and teacher leaders to develop, hone, and support their skills. If you are a prospective or current teacher leader or someone who supports teacher leaders, this book is for you. Regardless of the formality of the role of teacher leaders in your school or district, *Unleashing Teacher Leadership* provides the guidance you need to build your leadership skills, supported by proven strategies, structures, and tools that have helped teacher leaders across the country improve instruction in their schools, leading to improved student outcomes. Throughout this book, we detail the practices that teacher leaders should engage in on a daily basis and emphasize how teacher leaders are developed, supported, and sustained. This is not easy work—it's more complicated than simply providing teachers with new titles and a far too often modest stipend—but it's work that is worth the investment given the payoff of improved student learning.

As you continue serving as a teacher leader, enter into a teacher leadership role, or advocate for creating these roles into your school, district, or state, the tools provided in this book will help you. Within each chapter, you will find examples, user-friendly tools, and an explanation of why elements of teacher leadership are vital and how best to incorporate them into your classroom and school. Our hope is to inspire existing teacher leaders and develop the next generation of teacher leaders to advance educator effectiveness and improve outcomes for all students.

References

- Biancarosa, G., Bryk, A.S., & Dexter, E.R. (2010). Assessing the value-added effects of Literacy Collaborative professional development on student learning. *The Elementary School Journal*, 111(1), 7–34.
- Chetty, R., Friedman, J. N., & Rockoff, J. E. (2014). Measuring the impacts of teachers II: Teacher value-added and student outcomes in adulthood. *American Economic Review*, 104(9), 2633–2679.
- Crowe, R., & Kennedy, J. (2018). *Developing student ownership: Supporting students to own their learning through the use of strategic learning practices*. Learning Sciences International.
- Danielson, C. (2013). *The framework for teaching: Evaluation instrument*. Danielson Group.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development*. Learning Policy Institute.
- Desimone, L. M. (2009). Improving impact studies of teachers' professional development: Toward better conceptualizations and measures. *Educational Researcher*, 38(3), 181–199.
- Gallimore, R., Ermeling, B. A., Saunders, W. M., & Goldenberg, C. (2009). Moving the learning of teaching closer to practice: Teacher education implications for school-based inquiry teams. *Elementary School Journal*, 109(5), 537–553.
- Garet, M. S., Porter, A. C., Desimone, L., Birman, B. F., & Yoon, K. S. (2001). What makes professional development effective? Results from a national sample of teachers. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(4), 915–945.
- Guskey, T. R. (2000). *Evaluating professional development*. Corwin.
- Ingersoll, R. M., Dougherty, P., & Sirinides, P. (2017). *School leadership counts*. New Teacher Center and the Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania. <https://repository.upenn.edu/entities/publication/2beec6f4-7542-46ee-a6a7-ba494418fe9f>

- Lee, S. W., & Lee, E. A. (2020). Teacher qualification matters: The association between cumulative teacher qualification and students' educational attainment. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 77, 102218.
- Leutscher, T., Hudgens, T. H., & Barnett, J. H. (in press). Sustaining success: Measuring the long-term effects of a whole-school reform model on math achievement. Manuscript currently under review for journal publication.
- Leutscher, T., Logis, H. A., & Hudgens, T. (2020, April). Lasting change: How long-term implementation of an educator effectiveness system improved ELA achievement in Indiana [Roundtable presentation]. American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA.
- Logis, H. A., Hudgens, T. M., & Barnett, J. H. (2018, April). Thriving in Texas: Impact evaluation of an educator effectiveness system on student achievement [Paper presentation]. American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, New York.
- Marzano, R. J. (2017). *The Marzano teacher evaluation model*. Learning Sciences International.
- Muijs, D., & Harris, A. (2003). Teacher leadership—improvement through empowerment? An overview of the literature. *Educational Management & Administration*, 31(4), 437–448.
- National Institute for Excellence in Teaching. (2018). *Unleashing teacher leadership: How formal teacher leader roles can improve instruction*. <https://www.niet.org/assets/ResearchAndPolicyResources/464376c9ff/unleashing-teacher-leadership.pdf>
- National Institute for Excellence in Teaching. (2020). *High-quality curriculum implementation: Connecting what to teach with how to teach it*. <https://www.niet.org/assets/1da4c1fbd6/high-quality-curriculum-implementation.pdf>
- National Institute for Excellence in Teaching. (n.d.-a). *High-quality curriculum matters—especially right now*. <https://www.niet.org/assets/NIETInFocus/742752cce3/nietnow2020-results-and-evidence-high-quality-curriculum.pdf>
- National Institute for Excellence in Teaching. (n.d.-b). *2021 Learning acceleration resources: Fostering student ownership through academic feedback and motivating students*. <https://www.niet.org/assets/Resources/fostering-student-ownership-academic-feedback-motivating-students.pdf>
- Papay, J. P., & Kraft, M. A. (2016). The myth of the performance plateau. *Educational Leadership*, 73(8), 36–42. <https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/the-myth-of-the-performance-plateau>
- Rath, T., & Conchie, B. (2009). *Strengths based leadership: Great leaders, teams, and why people follow*. Gallup Press.
- Rivkin, S. G., Hanushek, E. A., & Kain, J. F. (2005). Teachers, schools, and academic achievement. *Econometrica*, 73(2), 417–458.
- Saunders, W. M., Goldenberg, C. N., & Gallimore, R. (2009). Increasing achievement by focusing grade-level teams on improving classroom learning: A prospective, quasi-experimental study of Title I schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 46(4), 1006–1033.
- Supovitz, J. A. (2018). Teacher leaders' work with peers in a quasi-formal teacher leadership model. *School Leadership & Management*, 38(1), 53–79.

- Sweeney, D. (2010). *Student-centered coaching: A guide for K-8 coaches and principals*. Corwin.
- Sweeney, D. (2013). *Student-centered coaching at the secondary level*. Corwin.
- Tate, J. S., & Dunklee, D. R. (2005). *Strategic listening for school leaders*. Corwin.
- York-Barr, A. J., & Duke, K. (2004). What do we know about teacher leadership? Findings from two decades of scholarship. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(3), 255–316.

About the Author



Joshua H. Barnett is chief executive officer of the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET), a not-for-profit organization that has trained and supported more than 30,000 teacher leaders over 20 years. He works with NIET partner districts, states, and higher education institutions to improve educator effectiveness and student learning by investing in teacher leadership as a lever for change and creating the systems and structures that enable teacher leaders to be successful. His work supports teachers to develop leadership skills, take on new leadership roles, and contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning in their school and district.

Prior to becoming CEO, Barnett served as chief operating officer and senior vice president of research and evaluation at NIET, leading the research agenda and production of evidentiary support for all initiatives and programs. He earned his doctorate in education at the University of Arkansas and served as an assistant professor of education policy at Arizona State University. His work has been published in a variety of outlets, including *Educational Leadership* and *Issues in Teacher Education*. He is the coauthor of “Learning on the Job: Teacher Evaluation Can Foster Real Growth.”

Related ASCD Resources: Teacher Leadership

At the time of publication, the following resources were available (ASCD stock numbers in parentheses).

Adventures in Teacher Leadership: Pathways, Strategies, and Inspiration for Every Teacher by Rebecca Mieliwocki and Joseph Fatheree (#118033)

The Artisan Teaching Model for Instructional Leadership: Working Together to Transform Your School by Kenneth Baum and David Krulwich (#116041)

From Underestimated to Unstoppable: 8 Archetypes for Driving Change in the Classroom and Beyond by Ashley Lamb-Sinclair (#123017)

Igniting Teacher Leadership: How do I empower my teachers to lead and learn? by William Sterrett (#SF116039)

Teach, Reflect, Learn: Building Your Capacity for Success in the Classroom by Pete Hall and Alisa Simeral (#115040)

Leading In Sync: Teacher Leaders and Principals Working Together for Student Learning by Jill Harrison Berg (#118021)

Peer Coaching to Enrich Professional Practice, School Culture, and Student Learning by Pam Robbins (#115014)

Small Shifts, Meaningful Improvement: Collective Leadership Strategies for Schools and Districts by P. Ann Byrd, Alesha Daughtrey, Jonathan Eckert, and Lori Nazareno (#123007)

Unstuck: How Curiosity, Peer Coaching, and Teaming Can Change Your School by Bryan Goodwin, Tonia Gibson, Dale Lewis, and Kris Rouleau (#118036)

For up-to-date information about ASCD resources, go to **www.ascd.org**. You can search the complete archives of *Educational Leadership* at **www.ascd.org/el**. To contact us, send an email to member@ascd.org or call 1-800-933-2723 or 703-578-9600.