

# Expanding Leadership in Education



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## Introduction

As we ponder the goals underlying effective education for K-12 students in modernity, it's clear that teachers have duties to their students that go far beyond the three R's. Teachers are working to help form the next generation of conscious citizens. That level of formation requires considerable effort by everyone involved –whether we are teachers ourselves, or those involved in education support.

Even though the main part of a teacher's job is ostensibly to craft compelling curricula and educate students with engaging lessons, there is one way above all others in which we can teach without quizzes, presentations, or activities. We are role models, and we are leaders. It is our job to support those around us, and teach those in our care to do the same.

Becoming an effective leader goes hand-in-hand with being a great teacher. However, leadership does not begin and end with the educators: Students need to be taught to be leaders, as well, and the administration must both lead and support the entire educational community with a deft hand.

What does it mean to be an effective leader? How can administration support teachers—and how can teachers support student leaders? We'll delve into these questions and more in this course. !



### **Case Study One**

In one case, a first-year teacher began her job full of enthusiasm and excitement to teach well and mold the minds of a new generation. However, from the very first day, she was beset with minor administrative problems that shouldn't have gone under her purview. Her school was well-funded, and because of this, the administration did not look too closely at what was done with individual project funds. This allowed for rampant misallocation of funds in the favor of the teachers who had been at the school longer. This young teacher frequently came into her classroom and found that she did not have the correct materials for her lessons. In some cases, even the basic furniture which her room was supposed to have was damaged or missing. She went to the administration for help and was told to rely on the other teachers for advice and assistance. Because of the lack of support and equitable oversight shown by the administration, the students in this teacher's classroom did not receive a stellar education that year. This was not because the teacher was unable to provide a top-tier education. This was because the teacher had to spend myriad hours solving problems that should not have existed in the first place. At the end of the year, the new teacher left the school, ensuring that the next young teacher to fill her shoes would undergo very similar problems.

## **Case Study Two**

In another small school district, the administrators decided to take some time before the school year to invest in support for their teaching staff. They decided to make sure that all teacher rest areas, including restrooms and break rooms, were stocked with all needed supplies. They sent maintenance teams through all classrooms to complete an inventory checklist of all materials which needed to be fixed or replaced, and they decided upon a centralized form of communication which they used to disseminate all needed information to teachers as the school year began. After the first few weeks of the academic year, the administrators noticed that teachers were coming to them less, that the teachers they surveyed for results seemed less stressed, and students and parents seemed overall more pleased with their academic experiences as well. The administrators continued their support of the teachers, adding extra support when exam season hit. At the end of the year, the administrators polled the teachers to see who would be leaving the school-based solely on their experiences during that academic year. Zero teachers opted to leave for negative reasons.

## **Takeaways from Case Studies**

In education, much care is given to the daily experience of each student in school. What is often glossed over, however, is the support and care given to the teaching staff. As the teachers represent the main factor controlling the student's academic experience, it makes sense to support the teachers in order to support the children.

However, the need for good support for teachers goes further than that. When teachers are allowed to grow and flourish, they often become experts within their niches of interest. They often seek to take on additional responsibilities or advisory roles, which helps the school system grow as a unit. They're often able to help assist their colleagues through problems, and give advice to increase the efficacy of the entire teaching staff. These types of teachers are referred to as teacher leaders, and they are necessary for any educational system which wishes to thrive, instead of merely surviving.

In this course, we'll delve into the necessary administrative support which drives teacher leadership. We'll also cover what it means to be a teacher leader, and what the benefits are for the entire community if each teacher strives towards growth and leadership.

## **Section 1: What Leadership Means in the Context of Education**

To be involved in education is to be involved in molding other people's lives for the better. This will require everyone in an academic community—from the students to the teachers, and administrators as well—to take on leadership roles. Being a

leader requires initiative and courage, but it results in strength, confidence, and enhanced responsibilities.

Before we delve into the mechanics of becoming a leader and the benefits of competent leadership, we'll first talk about the concept of leadership itself.

### ***What Is Leadership, and How Does It Relate to Education?***

Leadership is a concept which many people innately understand, but few can coherently describe. When one author interviewed 140 CEOs and asked for their definitions of leadership, the author received 140 completely different responses. What it means to be a leader differs depending upon context. For many people, it connotes acumen and drive, organizational abilities, and the ability to speak loudly. For others, it's far more important that a leader be humble, honest, and full of empathy.

When the differing responses were distilled into their most fundamental meaning, it was found that there was one common thread: In order to be a leader, most people found, a person had to display initiative, help motivate those around them, and create a positive impact on their surrounding environment.

In education, teachers are already expected to be leaders. The job description of a teacher is to help shape young people into positive, productive global citizens. However, because part of being a leader is going above and beyond the call of duty, there exists a difference between teachers who simply teach—and teachers who step up, work hard, and try to influence the greater community of their school for the better.

According to the United States Department of Education, the most important factors that influence a child's education are the quality of the teachers with whom they interact on a daily basis and the strength of the leaders who help govern their academic institution.

Teacher leaders are individuals who do their best to excel at both of these incredibly important facets of education. They ensure that they are doing their very best as educators within their classroom, and they reserve the time and energy it takes to step outside their classroom as well to help their school, communities, and other colleagues grow.

### ***What Does Effective Leadership Encompass?***

Even though the exact definition of leadership may be difficult to pin down, there are some qualities a leader should possess which rarely are questioned. These traits are those which allow a person to step into a leadership role in a truly effective way. These traits might include:

- The ability to help people set and achieve goals. Rarely will individuals be able to make a long-lasting positive impact on their surroundings without the persistent hard work of others to aid in the effort.

- The ability to improve and facilitate communication. Without clear communication throughout the community attempting growth, nothing will be able to happen—at least, not without a lot of avoidable conflicts and frustration.
- Clear insight as to what is happening, and the perspective to stand back and see how it all fits in. A leader needs to be able to incite action, but it must be meaningful action. Context makes actions meaningful; a leader needs to have the wisdom to figure out what that context is.
- The empathy and understanding to meet people where they are. Leaders must be able to motivate the people around them, and it is impossible to do so effectively without first being able to know their community well.

It may also be helpful to define leadership by stating clearly what it is not. A leader is not someone who merely speaks loudly and often; a leader is not someone who requires utmost control of every situation as it comes. A leader is also not someone who handles every new piece of information and every new event perfectly.

A leader is someone who is brave enough to stand up and enact change. It requires sacrifice and a willingness to be vulnerable and empathetic with the surrounding community. Being a leader is difficult, but there are few who lead who say that the experience was not worth it. Those who have interacted with effective, efficient leaders agree that finding and following a true leader changed their lives for the better.



### ***What Does It Mean to Be a Leader?***

Aside from the mere definition of leading, is there anything more fundamental or foundational that must be stated about being a leader?

Before one is able to become an effective leader, one must first learn how to lead oneself. It can, therefore, be extrapolated that the first person a leader leads is himself! This is because the role of leading requires a great deal of perseverance and persistence that only is possible if mastery of self is not an issue first. In other words, one cannot easily be a successful leader if one is disorganized and overwhelmed oneself.

An integral point of effective leadership begins with taking responsibility (and, when applicable, blame) for any missteps one might have taken. While this can be humbling, this establishes trust. Leaders who admit to culpability when necessary and take clear steps to right any wrongs are seen as capable individuals. In our society, the first and most instinctive response to wrongdoing is often to deny at all costs. This makes anyone willing to step up, take responsibility, and begin to forge a way forward a rarity—and a person whom others are willing to follow.

This adherence to truth and responsibility often allows a leader the clarity and perspective required to see necessary action and a path forward. In short, a person willing to be honest about his/her actions and own up to any missteps made can

generally be trusted to have an unbiased perspective when it comes to further action.

In education, this sense of intuitive clarity is even more important because it is a marker of personal growth. The blind cannot lead the blind. Those who cannot experience personal growth will have a difficult time leading others in their own growth. Therefore, only those teachers who are capable of being responsible for their own actions should be entrusted with the responsibility of others.

If you wish to become a teacher leader, start with looking inward and cultivating your own growth, clarity, and responsibility before taking on more external goals. If you are looking for a teacher leader, seeking out quiet individuals who accomplish their goals on a consistent basis is a good place to begin.

### ***How to Become a Teacher Leader***

There are several different paths to becoming a teacher leader. One of the first things to understand is that you don't need a formal job title to become one! In fact, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development notes that there are two types of teacher leaders: Formal, and Informal.

#### ***Formal Teacher Leader***

A formal teacher leader is someone who does have a designated and official job title which corresponds to his/her leadership activities. Often these are people who have been in their field long enough to net additional responsibilities and other duties, but sometimes a younger teacher can luck into these jobs as well. This may be extremely common in quickly-growing school districts, or in districts that experience a high rate of teacher turnover.

Job titles that often are associated with teacher leader positions tend to include terms like 'Instructional Coach,' 'Department Chair,' or 'School Administrator.' Each connotes the idea that teachers are able to act in an advisory capacity due to their time spent as a teacher, whether they advise the administration on how to run the school as a whole, or they use their skills to help guide other teachers to become better teachers.

Because specific job titles are usually fewer than the number of teachers at any given school, it should certainly be noted that teachers with no formal additional responsibilities can be leaders as well. These are known as informal teacher leaders.

#### ***Informal Teacher Leader***

An informal teacher leader is simply one who has taken on additional responsibility without a specific job title associated with it. This could be as simple as offering advice or mentorship to other teachers while in the break room, or offering to head up a new program at school when no one else has stepped up to do it. These types of teacher leaders tend to be much more initiative-based, rather than



performance- or experience-based. However, these moments of initiative can lend themselves well to building experience for promotions and more responsibility in the future.

Becoming an informal teacher leader is usually the first step in improving a teacher's leadership skills. In order to start planting the seeds for more leadership in your career, the first step is generally a simple one: Keep your eyes open! If you notice that anyone needs help, or (even more simply) if the school advertises a networking or growth opportunity, be prepared to sign up or step in.

There are three general pathways to teacher leadership, when it comes to informal incorporation of a role.

### ***The Three Pathways to Teacher Leadership***

The three pathways to teacher leadership are the instructional pathway, the policy pathway, and the association pathway.

- ***The Instructional Pathway:*** All teachers are educators, but some excel naturally at instructional talents and strategies. If you've realized that you're exceptionally good at connecting to your students, creating curricula, or any of the other activities which you and other teachers at your school engage in on a day-to-day basis, consider sharing your wisdom with others. A teacher leader might create a database of resources for other teachers at her school, or send email follow-ups to other teachers after discussing educational strategies on break. A teacher leader doesn't keep success private, but shares it as possible to ensure the success of every teacher on the instructional team.
- ***The Policy Pathway:*** Written policies shape everything about education, from the power of teachers and the administration to the amount and type of funding each department will receive. While administrators who write these policies always try their best to make educational policies as data-based and student-centric as possible, it's not always easy for someone who's never taught to make fair, effective policies for teachers and students. However, if a teacher lends their expertise to policymakers or decides to become a policymaker in his or her own right, that expertise can guide policy in a very productive way. Following this pathway to leadership could be as simple as attending governance and fundraising meetings, learning about the process and relevant stakes as much as possible, and lending your expertise wherever possible.
- ***The Association Pathway:*** Another term for leading by association might be simply 'communication' or 'community' leading. This type of teacher leader has an innate sense for changes that need to happen, or action that needs to occur on a mass level. This teacher leader is good at speaking to people, gathering support, igniting enthusiasm in colleagues for progress, and making sure that things happen. This type of teacher leadership is the easiest to get started with, in that you don't need any experience or special skills to make it happen.

However, you will need lots of initiative, and the ability to lean into discomfort when necessary.

## **Conclusion**

Being a true leader encompasses far more than simply making decisions about actions and telling people what to do. From the required interior reflection that must be done to the total humility and studied foresight necessary for nuanced, wise leadership, being a leader truly does represent a large amount of work and responsibility.

However, the personal and group benefits that result from true leadership are often far worth it. Being a leader instills confidence and the leader and peace of mind in those following wise leadership.

Becoming a leader may be difficult, but there are several different ways of doing so. From formal teacher leadership to informal opportunities for taking on more responsibility, leadership can take many different shapes and forms. It always requires initiative and clear-headed effort, however. Ultimately, being a leader is worth it—as long as the prospective leader is willing to put a significant investment into becoming the person the situation requires them to be. !

## **Section 2: Developing a Strong Administration to Support Effective Teachers**

Few people will argue that good teachers are the backbone of an education system. If the point of education is to support the students' growth and keep them safe, the teachers—as the primary adults who will be interacting with the students—are those best poised to do so.

This is a monumental task. If teachers are asked to support their students with a superior education and anything else which their students require, teachers themselves need superior support. For example, if teachers have to deal with the day-to-day administrative details of running a school in addition to their teaching duties, their teaching duties will necessarily be moved to a lower priority status.

In order for teachers to become teacher leaders and better support students, other teachers, and administration, the administration needs to support their teaching staff.

In this section, we'll discuss several specific ways that a school's administration can support their teachers at different stages throughout the academic year. If you're looking for concrete ways in which you can ask your administration to aid your teaching strategies and general quality of life as a teacher, these are all good places in which to begin.

## ***The Goals of a Smoothly-Running, Supportive Academic Administration***

If an administration is primarily concerned with the logistics of running a school, as opposed to the more content-focused practicalities of disseminating information as educators, the ultimate goal of an administration should be that the non-academic needs of a school community are met at all times. If a logistical concern arises and produces an uncomfortable environment such that learning is disturbed, that would represent a failure on the part of the administration.

The administration of a school, therefore, needs to be concerned with providing financial and material support for the school community. This will allow the teaching staff of a school to concentrate on education instead of infrastructure—or, at least, to prioritize academics wherever possible.

Let's discuss the practical care and support that will enable the instructors in your community to focus on their students, instead of the more administrative concerns which interrupt their duties.

### **What support do teachers require?**

Teachers require lots of support in order to get all of their academic work done. The main direction of the support should be to decrease the amount of time that educators are required to think about anything that is not education-based. Teachers have enough to accomplish with curricula, lesson plans, student management, and more without having to worry about keeping their classrooms stocked and furniture fixed!

Avoiding generalizations is key for practical assistance for teaching staff. The required administrative support for fully happy and effective teachers needs to be clearly delineated, otherwise it's not going to happen! The support teachers require can be broken down into several different categories, mostly falling into different times of the academic year.

### **What is it like when teachers are fully supported by administration?**

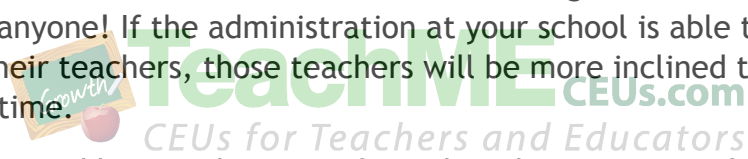
In a simple phrase, when things are better for the teachers, things tend to be better for students and administration alike! However, since we are focusing on the support administration can lend to teachers in this section, let's look at what the end goal is in terms of fully-supported teachers.

If teachers have everything they need when the school year begins, and they know the administration will be unwavering in their support of the teaching staff throughout the year, several effects take place:

- The teachers will be less stressed—and, therefore, more energetic and happy. Stress impacts every organ system physiologically and also makes it impossible to sleep well, which will in turn result in decreased health and increased

frustration. Stopping this negative cycle before it starts will increase everyone's happiness.

- The teachers will feel valued, empowered, and respected. This will help give them the confidence they need to teach their students well.
- The teachers will experience peace of mind. This will allow them the freedom they need to concentrate on their support of their students, rather than worrying about more mundane logistical details.
- The teachers will stop coming to the administration with requests. Teachers need specific support, and if the administration does not give it to them upfront, teachers will go and ask for it. This can result in more emails, waiting time, and meetings than are strictly necessary. Fewer emails and meetings will make most people happy and increase productivity across the board.
- The students who are taught by these teachers will have happy teachers. The point of a school is to invest in the students. Students can easily tell when teachers are not happy. This is confusing and distracting.
- The retention rate of teachers will increase. Right now, teaching in America is often called a profession with a revolving door policy. Retention rates are decreasing, and teacher turnover rates are increasing. This isn't an ideal situation for anyone! If the administration at your school is able to increase support for their teachers, those teachers will be more inclined to stay for a much longer time.



Ultimately, enhanced logistical support from the administration of an educational community is one of the strongest ways to increase the quality of life for teachers. Increasing the quality of life for teachers will strengthen the academic experience for students, which is an overriding goal of an educational community. Logically, therefore, it should be a goal for the administration to provide this support for the better experience of all members of the school community.

### ***Support Administrations Can Provide Teachers at the Beginning of the School Year***

Prior to the school year, when there are fewer students on campus and lessons being taught, the administration and teaching staff of a school has an opportunity to relax and re-set. At this time, during the summer, the administration should think ahead and plan for optimal support for teachers during the first few weeks of the academic calendar.

At the beginning of the school year, the school administration should invest their energy and money into the following five places and projects. They may seem basic, but if teachers are able to know that they have these areas under control, that will often go a long way towards assisting with their peace of mind during an uncertain time.

1. **Classrooms:** Teachers need to know that their classrooms will be fully stocked and safe places to be. Their classrooms should all be fully inspected at the beginning of the year, and any technology or other equipment should be vetted by an IT professional to ensure that it works as it should. There should be an easy and reliable system in place for the teachers to use in the case that any of their essential pieces of equipment are broken, and a place for them to reliably find items that they may need to restock. In addition, all basic furniture should be accounted for and relegated to specific rooms, with nothing switched or removed at any time.
2. **Faculty Restrooms:** When supplies begin to run low, they are often diverted to the students first, because a school's primary job is to keep students healthy and safe. Unfortunately, in many school districts, this extends to basic bathroom supplies. If the faculty restroom—a rare location where teachers can find respite during a busy school day—is not adequately stocked, teachers will get frustrated and stressed.
3. **Hallways:** Hallways need to be clear and clean at all times. There need to be specific strategies in place to ensure that students have a place to go, and that all lockers and recreation areas feature equipment that works well. There also needs to be some form of supervision in the hallways to ensure that students don't get bullied. If teachers don't have to worry about what goes on outside their classroom, they can spend more mental energy investing in their in-classroom activities.
4. **Teacher Workroom:** The teachers will need a lounge room. It will need to be accessible, comfortable, and stocked. There should be plenty of workspace as well as a relaxing space, and it needs to be cleaned regularly. It should also be enforced by staff that students do not enter the teacher workroom.
5. **Essential Information:** The administration needs to have a centralized, reliable system for communicating regular news and updates. The information needs to be in an accessible and known place—for example, a well-maintained website—and it needs to be sent to teachers regularly—for example, weekly by email. These updates should include all relevant information about how the school is being run, what is expected of teachers, and helpful information about life within the school. There should be an equally easy way for teachers to report back to the administration or ask questions if needed.

These may seem like basic necessities, but in many school districts, they are not prioritized or working with optimal function. In these school districts, the administration is telling teachers by their actions and investments that teachers don't matter. This is causing teachers to leave these schools, which isn't producing a cohesive experience for the students.

By implementing a few standards and strategies to give teachers the support they need, however, an administration can easily signal their investment in the teaching

staff. This investment will be passed on to the students, making for a better learning environment for all involved.

## ***Support Administrations Can Provide Teachers During Testing Season***

Aside from the beginning of the school year, the other most difficult part of the academic year for teachers is exam and testing season. The amount of paperwork, deadlines, and student management that a teacher usually has to manage goes through the roof during this time. Accordingly, it's up to the administration to increase their support of teachers at this time as well.

There are three basic ways that administrations can support teachers during exam season.

1. The administration can provide a constant stream of affirmations regarding the teachers' worth. This might seem like a soft or silly exercise, but teachers can often feel very taken advantage of and feel that their efforts are meaningless. It can raise middling morale to much-needed heights if the administration takes a few minutes to note when things are going well, and celebrate accordingly. This doesn't have to be a big deal; a simple email or notice in a recurring newsletter comparing data from past tests to current ones, noting a positive trend, and thanking the teachers for the effort they put in to have these results materialize (for example) may be all that is needed.
2. The administration can give teachers the grace and gift of time whenever possible. Exam season is a time during which deadlines and timelines fly by; allowing your teachers to concentrate on what needs to get done and not saddling them with more projects at this time will be vastly appreciated. If possible, giving them extra time to accomplish exam-related projects or even alleviating normal tasks by hiring temporary staff during this time will very much make your teachers feel supported! Another way to support teachers during this time is to ensure that all exam-related technical training is completed well before the exam season. Finally, take a few practical policies during the chaos of exam season, including:
  1. Reduce the number of meetings during this time. If it can be communicated in an email, it should. If meetings must happen, require only the most essential personnel be present. Inform all others with meeting minutes delivered by email.
  2. Make it clear that each teacher should take mental breaks during this time, as well. The administration should work with the staff to help each member take time off as needed.
3. The administration can and should go overboard with providing clear communication as exam season comes near. Exam season often brings with it many changes to regular school status quo, in the form of differing schedules

and vastly changing expectations of both the teachers and the student body. Sometimes, last-minute changes in exam schedules are unavoidable. Allowing the teachers as much notice as possible and providing rationale and extra assistance to reduce the impact of any decisions will show the teachers that the administration values their time (and their sanity).

These three measures of support are all geared towards keeping the mental health of each teacher on staff in check. A teacher who is forced to rush through work, a teacher who is under-informed on critical issues, a teacher who feels under-appreciated—these are persons who will not be in a healthy state of mind.

As discussed elsewhere, an empty cup cannot pour-over. If teachers are over-strained because they have to concentrate on logistics over their academia, their support of their students will necessarily suffer. Therefore, the administration needs to prioritize simple measures to keep teachers happy. Even well-placed, thoughtful compliments, and clear signs that the administration is fighting for teacher rights will go a very long way.

### *Celebrating Teachers Throughout the Year*

It's important to remember, at the end of each successful academic year, that the teachers are among the most important players who made that year happen. Your school may have specific traditions that celebrate the effort to which teachers have gone over the course of the year. It might not. Either way, here are specific ideas to help celebrate teachers throughout the year, as well as a few ways to round out the school year with support for your teachers looking ahead to summer and to the next academic year.

- From time to time, prioritize helping or surprising the teachers at your school with a random act of kindness: a project completed for them, a task taken care of, an unexpected free break period, or even just good snacks in the teacher's lounge. This is also an easy way to start giving support to your teachers if your administration does not have the budget for any larger changes which are needed. Just taking small steps to show the teachers that you value their time and effort will go a long way (as will a few extra moments of precious free time for them).
- Take note of specific actions that teachers do, and keep an eye on their schedules to see when particularly rough times crop up for each one. Sending well-timed complimentary emails or going on a coffee run during those times will be appreciated. The feeling that the hard work you do is going unacknowledged is one that will universally lead to poor mental health. Fortunately, the remedy for this specific issue is completely free.
- If the entire teaching staff is going through a rough time, such as exam season, you can really show your support for them by bringing in a resource for relaxation, such as a yoga instructor for an after-hours class, or by renting a massage chair. These things will represent expenditures, but in districts where

the administration has splurged on rare occasions to help their teachers relax in these ways, the teachers have felt appreciated and had the energy to make it through exam season with reduced stress.

- The first week of May is Teacher Appreciation Week. This often falls in the middle of the spring testing schedule, and can be forgotten or rushed. If at all possible, work with your staff's workload to make sure that they're not working overtime during teacher appreciation week. Schedule events to help the teachers relax, and make sure that the teachers know that they are appreciated during a difficult time.
- At the end of the year, schedule a celebration specifically for the teachers to commemorate what they did during the year. At the celebration, bring up specific examples of their hard work and what it was able to accomplish. Often, simply noticing and broadcasting the efforts of others can go a long way.

Teachers need to have the mental bandwidth to get their jobs done. Support from administration should ensure that teachers don't have to think about anything beyond academics; and steps should be taken to make this as much the case as possible. However, even if an administration does not have the resources to do this as much as is needed, merely giving teachers the recognition they deserve can go a long way. A school's administration should prioritize both required support of teachers and random, extra niceties for morale, as is possible.

### ***What Administrators Should Remember About Teachers***

Supporting teachers so that they can lead effectively will create a positive feedback cycle of good change through your school. Sometimes, the support teachers require is tactile and practical: for example, having adequate supplies in teacher break rooms, and ensuring that teachers' classrooms have all of the equipment required to help them do their jobs well.

On the other hand, sometimes supporting teachers boils down to simply remembering a few things about teachers and the way they like to be treated. A recent anonymous survey asking teachers what they wanted from administration most yielded these four pieces of information regarding teacher priorities:

1. Teachers want their time to be treated as a precious commodity. Teachers are asked to do many things with their time, so any overtures from the administration that appear to overextend their time or minimize its importance are generally not appreciated. Some specific actions you can take to give teachers more time back in their busy schedules include drastically reducing meetings (in number, length, or both); refraining from interrupting instructional time with PA announcements or unscheduled assemblies; and trusting that your teachers are using their free time well. Micromanaging the few minutes that teachers have to themselves each day does not instill trust or incentivize initiative.



2. Teachers need to be met where they are. Much emphasis is placed in the world of K-12 academics on meeting students where they are—that is, playing to each student’s individual strengths, and finding empathetic and effective ways to work with areas in which they may need to improve.

Administrators need to find similar ways to work with each teacher as that teacher needs, instead of treating the teaching staff as a unit. There are some teachers who need to be micromanaged. There are others who will need their freedom. There are some who will need assistance with their lesson plans, and others whose lessons won’t fit into standard lesson plans. Placing trust in each teacher’s methods as is possible and treating each one as an individual person—as is possible—will show the teachers just how much they are valued.

Similarly, when issues come up, treat them on a case-by-case basis, with sensitivity and nuance. Allow your teachers to have as much freedom and choice as you can grant them, and they’ll feel like you trust and value their input and place within your school.

3. Teachers need specific, targeted, and effective feedback. Everyone loves to hear that they’re a good teacher, but professional critiques that will help them become even better teachers will be even more appreciated, as long as they are doled out with empathy and sensitivity.

Teachers work hard to give specific feedback to each of their students. When grading hundreds of exams, it would be easier to default to platitudes for each student, but teachers know that doing so won’t help anyone grow. Instead, teachers spend hours finding specific attributes of each student’s work to complement and critique to buoy the student and help them become a continually better version of themselves.

Perhaps it is because of this effort that when a teacher is on the receiving end of an obvious platitude it hurts all the more! It only takes a few minutes to sit in on a teacher’s class and find something specific to remark upon later, and it will go a very long way towards making a teacher feel supported and valued.

4. Teachers need the administration to fight for them. Teachers, in most cases, are used to making their classes and activities work on a shoestring budget, and dealing with timelines creatively even when they’re changed at the last minute. Flexibility is a required part of the role. However, if the teachers at your school become aware that their budgets are shrinking and their schedules changed because the administration does not care about their experience, teachers will feel less inclined to work extra hours to make everything work seamlessly.

This does not take much effort. Simply keeping the teaching staff’s priorities in mind—starting by asking them what their priorities are!—and then ensuring that they don’t lose them without your fighting for them first will let the teachers know that you are on their side.

## *How Teachers Can Get Support from Their Administration*

It is the role of the administration to support the teachers, and as such, the initiative for doing so should come from inside the administration. However, if the administration is not being proactive in its support for the teaching staff, teachers can and should reach out to make sure that they are requesting the support that they need.

In order to make your case as a teacher requiring support stronger and less easy to reject, there are some steps you can take before you send that email or knock on that door.

1. If you're a teacher asking for backup from the administration in a case of student disobedience, try to cement a pattern of handling minor disruptions on your own, or with the help of another teacher. Administrations are very used to receiving students who have committed all kinds of minor infractions, with the expectation that it's now on the administration to 'handle it'. The average volume of students that they are expected to assist in disciplining on a daily basis is more than any administration can reasonably be expected to handle. Therefore, as a teacher, you should try to handle all situations on your own that you possibly can. It'll make those occasions when you have no choice but to send a student to administration more weighty—for both the administration and for the students in your class.
2. Document everything. If you're running out of supplies, if your classroom needs more funding, if parents are complaining or if your students are refusing to behave well in class: Make sure that there is evidence and a paper trail, if possible, describing all occurrences of all adverse events. Being able to back up your claims to administration with hard data will make any related requests you make much harder to turn down.
3. Present yourself from a place of strength and collaboration. When you go to administration because you need help with a student or funds for your projects, refrain from phrasing your request in a way that places you in a state of supplication. Instead of 'I need' statements, focus on 'we need' statements. Instead of saying 'I need help figuring out how to handle this student's misbehavior', say 'We need to work together for the sake of this student's growth and welfare'.
4. Speak up during administrative feedback sessions or your own personal yearly reviews. If there are concrete issues at your school which could be remedied by administrative action—for example, an issue of understaffing or inconsistent maintenance—take note, and bring them up when possible (especially if you are given a specific avenue by which to do so).
5. Be prepared to defend the benefits of strong administrative support for your teachers. Those who are good administrators are likely in their positions because they appreciate data, numbers, and proven logical outcomes. If you're

able to communicate that higher support from the administration will translate into tangible benefits for all concerned, that will help the administration see that their investment (whether in time or finances) in the teaching staff will be worth it.

6. Support your fellow teachers. If you're a teacher who is looking for support from the administration, it's a priority to get that support. In the meantime, take small steps to buoy up your colleagues, through positive feedback, assistance, coffees, or any other small idea that might come your way. This is not a substitute for effective, universal support from the administration. However, if you can help a fellow teacher get through a rough time, you'll show the administration that you're invested. This is also an excellent way to get started as a teacher leader in a small way.

It's in the best interest of the administration and every member of an academic community that the administration serves teachers and students well. However, if the administration is not supporting teaching staff in the way that assistance is required, it may be up to teachers to alert the administration to that fact. Being prepared to argue your case in a way that offers no avenue for refusal is a skill, and a necessary one. It starts with making sure that you already are a teacher leader, in that you support your colleagues and students as best as you are currently able. Documentation and consistent mentioning of current issues at public forums and all private opportunities will also help you make your point.

### ***Administrative Support for Ongoing Education for Teachers***

When considering the methods by which teachers grow more proficient at their craft, it can be easy to gloss over the most obvious—and most necessary—tools for helping educators grow. Many other fields have natural ongoing, professional development opportunities through seminars, fellowships, classes, and more. However, when it comes to helping teachers grow as teachers, it can easily be forgotten that they may need to go to school as well.

In order to serve the students of your community best, and particularly in order to assist your educators in becoming teachers who successfully lead, the staff at your school needs to be kept up-to-date in regards to the most recent research in education. New tools to better serve students are constantly being invented. Psychologists are discovering new insights into the brain development of young persons. New methods building upon that research are constantly being implemented, changing and upgrading the previously agreed-upon best practices of education.

Perhaps the most frustrating task given to teachers is any for which they are ill-equipped. Ensuring that your teachers have all of the opportunities available to them to teach them everything they need to know is crucial for the happiness of your staff (as well as the success of your students).

There are many reasons by which pursuing ongoing education for your staff makes sense for the entire community. First and foremost should simply be that investing in education for teachers makes sense, as they are the ones who most directly contribute to the educational quality of your school! Here, however, are eight practical reasons to consider making ongoing education for educators a staple of your support for teacher leaders in your school:

1. **Promotion and Salary Increases:** One easy way to reduce stress and frustration for your teaching staff is simply to increase their wages. This can allow them to purchase the tools they need for success, as well as allowing them to care for themselves and their families adequately so they're not worrying about basic necessities during school hours. However, the promotion and raise process is often not as simple as simply raising the funds for larger educator salaries. One way you can justify paying teachers more is by encouraging them to obtain higher degrees or certifications (particularly if you're able to offer financial assistance for these programs). Helping a teacher earn more education for him or herself and therefore earn more money can be the start of a positive feedback cycle that benefits your school, the students, and the other staff.
2. **Increased Creativity and Performance:** Newer educational programs place significant importance on the teacher's creation of varied, exciting lessons for their students on a day-to-day basis. If your teachers are struggling to mix things up for their students, allow them the resources to learn how to do so. Learning these new methods and skills will improve the quality of teaching a teacher is able to offer, and will also enhance their own confidence and professional image.
3. **Being Able to Offer The Latest in Education:** The best practices in education are constantly changing as we learn more about how students learn. Teaching has gone from being the relatively simple discipline it was in decades past to an incredibly complex and sophisticated endeavor. It's good for marketing your school's image to be able to say that your teachers are educated in cutting-edge teaching practices. It will also help your teachers understand students better, increasing their efficacy and confidence as they go about their days.
4. **Allowing Teachers the Flexibility to Become Teacher Leaders:** Encouraging your teaching staff to take courses or certifications both inside and outside their necessary fields of interest will allow them to branch out. This can help them offer support and advice to other teachers, assist with administrative duties or decisions, and even help them transition their careers if they are so inclined.
5. **Giving Educators the Enjoyment of Personal Development:** Educators need to understand, experience, and enjoy learning themselves! Even supporting your staff in their dreams to pursue personal hobbies or learn about their field in more depth can help your educators remember why they wanted to become teachers in the first place. This engagement is infectious and will help their students become more excited about the process of learning as well.

6. **Learning Productivity Skills to Maximize Working Hours:** Just as we are constantly learning more about how to best teach students, we're consistently learning new ways to protect our time and get the most out of our efforts. Allowing your teachers the opportunity to find new ways to streamline their work will be an investment in everyone's happiness, and the teachers will definitely appreciate it.
7. **Increasing Job Security for Teachers:** A teacher with increased credentials and more experience is more marketable to future employers. Investing in ongoing education for your teachers will therefore not only raise the profile of your school, it'll increase the qualification of each individual teacher. This will help your teachers stress less about their situations and assist them should they decide to leave your school.
8. **Investing in Built-In Networking:** Giving your teachers the opportunity to enjoy classes and certifications outside their existing communities gives them the chance to network, as well. This increases the scope by which teachers can be leaders by a sizable portion; it also means that your teachers will have a wider network of fellow teaching practitioners to rely upon for advice when needed.

At the end of the day, your teachers will be thankful for the support and the confidence—and they'll be better able to serve their students. Giving your teachers access to ongoing education opportunities and ensuring that they have the time and financial resources to do so while performing their teaching duties shows that you're invested in their individual welfare, as well as that of the entire school. This will, in turn, inspire them to invest in the school as well by being exemplary teachers and teacher leaders as they learn more skills with which to help the entire community.

## **Conclusion**

The goal of a school's administration should be to serve the teachers so that the teachers can support the students. It's a good idea for the administration to remember that an empty cup cannot pour-over—and so tired, overworked, and under-educated educators will not be able to invest in their students.

Logically, therefore, administrations need to invest in their teachers. By providing strategic support, feedback, and extra time and resources when possible at specific high-energy times of the year, the administration can make it clear that they are on the teachers' side. By investing in the teaching staff through ongoing education and caring practices, the administration can make it clear that they want everyone to succeed. !

## **Section 3: Serving Students as Teacher Leaders**

It's clear that when teachers step up and take on responsibility beyond their job description as educators that it is good for both the administration and the

teachers themselves. However, as a teacher's main job is to serve students, being a teacher leader does need to have benefits for those being educated. Fortunately, becoming a teacher leader is as good for students as it is for everyone else. In this section, we'll discuss how teacher leadership benefits those being educated as well as the entire school community.

## ***Key Characteristics of Being a Teacher Leader***

When teachers are asked to be effective leaders for their students, they're being asked to do far more than just decide what activities or educational modules will be studied; they're also being asked to do far more than instill and expect obedience from their students. Being a teacher leader encompasses many different skills and aptitudes, regardless of the specific environment or job requirements.

However, there are ten consistent essential traits which, when found together, are often indicative of a teacher leader. If you're trying to expand your leadership as an educator, there's a good chance you'll be able to do so by emphasizing the following attributes.

1. ***Passion***: If you're a teacher, you need to be passionate about education. The fact that you get up every morning and proceed to sculpt the minds of the next generation should be something that gets you to leap out of bed-or, at the very least, fills you with an intrinsic energy and hope for success that fuels you through long nights of planning and difficult encounters with students. While every teacher will doubtless feel and express their enthusiasm differently, every teacher leader needs to be truly passionate that every student receives the best education possible.
2. ***Integrity***: A true leader will be as unflinchingly honest as is possible in every situation, out of respect and responsibility for those with whom they interact. This includes students, other teachers, and administrators. One ramification of this foundational attribute is very simply that true teacher leaders can be trusted and counted upon. A true leader must be reliable and trustworthy in all things, big and small - from standing by your students through day-to-day difficulties, to other quotidian situations like meeting timelines and everyday commitments.
3. ***Collaborative Team Player***: A true leader knows that he or she doesn't have to go it alone. Leaders delegate, rely on others for input, and make sure that they're working in the same helpful environment as other teacher leaders for the sake of the entire school and student body. This is helpful in terms of avoiding teacher burnout and, ultimately, being able to help the student body more, not less. While collaboration can be used as a thinly veiled excuse to dump work on others, true collaboration is a give and take wherein all members of the team equally pull their weight. As such, a teacher leader knows that he or she would be nowhere without the support of their full team.

4. **Communicative:** Teachers who lead well are able to make sure that their vision for their classroom and curriculum is clear and well-articulated. This means that anyone who is being led by this teacher leader should be aware of their role, and aware of the tools they have to succeed. This communication is not limited to a teacher's students, but to the other teachers and administrators supporting education as well as each student's parents. Good teacher leaders know how to communicate intended goals and help students stay focused upon those ends.
5. **Positive Attitude:** Teacher leaders are able to maintain a pleasant, positive, upbeat demeanor for the sake of those with whom they are working. They realize that this upbeat attitude is a big part of a healthy learning environment, and are able to set aside any personal grievances to help make education productive and fun for their students. As teachers are human, they will of course not be intrinsically happy all the time. However, they are able to use the perseverance and patience fueled by their passion for education to help with a positive attitude, no matter what is before them.
6. **Confidence:** Even in the face of a setback, teachers who are also leaders are able to stay calm and positive. They know that they're working towards a good goal, and they're confident in their ability to get there – even if they do need to change their methods or increase their research efforts from time to time. This permeates every aspect of being a teacher, from writing lessons to guiding students through tough academic subjects or simply appropriate classroom behavior. Teacher leaders are able to maintain the calm, cool confidence required to keep their students on track even in the midst of occasional chaos.
7. **Inspirational:** Teacher leaders work hard to maintain motivation among their teams, their students, and even themselves in the face of academic and personal growth goals which can, on some tough Mondays or early mornings, seem relatively distant. One way that teacher leaders do this is by celebrating all accomplishments, large and small, and keeping these accomplishments directed towards larger goals.
8. **Engagement:** Teacher leaders are able to keep their teams and students engaged in the work, every day. Teacher leaders challenge their teams and students, and request input and feedback constantly. They're able to keep their students oriented towards ever-changing goals, and working towards the high expectations they have for their classes.
9. **Fearlessness:** Teacher leaders are able to take risks and make mistakes in the name of bringing their students a top-tier education. They work hard to make their classrooms exciting, original places to be, so that their students feel safe as they themselves make mistakes to help them grow and learn within the classroom. This sense of fearlessness can also help the teacher leader be more of a resource to students who will likely be afraid or sad from time to time as well.

10. **Celebrators:** Lastly, teacher leaders are persons who are not afraid of celebrating every little victory that their students achieve-or that anyone else on their team achieves! Celebrations help give children and adults alike the motivation that's often required to go on when times get tough. When a teacher leader is a good celebrator, they can often skillfully use the good times to help their team and class get through any bad times which may lay ahead!

None of these points concern basic teaching skills such as organization or creative lesson planning. It's clear that being a teacher leader is a lot more about who you are, rather than what you necessarily do! Of course, a successful teacher leader will also have more administrative skills that allow them to teach and lead effectively. However, the crucial internal makeup of a good teacher leader is often considered to be the most important.

### ***The Roles Teacher Leaders Must Play***

In the above section, we discussed the different internal attributes that a teacher must have and then display in order to be considered a true teacher leader. However, the job does not end with an undefined spirit of celebration, teamwork, or delegation! In order to be considered a true teacher leader, a teacher must play several different roles within the school itself as well as within the lives of each of their students.

Here is just a sampling of the different roles a teacher leader will be expected to play for optimal success:

1. A teacher leader must be a resource provider. Whether for the students in their class or for other teachers on their team, in order for people to look up to a teacher as a leader, a teacher must be able to offer requested help and resources-and follow through when expected! This might look like one teacher leader sharing educational resources with another, for the benefit of the entire team and student body. The teacher can offer him or herself as a resource as well: for example, offering to help another teacher set up their classroom, or provide wisdom to help manage a troublesome subject. When this happens regularly, a teacher is seen as a true asset to a team, a team player, and someone who can be relied upon-all great characteristics of a true team leader.
2. A teacher leader must be an instructional specialist. That sounds like jargon for 'teacher', but it goes a little bit more into detail about what is necessary for true success as an educator. A teacher needs to have a gift, studied or otherwise, for imparting information well in such a way that students actually enjoy and opt-in to the learning process. Teachers must be aware of and confident in many different types of learning styles, as they will always be tasked with reaching many different students who will learn best in many differing ways. When necessary, a teacher should always reach out to other teachers for recommendations on different teaching strategies.



3. A teacher leader must be a curriculum strategist. Educators are well aware that the art of teaching involves far more than just standing at the front of a classroom each day. It's often the role of the teacher to come up with detailed lesson plans which meet all the external objectives required, will engage the students as is equally necessary, and is polished and informative enough to hand out to parents and administration so all are informed. Once this comprehensive lesson plan, or curriculum, is formed, a teacher needs to find ways to make that plan happen. If the teacher is not in charge of creating curricula but more involved in adopting standardized versions, that teacher still needs to know how to bring a curriculum to life, make the lessons work for his or her unique student body, and work with other teachers to make sure that the various parts of the curriculum all work together well.
4. In order to be successful, a teacher leader must be a classroom supporter. Whether in their own classroom or as a supporting player in another classroom, a teacher leader must be able to take note of the environment in any given classroom and be able to guide that class towards peace and knowledge. A teacher leader who is gifted at supporting creative and effective classrooms will have to have lots of very versatile skills; for example, they will have to be good at classroom management, but they'll also likely have to be good at connecting with each student on an individual level. If a teacher leader is invited to co-teach, to support a struggling colleague, or to give feedback for another teacher after sitting in on a lesson, that feedback needs to be sound and helpful. In fact, being able to support colleagues and assist with the betterment of the entire teaching staff is an integral part of being a teacher leader (as is taking feedback gracefully when it's time). Working well with peers helps the entire school system grow well.
5. A teacher leader must be a learning facilitator. This has two different facets. First, the teacher must be able to facilitate the process of learning among students. This, however, is a basic part of a teacher's job description, and is expected. A true teacher leader expects the teachers on staff, including him or herself, to be learning as much as the students are! To be a teacher leader means not only harboring this expectation but facilitating it for everyone. Figuring out ways to make ongoing education opportunities available for the teachers at your school, whether that is an externally led workshop, a course option, or simply a back-and-forth feedback-based way for teachers to comment upon each other's teaching styles in a constructive manner: This will help raise the caliber of teaching at your school, and it's the job of a teacher leader to see that that's in everyone's benefit—and to help make it happen.
6. A teacher leader must be a mentor. Once a teacher is no longer the newest teacher at the school, he or she must realize that they have knowledge that can and should be shared. This is particularly applicable if there are any new, younger or less experienced teachers at your school who might need some help getting started. Taking the time to impart the benefit of your time teaching

upon someone who might need it is a strong mark of a teacher leader. It's generous, it shows that you value the good of the staff just as much as your own personal success, and it's the kind of investment that will likely return to assist you later on!

7. Being a teacher leader means being a school leader. A good teacher can't just show up to his or her classes each day, teach his or her subject, and walk out. A teacher leader needs to be involved in the life of the school as much as possible. Teacher leaders serve as department chairs, they serve on school improvement teams and assist with parent-teacher organizations, they go out into the community and represent their school during board meetings and help fundraise. Being a teacher leader means taking the time and initiative to work hard for their school, as well as their students—and themselves.
8. If you're looking to be a highly functional teacher, there's a good chance that you should look into becoming a high-output data coach. If you're working with students, you have access to tons of data: from how each student is doing on their tests, to things like attendance and the enjoyment levels of teachers and students alike to various curricular activities. If you're a forward-thinking teacher leader, you'll realize that you can do a lot with that data. Taking the time to go through the numbers can teach you a lot about what's working about your school. It can even help you chart a way forward that will be more economical and efficient for all concerned. However, doing so can be difficult. It requires perseverance, initiative, and follow-through. If you take the time to analyze the data produced at your school, you will be able to make more informed and balanced decisions for your staff, students, and administration.
9. If necessary, a teacher leader is a dynamic catalyst for change. Education is constantly evolving based on brand new information from scientists studying how people learn as well as the technology available to help teachers teach. While it's understandable that many would prefer things not change, as change is uncomfortable, change is necessary so that we continue to serve students as best as possible with the most updated resources we have. When necessary, a teacher leader needs to be among those to initiate and accept those changes. Teacher leaders need to be aware of what is cutting-edge, what the latest news and research says, and how to obtain the tools that will lead their school and their students to success. They also need to know how to implement these changes in graceful, empathetic ways, and help students and staff alike become accustomed to paradigm shifts as best as the teacher can.
10. Perhaps the most important role a teacher leader must embrace is being a learner himself or herself! Teacher leaders need to learn every day from their own actions and the actions of others, with the goal of making their teaching ever better. This requires humility and objectivity that might not seem to go hand-in-hand with the concept of 'leading', but a teacher leader is not egotistical. A teacher leader will be aware that their particular goal is not to make themselves seem better, but to assist their students and colleagues in

becoming actually better, every single day. A large part of that is self-improvement which comes through growth and learning.

It can seem like there are many required attributes and personas a teacher is required to take on in order to be a teacher leader. This is true, but it should be taken more as an opportunity to become a teacher leader in one of many different ways, instead of an overwhelming checklist of necessary traits in successful leaders. When you're looking to become a teacher leader, the most important step is to take the initiative to step up. The rest will follow with time and practice.

### ***Who Can Be a Teacher Leader***

After going through all of the roles, criteria, and other things expected of a true teacher leader, you might be shaking your head. It can seem like a truly lofty goal, and at times, too lofty! Teacher leaders, after all, are people, too, and no person is that perfect.

The ideals represented above are the end goal to which teacher leaders must aspire. In truth, nobody needs to be perfect or even hugely experienced to become a teacher leader. It requires more the spirit and willingness to step up, work hard, and do one's part—more than having decades of experience to draw upon. In fact, even brand new teachers should begin their careers with the mindset that they're going to be teacher leaders, as well.

### ***Why Be a Teacher Leader?***

Teaching is hard enough, some may argue. This is certainly the case. Between lesson planning, helping manage students, ongoing education, grading papers, and more, teachers are already some of the busiest, hard-working employees. Why would it be at all beneficial to pile any more work on a teacher's plate, such as the expectation to be a leader as well as a facilitator of the educational community?

There are myriad benefits for those around them, of course. Many of the roles and attributes of a teacher leader that we've discussed above are vastly beneficial for students, administrators, and teachers who surround a teacher leader. However, it might interest future teacher leaders to know that being a teacher leader might benefit no one so much as it does the teacher leader herself.

It comes from the same general rationale for self-care in general. As stated before, an empty cup cannot pour-over. It is necessary for those expected to lead and care for others to first ensure they have a well from which they can draw for support. Many of the roles and personality traits of a teacher leader are geared to support the teacher him or herself as much as they are geared to support others.

If you're a newer teacher or an overwhelmed teacher, you may be tempted to think that teacher leadership is not for you. Here are a few tips, tricks, and rationales to help you change your mind:

- Remember that being a teacher leader does not necessarily require you to take on an additional role with a formal title. Even though we postulated the various roles a teacher leader can take on above with formal titles such as ‘instructional specialist’ and ‘mentor’, you don’t have to go out and take on mandated, public extra duties to add more to your already-full plate. Instead, learning how to be a resource and doing what you can, even if it’s different on a day-to-day basis, is a perfect way to start being a teacher leader.
- You can start small. It’s been said that the best way to become a teacher leader is simply to teach with your door open or just initiate conversations in the break room about how to be a better teacher. Even being curious is a good way to lead –remember, teacher leaders, are perpetual students!
- It seems counter-intuitive, but sometimes taking on leadership roles—whether defined and formal or less so—can help alleviate the stress one feels as a new or struggling teacher. Being in a situation where you’re asked to think in a more managerial or overarching capacity can help put smaller issues in perspective. It can also help you network and enlarge your community of support. If you’re open about your struggles to your larger community, you’ll have more opportunities to receive help, delegate stress, and learn strategies to become a better teacher.
- The mere act of taking on more responsibility and becoming a teacher leader has been shown by studies to increase a young teacher’s sense of confidence and self-worth, which can itself help alleviate confusion, stress, and overwhelm in early or difficult teaching years.
- Similarly, if focusing on difficulties in your own classroom has given you a lot of stress and a telescoping view of your priorities, taking on new projects and leadership roles can tell you that you’re capable of causing good and needed change when necessary. That power can extend back to your classroom when you’re ready to bring the focus back home.

If you’re looking at your current responsibilities and thinking to yourself that perhaps leading isn’t for you, think again. Somewhat paradoxically, becoming a teacher leader and accepting the responsibility inherent with that role has been shown to alleviate stress, not increase it. Start small, be honest with yourself and others about your struggles and your workload, and you’ll find that you may personally benefit from leading as much as those whom you are directly working to benefit.

### ***Benefits for Students of Working With Teacher Leaders***

As you might expect, having a strong teacher leader isn’t just good for the teacher and the teacher’s team! As the point of education is to provide an engaging and effective education that meets each student where they need to be met, one of the goals of being a teacher leader—perhaps the goal—is to get to know and serve each student individually, as well as the class as a whole.

When the administration and teaching staff is comprised of leaders, every student benefits. Here are just a couple of tangible ways in which this can be seen:

1. Students who work with teacher leaders are more likely to become student leaders. When a student sees a teacher they admire working hard in the classroom and also being very active in extracurricular events, students will naturally believe that this is something that they should do, as well. The importance of leadership for students is paramount: They will experience the same benefits of enhanced responsibility as teachers do. As one of the main points of education is to help train students to be helpful and active global citizens, inspiring them from an early age to take on more leadership (as they can) helps them grow into who they need to be.
2. Teachers who step outside their classroom to become school and community leaders often have more access to professional networks and colleagues who can help with areas in which the teacher leader may lack specific knowledge. As discussed above, this can greatly help with teacher burnout, but it's also a boon for the students.

## Summary and Conclusion

Ultimately, becoming a teacher leader requires significant initiative from each teacher, but it is a necessary step to help a school community transcend survival to become a thriving, happy, and productive environment. Administrative support is necessary in order to help teachers and students thrive, but change often begins with one teacher stepping up and bringing issues to light.

Whether you're able to create positive change in your school by pursuing ongoing education, shifting your job responsibilities to take on formal side projects, or simply opening your door while you teach and participating more in feedback sessions when you can, your actions are important. Your leadership will not go unnoticed. True teacher leaders are able to create the world they want to see, whether it's through large sweeping actions or through daily reminders to the entire academic community that everyone's working together, and that the end result of happy, engaged students is always worth the hard work it takes to get there.

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