

## Chapter 8

# An Untapped Resource: Embedded School Personnel in University-Based Teacher Preparation Programs as a High-Impact Practice

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter showcases a teacher preparation program (TPP) targeting early career, in-service teachers who are most vulnerable to early attrition and was created to support district efforts to retain and develop an effective workforce. The chapter focuses and puts a spotlight on the role of the instructional consultant, which is the most innovative aspect of this district-based teacher preparation program. These instructional consultants are embedded in the design and delivery of program coursework. This instructional consultant role was innovated to provide a conduit for teacher leadership in this ongoing partnership. This chapter recounts how this partnership began, how instructional consultants have become a conduit for leveraging and growing teacher leadership for all stakeholders involved in this school-university partnership, and the ongoing impact of this program in terms of teacher retention and improving instructional effectiveness.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

For too long, top-down models of Teacher Leadership have prevailed. These top-down models tend to reinforce hierarchies of power and often leave teachers without the professionalism and respect they deserve. Moreover, not all teachers who develop leadership skills want to become administrators. There are many reasons for this, including that many teachers who develop and demonstrate leadership want to “maintain teacher roots while demonstrating greater impact on the school and community” (Zugelder et al, 2018, p. 73). Other teacher leaders want to maintain their frequent interactions with students; they are not necessarily interested in moving into administrative roles that take them out of the classroom since they are deeply passionate about their teaching. Teachers considering leadership roles may also be concerned about the way in which this new role will impact their relationships with coworkers (Nguyen, et al, 2019).

Teacher leaders can, however, effectively utilize their leadership in connection with their peers, and, in this model, foster leadership of others with whom they teach. An important quality and skill of any effective teacher involves true understanding and awareness of the range of social and emotional dimensions of teaching and learning and the interplay of these dimensions within their specific context. This context-specific experience supports the work of the teacher leader through authenticity and trust. As a result, in community with their colleagues, teacher leaders’ roles are critical for embedding any kind of instructional reforms. Instructional reforms often “depend on teacher leaders’ capacity to implement any new approach and help colleagues understand how it fits with their values, skills, and expertise” (Cheung, Reinhart, Stone, and Little, 2018, p. 38).

Teachers hold untapped potential for leadership. Older top-down models often prevent teachers from finding the agency and freedom needed to emerge as leaders, ones who are empowered to search for most effective ways to teach their own students. Teachers work in myriad ways to ensure that their students are learning the curriculum and also developing into active citizens in a democratic society. “Teacher leadership in the broadest sense has been defined as teachers holding an important position at the core of schools” (Zugelder, et al, 2018, p. 62). All teachers can develop into effective leaders, and there are conditions and relationships that feed this development.

Teacher leaders are the facilitators of effective instruction; their roles are incredibly important positions to hold. They can, in essence, escalate or de-escalate instructional momentum. A role that we created for this School-University partnership, called the Instructional Consultant, plays a dynamic and bi-directional role in facilitating instruction. Instructional Consultants have been successful classroom teachers in the past and they currently serve in administrative roles in their respective schools.

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