Building Career Continuums for Teachers

NNSTOY Webinar
April 5, 2016
8:00 PM – 9:00 PM (est)
Teacher Career
Advancement Initiatives

Presenters:
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Moderator:
Joe Fatheree, 2007 Illinois Teacher of the Year @NNSTOY
“I'm getting supported and I'm pushed towards another level, that is amazing, so that is one reason I get up every day in the morning and I'm here to teach my kids.”

—Teacher, DC LIFT
Why this study?

- Time to build expertise in teaching
- 40–50% leave before expertise is built
- Management based on intrinsic motivation increases retention
- Career continuums foster intrinsic motivation: autonomy, mastery & purpose

#teacherpathways
Study Questions

What are the design features of effective career advancement models?

What enabling conditions are needed to launch & sustain these models?

What are the general principles for developing effective models?
1. Aspire Summit Charter Academy’s College Ready Promise Initiative (Modesto, California)

2. DC LIFT (Washington, D.C.)

3. Denver Differentiated Roles Pilot (Denver, Colorado)

4. Knox County TAP Program (Knox County, Tennessee)

5. Scottsdale Career Ladder Program (Scottsdale, Arizona)

6. Southeast Polk Teacher Leadership and Compensation Initiative (Southeast Polk Community School District, Iowa)

7. Seattle Career Ladder Program (Seattle, Washington)

8. L.I.F.T. Opportunity Culture Initiative (Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina)
Study Methods

- Interviewed program coordinator(s)
- Held focus groups with administrators & teachers
- Reviewed program documents
- Reviewed program evaluation data and/or findings, if available
- Researchers coded transcripts & documents
## Design Features

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Structured Teacher Leader Roles

“We were very purposeful when we planned our structure and the system and the way that this was going to work. We were so thoughtful in every last detail and were so clear about what were our roles, what are we supposed to be doing. We do have very clear expectations.”

—Seattle Teacher
“We don’t make that much extra money...I think we’re not in it for the money, I think we’re in it because we want to be stronger teachers.”

—Seattle Teacher
Coming from a district that didn’t have teacher leadership roles, I felt valued because I was getting monetary payments for my excellence, which I wasn’t getting prior to that. So it was the definite positive reward for me to perform.

—Denver Teacher
Opportunities for Collaboration

“It’s not just that one snapshot. There are little bits and pieces where colleagues come in.”

—Summit Charter Academy Teacher
“And so now since I’m only teaching half time, I can utilize that other half of my day to do all of the other things.”

—DC Lift Teacher
Peer Coaching

“It was a huge window into how I taught…whatever you received from your colleagues was taken so much easier than it would have been from an administrator because it’s somebody that’s there that’s willing to help you get better. It’s just colleagues sharing information and giving information in terms of how you can be better.”

—Scottsdale Teacher
New and Experienced Teachers

“As a first-year teacher, it was great for me to have constant support, constant leadership coming in, showing me what to do. I wasn't just there on my own.”

—Knox County Teacher

#teacherpathways
New and Experienced Teachers

“You are a non-judgmental, non-evaluative, non-threatening situation because you don't control them or their score. So they are more open. They trust you.”

—DC Lift Teacher
Peer Evaluation

“We are very intentional about why peer coaching and evaluation live together, and then ensure that we have the right support in place for these team leads who are the center point of coaching and evaluation living together.”

—Denver Administrator
Professional Development Opportunities

Teacher-led, Just-in-time, Job-embedded

“That was really pushing her, comfortably...with all her students she’ll be using that strategy. That’s 90 more kids that got exposure that wouldn’t have, if we did not have this program.”

—SE Polk County Teacher Leader
I get to an issue or a problem where I’m really stumped...almost always someone has a great idea or a twist. I ask, ‘Have you thought about this or have you tried this?’ I’m so appreciative of having a team who are talented, dedicated...they’re as highly educated as I am, and it’s nice to have a team of leaders to go to and work with as a resource.

—Summit Charter Academy Principal
Structured Teacher Voice in Decision Making

“I think she has the power of team...where every decision and everything has to be on her back. Not just the lead team, but the teachers who are leaders without a title because every teacher here has a leadership quality in some aspect.”

—Aspire Academy Teacher
Enabling Conditions

- Readiness
- Leadership
- Stakeholder Involvement
- School Culture
- Funding Sustainability
Readiness

“We’ve had schools pull out that are going to be part of cohort four because they need to build up their readiness.”

—Denver Administrator

Timing could not have been better!”

—Southeast Polk Administrator
Stakeholder Involvement

“We met with administrative groups, we met with our Cabinet, we met with every teacher group, parents and students, school board. We met in every school. All of our teachers, could come and offer input. So we did a road show of 11 different schools in about two weeks.”

—Southeast Polk Administrator
School Culture

“...it’s because of that culture...Every single teacher is vested in getting that student growth, doing the best thing they can for their students in their classroom, at their school, on their campus—

HELPING ANOTHER COLLEAGUE!”

—Scottsdale Administrator
Leadership

“This needs to be a teacher-led initiative, a teacher supported initiative, because it is about elevating the craft from the peer perspective...”

—Denver teacher
Financial Sustainability

“We even discussed that when we were selling this, that our plan would be so successful, even if our funding was cut from the state, that we would find somehow to manage it through the district. So, hope so.”

—Southeast Polk Administrator
Key Findings and Lessons from Teacher Career Continuum Study

Based on the diverse characteristics of the eight study sites, we believe such initiatives can be implemented in:

- urban, suburban, or rural districts;
- high poverty or affluent districts; and
- in school/districts both with and without a strong union presence
Seven General Observations

- There are positive trends in the recruitment and retention of teachers
- Creating time for teachers to meet and collaborate is essential and a challenge
- There is more collegial interaction and shared responsibility for one’s colleagues
- We see evidence of a positive impact on teacher effectiveness and short-term learning outcomes
- Teachers in leadership roles report greater job satisfaction
- Teacher/administrator relations and the roles of principals change in positive ways, but present new challenges
- There are significant challenges in sustaining teacher career pathways initiatives
1. There are positive trends in the recruitment and retention of teachers

“

We choose to work with our colleagues...when you think about making that decision [to leave], I thought, okay, I will be five or ten minutes from my house, but I won’t have my team.

”

—Aspire Summit Charter Academy Teacher
2. Creating time for teachers to meet and collaborate is essential and a challenge

“
I have lasted three years...
But staying until five, six o’clock at night. Going home, working on evaluations that I’ve done this week. So it’s massive. It’s overload.

”—Knox County Teacher Leader
3. There is more collegial interaction and shared responsibility for one’s colleagues

“You’re not performing for just the dollar, you can't let down a group of people you’ve been working with.”

—Comments by two Scottsdale, Arizona Teachers

There’s more sharing.
There’s more quality lessons going on because the coaches are in multiple rooms, sharing the ideas. They’re modeling lessons.

—Southeast Polk Teacher
4. We see evidence of a positive impact on teacher effectiveness and short-term learning outcomes

“Some teachers have seen advancement of 1-2 grade levels of math. The data shows this, although not everywhere. There are lots of different factors in schools we serve that play into student achievement, but we’re seeing tremendous signs even in the pilot stage.”

—Director of Opportunity Culture Initiative in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
5. Teachers in leadership roles report greater job satisfaction

“
I don’t want to be an administrator because I don’t want to be removed from the instruction or kids. This is the happy medium.

—Southeast Polk Teacher Leader

For me personally, I’ve been teaching for 10 years and this is definitely... I have the best work life balance that I’ve ever had in 10 years.

”—Denver Team Lead
6. Teacher/administrator relations and the roles of principals change in positive ways, but present new challenges

“...they have garnered more respect and buy-in from their teachers. Because they’re not seen as ‘us’ and ‘them’ anymore. It’s become more of a ‘we.’”

—Knox County Teacher commenting about school administrators
7. There are significant challenges in sustaining teacher career pathways initiatives

“With any initiative, you know, they get you hooked on it and throw you a lot of money. They’re starting to wean us off the money now, but it’s still something that I believe in strongly in that it will be in our budget, the funding for teacher leadership in this way.

—Denver Principal
Questions for participant discussion

One of the overarching lessons we learned was the need to expand conceptions of teacher leadership as an individual calling to a systemic re-structuring of the teaching profession.

As teacher leaders, what do you see as your role in creating a more purposeful and systemic approach to address the career aspirations of a new generation of teachers who want to lead from the classroom?
How can we expand teacher career path initiatives?

We have talked about the design features and enabling conditions that we identified to help move towards readiness to build a career pathway in a school or district.

Have we missed anything? What do you see as most important? Less important?

What are the barriers in your district or school that would need to be addressed in order to implement a teacher career pathway?
Open discussion of what is on your mind!!!!
There’s so much more to learn

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ALWAYS LEARNING