The Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate Program: Building Resources for Reform

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Abstract

As school districts strive to meet today's heightened demands for accountability and quality in education, many are asking teachers to assume leadership roles that are important to the success of their reform plans. Few, however, have figured out how to systemically support teachers to ensure they can be effective in these roles. This comes as no surprise, as basic theoretical understanding of teacher leadership development is weak. In an effort to begin to address this gap in the literature, a national group of stakeholders was convened to draft Teacher Leader Model (TLM) Standards that could initiate dialogue about the knowledge, skills and competencies of teacher leadership. At the same time in Boston, teacher leaders were convened by Boston’s Teacher Leadership Resource Center to pool their expertise and draw upon education research to design a practice-based program of graduate-level courses that could strengthen teachers' abilities to succeed in their roles, drive improvement and reform, and advance the professionalization of teaching in Boston. We created the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate (BTLC) program. In this paper, we accept the invitation for dialogue presented by the TLM Standards and experiment with employing these standards as a lens for examining the competencies addressed in our program. Using the TLM Standards as a guiding framework, we examine the alignment between the skills taught in the BTLC courses, the skills required for our four target teacher leadership roles, and the skills teacher leaders perceived as important for efficacy in their roles. This dialogue with the TLM Standards leads us to identify recommendations for our own program, implications for the TLM Standards and new theoretical understandings that we have found to be important to teacher leadership development. In the interest of furthering the dialogue, we use the results of our analysis to propose a new model framework for teacher leadership development.
The Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate Program: Building Resources for Reform

With today’s heightened attention to accountability and quality in education, the development of leadership capacity in schools has been recognized as an essential element in school improvement (Bryk, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2004; Togneri and Anderson 2003). Teachers are asked with increasing frequency to fill this need by assuming teacher leadership positions from which they are expected, for example, to guide professional growth, lead collaborative efforts around curriculum and assessments, or manage the process of instructional change among their colleagues (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008; Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000; Supovitz, 2008; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). It is recognized that from the vantage point of such formalized teacher leadership positions, effective teachers can use their social capital as leverage to exercise an influential role in the process of school improvement (Danielson, 2006; Leana, 2011). These positions also promise to offer today’s teachers the opportunities they seek for career advancement without leaving the classroom (Johnson, Berg & Donaldson, 2003; Peske et al, 2001).

In order for teacher leadership roles to successfully fulfill their intended purpose within improvement and reform plans, the teachers who have assumed these roles must be able to perform them well. Generally this requires mastery of a repertoire of leadership skills, skills that lie far beyond those required for effective classroom practice. But what are the knowledge, skills and competencies that teachers need to succeed in such roles? Standards are available from a variety of sources to guide student learning, teacher learning and leader learning, yet there exists no widely accepted schema for what teacher leaders should know and be able to do. In 2010, this question was being pursued by two different groups in different ways.

In that year, the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, a national group of stakeholders concerned with the critical role of teacher leadership in student and school success, shared for comment a draft of model standards it had created. Members of the consortium, which included teacher leaders as well as school, district, state, higher education and professional association leaders, had reviewed research, existing programs,
and teacher leaders’ own experiences in order to define seven “domains” and describe the “functions” for each. After reviewing public comment and making appropriate adjustments, the Teacher Leader Model (TLM) Standards were released in November 2011 to “stimulate dialogue among stakeholders of the teaching profession about what constitutes the knowledge, skills and competencies that teachers need to assume leadership roles in their schools, districts, and the profession” (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011; p.3).

At the same time in Boston, the Teacher Leadership Resource Center (TLRC) had convened a cohort of experienced teacher leaders to design a program that could support teachers who hold key leadership roles in the district to strengthen the skills they need to succeed in those roles. In order to identify the knowledge, skills and competencies that would become the content of the program, they pursued a backward-planning approach: They looked at the specific tasks required by four locally-significant teacher leadership roles and used their review of research and existing programs to create a comprehensive list of what teachers would have to know and be able to do to succeed in these roles. This was their first step toward designing a toolkit of resources that can be used to help teachers strengthen these skills.

These two contrasting approaches have lead to differing results. In this paper, we accept the invitation for dialogue presented by the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium and experiment with employing the TLM Standards as a lens for examining the competencies of our program.

First we wondered about the extent to which our own program was a TLM-aligned program. Standards are often useful for establishing a common language and for facilitating analysis and resource-sharing across programs. We wanted to know: In what ways do the TLM Standards align with the skills taught in the BTLC courses?

Since we created our BTLC program to meet the needs of four specific teacher leadership roles, we wondered to what extent the TLM Standards also align with those specific roles. If the TLM Standards were to become a widely-accepted standard, for

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1 The Teacher Leadership Resource Center was established in 2010 as a partnership project of the Boston Plan for Excellence (BPE, a public education fund), the Boston Public Schools (public school district) and Boston Teacher Residency (in-district teacher preparation program). It is funded through a federal Teacher Quality Partnership grant and has also received support from the Carnegie Foundation and Barr Foundation.
example, would TLM-aligned programs of the future be likely to support teachers who hold these roles? Therefore we asked: *In what ways do the domains of the TLM Standards align with the skills required of our four target roles?*

Ultimately, we want teachers to not only be effective but feel effective in their roles. Efficacy is important to teachers' retention in their roles and satisfaction with their career. This study is not designed to measure effectiveness, but we did wonder about the match between the domains of the TLM Standards and our program participants' own perceptions of the skills they feel are important in their work. In a third analysis we sought to answer the question: *In what ways do the TLM Standards align with the skills teacher leaders perceive as important for efficacy in their roles?*

By posing these questions, we hoped to gain a new perspective on our own program as well as to be able to contribute new ideas to the dialogue on teacher leadership competencies initiated by the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium.

Our paper begins with a discussion of existing research on the value of teacher leadership roles and the conditions that may impede or support the satisfaction or efficacy of teacher leaders. This is followed by a description of the BTLC program’s aims, design, content, and performance outcomes. Next, we use the TLM Standards in three layers of analysis, examining the content of our BTLC courses, the skill demands of our target roles, and the competencies teachers perceive as important for efficacy in their roles. Finally, the paper concludes with implications of our analyses for our program, commentary on the TLM Standards, and observations that can contribute to theoretical understanding of teacher leadership development. In the interest of furthering the dialogue, we also use the results of our analysis to propose a new model framework for teacher leadership development.

**Teacher Leadership Today**

Effective teachers are a crucial factor in improving student learning (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kane, 2005), but their potential influence on student learning is not limited to the confines of their own classroom walls. When “teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of
school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement” they are practicing teacher leadership (York-Barr and Duke, 2004, p. 288). Teachers’ intimate knowledge of the needs of their students, the demands of the work, the dispositions of their colleagues, as well as their positioning in schools every day makes them an important asset to improving teaching and learning. As such, it makes sense that in addition to encouraging the many important informal ways in which teachers exercise leadership, schools might also tap effective teachers in strategic formal ways. However, being an effective teacher does not guarantee that one will be an effective leader. Leadership is challenging work and a substantial knowledge base is required to do it effectively. As schools and districts increase their reliance upon teacher leadership roles to fulfill important functions within their improvement plans, it is important that they consider how teachers will be supported to perform these roles well.

While researchers remain challenged to show a direct empirical link between teacher leadership and student learning, teacher leadership is indirectly associated with positive gains in student learning in several ways. In settings in which teacher leadership is focused on improvements in classroom instruction, it is more likely to be correlated with positive student outcomes (Harris, 2005). York-Barr and Duke (2004) note that teacher leaders’ efforts to facilitate the development of a school culture of trust have lead to improvements in instructional practice that positively affect student achievement. The involvement of teacher leaders in the development of collaborative relationships with their colleagues and in school decision-making processes are also argued to have a positive impact school culture and improvements in instruction and the school (Harris, 2005; Danielson, 2007). In fact, a study by Leithwood and Jantzi, as referenced by Muijs and Harris (2003), found evidence that teacher leadership can have a more profound effect on student learning than a principal’s leadership.

Teacher leadership roles have also been found to contribute to greater teacher satisfaction (Harris, 2005). As teachers become confident in their professional practice they often seek to make a greater difference beyond their own classrooms. Researchers have found teachers to have a greater level of satisfaction when they hold roles that enable them to participate in decision-making processes around school-wide policies (Taylor & Bogotch, 1994; Johnson & Landman, 2000), and the amount of input they have in school-
wide policies has been shown to have an association with a decreased likelihood of leaving the profession or transferring schools (Ingersoll, 2001). In this way, teacher leadership roles are often perceived by teachers as an opportunity for a career ladder in an otherwise flat profession, as they make career advancement possible without leaving the classroom to become a school administrator. Research suggests such opportunities are especially important for retaining today’s teachers and attracting high-caliber candidates to the teaching profession, (Johnson, Berg & Donaldson, 2003; Peske et al, 2001) both of which are important for improving student learning.

Existing norms in teaching, however, tend to impede rather than encourage teacher leadership. Harris (2005) found that isolation is a consistent issue for teachers who choose to take on leadership roles. Egalitarian values held by teachers contribute to the isolation and resistance teacher leaders feel from their colleagues (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Lieberman, Saxl, & Miles, 2000; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Formal teacher leadership roles conflict with this norm by unintentionally creating a hierarchical structure among teachers. In addition to the potential tensions with colleagues, other reasons teachers may not be interested in assuming leadership opportunities beyond their classroom are having a full plate, lack of time and tests (Barth 2001).

For teacher leadership to succeed at scale, teachers require access to meaningful, relevant professional learning opportunities that help them navigate these persistent challenges. As Katzenmeyer & Moller (2001) note, teachers are often asked, “to assume leadership roles without any preparation or coaching, because they appear to intuitively know how to work with their colleagues” (p. 47). This is problematic because the skills needed to work with colleagues are different from the skills needed to work with students (Danielson, 2007) and because effective leadership also requires a range of additional knowledge and skills. Skill topics such as leading groups and workshops, adult learning, collaboration and teamwork are critical (Barth, 1998; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001) as is knowledge of how to lead data use, access educational research and manage change. These leadership competencies are not traditionally a part of teacher preparation programs or teachers’ professional development options, yet today’s teacher leaders are regularly asked to engage in tasks that require mastery in these areas.

We believe if teachers are to assume leadership roles they should have the
opportunity to strengthen the skills needed to succeed in their roles. To be sure, principals should share some responsibility for this work, but we see principals as having neither the time nor capacity to be the primary providers of the extensive, specialized training teacher leaders really need to perform these roles well. In our view, teacher leaders themselves are best equipped and best situated to be professional resources for one another. The BTL C program aims to provide a structure for that.

The Teacher Leadership Resource Center and the BTL C Program

The Teacher Leadership Resource Center (TLRC) was founded in 2010 to strengthen teachers’ abilities to be professional resources for one another, school improvement and district reform. As a partnership project among three agencies, the TLRC benefits from grounded experience in systemic reform from the Boston Plan for Excellence (Boston’s public education fund)\(^2\), first-hand knowledge of the career aspirations of today’s teachers from Boston Teacher Residency (Boston’s in-district teacher preparation program), and a direct connection to the district’s priorities through the Boston Public Schools.

It was founded with the recognition that formal teacher leadership is not new to Boston. For decades teachers in this district have assumed positions focused on improving instruction. Notably, during the 1990s, which saw significant investments in building capacity for literacy and math coaching at scale, instructional leadership teams in every school, teacher-led professional development in science, and strong mentoring, the district saw strong steady improvement. This improvement earned Boston the distinction of receiving the 2006 Broad Prize for Urban Education and was also recognized by McKinsey and Company as a move from “good to great” (Mourshed et al, 2010). Some experienced teacher leaders from that decade continue to serve in one or more of the two dozen formal leadership roles in Boston today. But, teacher leaders who are newer to the district and who do not serve in one of the few roles that offer support are left to build their skills on their own. They may pursue graduate coursework, seek out books and articles or simply

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\(^2\) As of June 2011, the Boston Plan for Excellence and Boston Teacher Residency have reorganized to become a unified agency named BPE.
surf the internet to find strategies to serve their needs. The absence of a systemic approach for developing the leadership capacity of teachers who hold important roles threatens the success of the initiatives they aim to support as well as these teachers’ satisfaction and retention in their roles. With teacher leadership roles growing in number and importance in Boston today, we believe a systemic approach is needed so that teacher leadership capacity is no longer built individually, but collectively; so that teacher leadership is an organizational asset capable of fueling reform, not an individual disposition through which some teachers manage to create islands of excellence.

Our systemic approach to teacher leadership development is the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate program. Funded by a federal Teacher Quality Partnership grant as well as support from Carnegie and the local Barr Foundation, the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate (BTLC) program was designed by teacher leaders for teacher leaders to develop the skills and knowledge needed to effectively carry out their leadership roles so that they can drive improvement and reform in the district while also advancing the professionalization of teaching in Boston.

In contrast to traditional teacher leadership programs that prepare teachers for the potentiality of assuming roles, we recruit teachers who already hold roles, with emphasis on specific roles that are tied to initiatives in Boston’s Acceleration Agenda, the Boston Public School district’s five-year strategic plan for achieving proficiency, closing achievement gaps, and preparing students for college completion and career success (Boston Public Schools, 2010).

At the inception of this project, in order to understand the task ahead of us we conducted a census of the formal teacher leadership roles in the district and found well over a dozen of them. Recognizing that we could not target all of the roles, we collaborated with the district to consider the following question: Which few teacher leadership roles, if truly enacted with quality, stood to make the biggest difference for Boston’s schoolchildren? After consideration of the relationship of each role to the district’s reform plan, the decision was made to focus initially on four.

- **Language Assessment Team (LAT) Facilitators** – One LAT Facilitator is appointed by the principal in each of Boston’s 134 schools. The LAT Facilitator is responsible for facilitating a school-based team capable of managing and monitoring the
progress of English Language Learners in the school and assisting school leaders with the implementation of the Boston Public Schools English Language Education Policy. With 30% of students in the district identified as English Language Learners and these students disproportionately underachieving, it is critically important that the LAT Facilitator in each school be supported to perform their important role well.

- **Academic Achievement Framework (AAF) Team Facilitators** – Approximately half of Boston’s schools are currently implementing the Academic Achievement Framework system of instruction, designed to close the achievement gap by helping ensure struggling students are getting what they need. AAF Service Team Facilitators, appointed by the principal, manage a group of teachers and school staff as they use the Academic Achievement Framework Data-Driven Problem Solving Process to address student-level academic, behavioral and language challenges with a coordinated response.

- **School Team Leaders** – Most, but not all, Boston principals organize their schools by appointing a team leader at each grade level, subject area or department. In these schools team leaders are generally responsible for facilitating regular meetings with colleagues based on goals that may be established by school leadership or by the team itself. In many cases team leaders are also members of the school’s Instructional Leadership Team, facilitating important two-way communication about instructional needs and priorities between school leadership and every teacher in the school. In many schools principals have made complicated organizational arrangements to enable these teams to meet, and it is important that teachers leading these team meetings know how to effectively use the time to improve teaching and learning.

- **Mentors** – Recognizing that student achievement is largely dependent on the quality of teaching in the district, mentoring roles are also seen as critically important to district improvement. Boston teachers may hold various mentoring roles, designed to support pre-service, novice or veteran teachers. The mentoring roles that were examined for the BTLC program design were mentors of student-teaching residents.

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3 For more information on the Academic Achievement Framework, please visit http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/aaf.

(Berg & Souvanna, 2012)
for the Boston Teacher Residency (BTR) program and mentors of novice teachers for the district’s New Teacher Developer (NTD) program. The majority of mentors in the district work through these two programs.

While most teachers receive only a token stipend or are uncompensated for holding these roles, teacher leaders can earn graduate credit and move up the salary scale for completing BTLC courses that help ensure they are effective in these roles. We consider this salary boost to be a worthwhile investment on the part of the district; it is a way of leveraging the pre-existing salary scale to support teachers to be both more satisfied and effective in their roles, which we believe will fuel improvements in the measurable outcomes of the Acceleration Agenda.

Teacher leaders have led the work in every phase of development of the BTLC courses and continue to be an integral part of course facilitation and refinement. Experienced classroom teachers who hold varying teacher leadership roles including the four target roles were recruited in 2010 to develop a curriculum, instructional resources, and a set of performance assessments for each of four graduate-level courses that form the core of the BTLC program. The TLRC contracts with practicing teacher leaders, some of whom were course developers, to facilitate the courses. We provide coaching for these course facilitators to ensure they are supported to establish in their courses collaborative communities in which teachers learn from one another and create supportive new relationships that extend beyond their own schools. Several routines ensure ongoing feedback from course participants and allow the BTLC program to be a learning organization that can respond and stay relevant to current needs of teacher leaders in Boston.

The four core courses of the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate program are: Using Data, Supporting Instruction, Shared Leadership, and Professional Expertise. [See Table 1 for brief description of each.] This four-part course structure was derived from a meta-analysis we conducted of existing skills frameworks for teacher leadership and school leadership that were relevant to our district and purpose. [See Appendix A] We began with

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4 Our courses are cross-listed as 3-credit courses at Cambridge College and UMass Boston.
the comprehensive list of knowledge, skills and dispositions needed by effective teacher leaders that was produced by the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession in Washington (Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession, 2009). We knew this work to be philosophically aligned with our mission to contribute to the professionalization of teaching. We also took note of the competencies outlined by the Five-State Leadership Consortium (2010), a group convened by the Council of Chief State School Officers to design a model for teacher leadership development initiatives in Kentucky, Ohio, Delaware, Alabama and Kansas. As the work of a five-state consortium, it seemed an important first move toward shared teacher leadership standards. Since Boston has made a significant investment in having mentors trained by the New Teacher Center in Santa Cruz, we made the decision to also align with the sequenced curriculum of their Mentor Academy (New Teacher Center, n.d.). Soon after we began our program development process, a draft of the TLM Standards was released for comment, and these were added to our meta-analysis (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2010).

But teacher leaders and school leaders need to have a common conception of leadership to truly work in concert. Therefore, we decided to include in our analysis several locally-relevant standards for school leadership. Boston’s school administrators are licensed based upon the Massachusetts Leadership Standards and evaluated based upon the Boston Dimensions of Effective Leadership, thus we included both of these skills frameworks in our analysis (Boston Principal Fellowship, 2005; Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.). Boston also provides support and incentives for teachers to earn National Board Certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), so the new NBPTS Certification for Educational Leaders was considered locally-relevant (NBPTS, 2010). Lastly, in the interest of preparing teacher leaders for the 21st century, we made the decision to include the Educational Technology Standards and Performance Indicators or School Administrators from the International Society for Technology in Education (2009). Looking across these eight skills frameworks, we identified four main categories of skills.
To earn the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate, teachers must successfully complete the performance assessments embedded in these four graduate-level courses and they must also complete additional role-relevant training. We view the four core courses as providing leadership skills that are important across many roles, but recognize that every role has role-specific knowledge and skill (e.g. math content knowledge, assessing language development of English Language Learners, etc.) that are important to ensure that teacher leaders are leading their colleagues in the right direction. We coordinate with district departments to identify existing professional development opportunities that are role relevant that will count toward the certificate or we assist these departments to design new ones.  

An additional important feature of our program’s design is that we strive to organize course sections by grouping teacher leaders who hold the same type of role so that facilitators can tailor the practice-based coursework to demands of that particular role and so that participants who share a role can form a professional community across

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5 Note: We also believe teacher leaders should be accomplished classroom teachers, but we do not focus on strengthening teachers’ instructional skills. The teachers we serve already hold leadership roles for which they have generally been selected by their principals or the district. In some cases teachers are selected for their strong instructional practice. We believe in all cases they should be.

Table 1: Description of BTLC Core Courses

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using Data</td>
<td>Participants learn how to lead teams to understand and analyze various forms of data, use data in decision-making processes, communicate using data and foster a culture of high expectations with data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Instruction</td>
<td>Participants gain expertise in how to apply principles of adult learning as they learn and practice strategies for observing teaching, examining student work collaboratively, analyzing instruction and instructional resources, facilitating growth-oriented dialogue, and planning and implementing effective professional learning experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shared Leadership</td>
<td>Participants learn approaches for building unity of vision within a team, managing an effective, collaborative team, and understanding the role of individuals and teams within school and district systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Expertise</td>
<td>Participants build routines for guiding team reflection and harnessing professional expertise within a school, while also building skills to access and use the professional knowledge base and apply that expertise to systemic improvement.</td>
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schools that will sustain them in the work they share. This design also enables organizational learning to occur across schools about the role that can be fed back to the district departments that offer the role.

We expect that teacher leaders’ participation in the BTLC courses will help guarantee that the important roles they hold in the district’s reform plan are carried out effectively, contributing to improvements in teaching and learning in Boston and to increases in the measurable outcomes of the Acceleration Agenda. [The program’s logic model is provided as Appendix B.] Qualitative data collection routines including pre- and post-course surveys of course participants, interviews with participants, principals and district personnel, and focus groups with facilitators help us to monitor our intermediate program outcomes: increased competency in target roles, improved culture of individual and collective accountability for results in schools of participants, increased personal and professional career satisfaction for participants, and increased program knowledge about the conditions required for effective teacher leadership.

**Teacher Leader Model Standards**

While there is great interest today in using teacher leadership as leverage for school reform and improved student academic performance, few have figured out how to systemically support teachers to ensure they can be effective in these various roles. This comes as no surprise, as basic theoretical understanding of teacher leadership development is weak (Mangin & Stoelinga 2010; Ross et al., 2011). We have previously described how during our program design phase we used the draft of the TLM Standards and other similar resources to guide us in identifying the range of skills that teacher leaders in our district might need. The Teacher Leader Model Standards as published in 2011 propose a new organizing framework for thinking about the competencies important for teachers to engage in leadership roles.

The Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, whose members represent the wide spectrum of stakeholder groups in the education field, developed the Standards through examination of current research and engaging in dialogue with each other, experts in the field, and the public. According to this consortium, the critical dimensions of teacher
leadership are organized into seven broad domains:

- Domain I: Fostering a Collaborative Culture to Support Educator Development and Student Learning;
- Domain II: Accessing and Using Research to Improve Practice and Student Learning;
- Domain III: Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement;
- Domain IV: Facilitating Improvements in Instruction and Student Learning;
- Domain V: Promoting the Use of Assessments and Data for School and District Improvement;
- Domain VI: Improving Outreach and Collaboration with Families and Community; and
- Domain VII: Advocating for Student Learning and the Profession.

Within each domain, the Standards provide examples of actions or functions teacher leaders might perform. [See Appendix C]

**Analysis of the BTLC program using the TLM Standards**

In the section that follows, we employ the TLM standards to examine our program by using them to check alignment between our BTLC curriculum, what is required of our reform roles, and teachers' perceptions of the skills they need.

*Analysis of the BTLC curriculum*

Each of the BTLC program’s core courses has a curriculum toolkit that includes a sequence of skill topics to be addressed, a syllabus that outlines required readings, performance assessments with rubrics, and a shared collection of resources and strategies that are useful for strengthening knowledge and skill in those topics. Facilitators draw upon our shared collection of resources and strategies flexibly and as needed to prepare participants to complete the required performance assessments successfully. In addition, facilitators share some common instructional practices across all four core courses, such as modeling and thinking aloud about their facilitation skills throughout course sessions, managing an online asynchronous discussion of readings between course sessions, and using course participant data from the registration survey and exit slips to differentiate
course sessions based on course participants’ needs. TLRC staff provide coaching and bimonthly meetings for facilitators to be able to do this well.

Following we describe how the materials in the curriculum toolkits address the domains of the TLM Model standards. As a learning organization, the TLRC has continually remained attentive to teachers’ reports of their challenges and needs and updated the materials accordingly. Our analysis is based upon an examination of the collection of materials in each course toolkit as they existed in February 2012. For each course we describe the specific instructional activities or assessment tasks that align with the domains of the TLM standards.

**Using Data.** This course is principally focused on supporting teachers to build the skills for Domain V: Promoting Use of Assessments and Data. In this course, teachers are taught to collaboratively examine qualitative and quantitative data, understand how to make valid inferences from data, and be aware of common misuses of data. Bringing their laptops to class, they are instructed how to access data from various data systems available to Boston teachers and they are taught to download it into Excel where they learn to combine it, analyze it and create data displays. As a requirement of the course, they lead a data-based inquiry cycle with colleagues back in their schools to address a priority problem at the classroom, grade or school level. Therefore, teachers are taught not just to do this themselves, but are guided to practice protocols and strategies for analyzing and using data with colleagues, maintaining attention to cultural proficiency when making judgments about children, and strengthening collective ownership in the work.

We have found that teachers are unable to do the challenging work of Domain V successfully without skills for Domains I, II and III. Data use is not just a technical challenge, but an adaptive one (Heifitz, 2002). Therefore, in this course teachers are introduced to some common barriers to data use and are provided with opportunities to practice strategies for creating a culture of collaboration and learning in which a data culture can take root (Domains I & III). As teachers’ data skills improve, they become adept at being able to identify the student learning challenges that need to be addressed, but they are not always able to identify high-leverage instructional or programmatic responses to these challenges. Building teachers’ skills for accessing and using research (Domain II) to identify an intervention that can address a specific problem of practice becomes critically
important. If we do not teach this skill, teachers can get stuck on trying only what they already know while seeking a new result. Sometimes new knowledge is needed from beyond those on the data team.

The performance assessment for this course also requires teachers to share their data inquiry process and/or findings with three audiences in ways that contribute to creating a culture of high expectations. In order for them to do so with success, we address some of the skills described by Domains IV, VI, and VII. Teachers are not only guided in being able to identify high-leverage audiences for sharing data, but their clear purpose for sharing data—facilitating improvements in instruction or student learning (Domain IV)—and to consider how the choices they make in communicating data can best lead to the desired result. We encourage but do not require that one of those audiences includes family or community partners. In preparation we examine case studies, explore existing resources, and share examples from our own schools in which data has been used in meaningful ways with families and community (Domain VI). Through their final assessments, teachers are asked to demonstrate that they can apply the skills and strategies they have learned in this course to make data-informed statements that can help them advocate for decisions that benefit students, teachers and schools (Domain VII).

**Supporting Instruction.** While all of the BTLC courses focus on factors that contribute to improvements in instruction and student learning (Domain IV), our Supporting Instruction course addresses this area with greatest depth. Basic principles of adult learning are reviewed in every course. In this course, however, participants explore what makes teachers unique as adult learners and spend the bulk of their time applying this knowledge as they practice and build a repertoire of strategies for analyzing instruction grounded in evidence such as direct observation or student work (Domain V) and for facilitating growth-oriented dialogue about instruction. Since teacher leaders are often asked to support the instruction of teachers in a subject area or grade-level outside of their area of expertise, and since the field of educational practice is always expanding, this course is also designed to bolster teachers’ skill in using the internet, social networking and other technology tools for researching, evaluating and adapting resources or strategies that can address a specific problem of practice (Domain II). At the same time, the course strives to ensure that participants are well-versed in the principles of effective professional
learning with the goal that they can confidently lead individuals, teams or large groups in professional learning experiences (Domain III).

The work of instructional improvement requires teachers to make themselves vulnerable and take risks, something they are unlikely to do unless there is a collaborative culture (Domain I). The skills of listening, reflecting, building trust and creating an inclusive culture are not only taught through readings, explicit instruction, and practice, but they are modeled in order to create among the class the same kind of learning community that participants are striving to create in their schools.

**Shared Leadership.** Just as adult learning principles represent core knowledge that bears repeating in every BTLC course, so too with principles for establishing a collaborative culture. These principles are introduced in other courses but the *Shared Leadership* course is where this topic is fully unpacked (Domain I). The *Shared Leadership* course is designed to help teachers understand the importance of shared vision and its relationship with trust. Participants are instructed in how to collect and use data to take the temperature of the culture of the team or school (Domain V) and are provided with a repertoire of strategies to improve it. As a requirement of the performance assessment of this course, teachers experiment with these strategies back in their school settings, either informally or as formal professional learning experiences (Domain III), and they use course readings to develop a language and framework for reflecting together on their experiences in our online discussion forum.

In this and all BTLC courses, teachers are expected to apply their skills in the context of their roles so that they can facilitate improvements in instruction throughout their schools (Domain IV) and advocate for the necessary resources (Domain VII). This course focuses on some of the discreet skills required for this work. We train teachers to know themselves and their teams as well as to manage group dynamics, deal with challenging colleagues, hold difficult conversations and engage in culturally competent dialogue that puts students’ interests first.

This course also introduces teachers to systems thinking. In one performance assessment exercise, teachers create a map to illustrate their role and the role of their team in context of other school teams, the district and other stakeholders. After sharing cases and strategies for doing so, we ask teachers to create and implement a plan to improve
communication and collaboration with one of the groups on their map. We do require that a family or community group is included in this map, and many do choose this as their target for improved outreach (Domain VI).

**Professional Expertise.** The four BTLC core courses have been developed on a staggered schedule, and as yet the Professional Expertise course is still in draft form. We expect to pilot it in fall 2012. Based on current thinking, this course is principally focused on accessing and using the professional knowledge base, which we view as coming from research (Domain II) as well as from practice (Domain IV). It is focused on strategies for ensuring schools are able to bring all available relevant knowledge to bear on their work. Traditionally the large gap between educational research and practice has kept students from benefitting from the professional knowledge base beyond what their own teachers know. We view this as both a technical and adaptive challenge that can be overcome in this course.

In this course, teachers are charged with applying these skills to identify research and resources that address a specific problem of practice (Domain IV), and to guide colleagues in accessing, understanding and/or using these resources (Domain III). They are also supported to apply these skills toward influencing policy, as they learn to analyze policy and devise research-based recommendations that can be used to advocate for improvements (VII) in the conditions that support effective teaching and learning.

**Summary.** Whereas we define leadership in our context as influencing instructional improvement, it is not surprising to find that all of our leadership development courses work to strengthen teachers’ skills for Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement (Domain III) and Facilitating Improvements in Instruction and Student Learning (Domain IV). Each course addresses these domains in different and complementary ways. As a result, a teacher would find it insufficient to only participate in the Using Data course even though it addresses all seven domains. This course does introduce strategies for establishing the kind of trusting and collaborative culture that is important for data use on a team, but it is in the Shared Leadership course where teachers probe and refine the skills of turning a group of teachers into a real professional learning community. Similarly, the Supporting Instruction course uses data and other forms of evidence to focus dialogue on instructional improvement, but it is in the Using Data course
that teachers develop a comprehensive repertoire of strategies for collecting, managing, manipulating, displaying and sharing quantitative and qualitative data.

Table 2: Alignment of the Core Courses of the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate with the Teacher Leader Model Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Leader Model Standards</th>
<th>Core Courses of the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain I: Fostering a Collaborative Culture to Support Educator Development and Student Learning</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain II: Accessing and Using Research to Improve Practice and Student Learning</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain III: Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domain IV: Facilitating Improvements in Instruction and Student Learning</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain V: Promoting the Use of Assessments and Data for School and District Improvement</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domain VI: Improving Outreach and Collaboration with Families and Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domain VII: Advocating for Student Learning and the Profession</td>
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In this analysis, we discovered that there do not appear to be any domains of the TLM Standards that are not aligned with at least one of our program’s core courses, and in fact, a closer look at the functions for each domain of the TLM Standards shows that our program aligns with all of the functions of the domains as well. [See Appendix C for the domains and functions of the TLM Standards]

We also sought to identify whether there were skill topics in our core courses that did not appear to be emphasized in the TLM Standards, but we were limited by the fact that the language of the domains and functions is at a different level of specificity than our skills.
areas. For example, while there is no explicit mention in the TLM Standards of teacher leaders understanding how to design assessments for progress monitoring or to lead colleagues in analysis of qualitative data and student work, one could possibly see these BTLC competencies within the function of Domain V that states, “The teacher leader collaborates with colleagues in the design, implementation, scoring and interpretation of student data to improve educational practice and student learning.”

In conclusion, we feel confident that our program is aligned to the TLM Standards. We could imagine that such alignment could facilitate constructive comparisons or resource-sharing with other TLM-aligned programs of teacher leadership development.

**Analysis of the BTLC target roles**

Our analysis of the four teacher leadership roles that were targeted in the design of our program is based on written artifacts provided to teachers who hold each role, such as a job description, a list of expectations, or a role handbook. In the case of School Team Leaders and Mentors, we looked across artifacts from different sources, as each principal defines the role of his or her own Team Leaders and each mentoring program in the district has its own expectations. By restricting our analysis to these written documents, our analysis only takes into consideration the specific skills and responsibilities that have been identified as important by the authors of these documents, that is, the department or individual administering the role. The way teachers enact each role may be different than what is contained in these documents. For each role, we provide a brief description of the espoused responsibilities and structure of the role. Then, we discuss the alignment between the functions of the roles and the domains of the Teacher Leader Model Standards.

**LAT Facilitators.** This role requires these teachers to be knowledgeable about instructional and compliance issues related to English language education and stay current in this knowledge through attendance at three district-wide meetings per year. LAT Facilitators, most of whom teach full-time, are responsible for relaying this information to administrators, teachers, and staff at their schools. In addition, LAT Facilitators are also broadly responsible ensuring that ELL students are properly identified, placed and assessed. They also support the principal in monitoring compliance with ELL policy and
supporting instruction of teachers who work with ELL students. LAT Facilitators are appointed by the principal and receive a stipend that varies from $300-$900 depending on the number of ELLs in the school. A recent report showed that ELLs are performing at high levels in schools with an effective LAT Facilitator and a high-functioning LAT team (Tung, 2011).

Of the seven domains outlined by the Teacher Leader Model Standards, LAT Facilitators are explicitly required to embody the functions and dimensions of teacher leadership outlined in five of them. LAT Facilitators are expected to support colleagues in their school (Domain III) to improve the instruction and learning of ELL students (Domain IV) through the use of assessments and language acquisition data (Domain V). They must know how to help colleagues use data and assessments to correctly identify the placement of ELL students as well as to identify ways in which instruction can be altered to suit the language development needs of particular students (Domain V). Additionally, a function of the LAT Facilitator is that of advocate for ELL students (Domain VII). LAT Facilitators are responsible for recognizing students not identified as ELLs who should be, ensuring that ELL students are assigned to appropriate classrooms and are provided with the necessary ELL services required by law. As they are asked to facilitate required meetings between the school and parents, LAT Facilitators also are expected to be adept at fostering school and parent collaboration (Domain VI).

**AAF Service Team Facilitators.** The Academic Achievement Framework is a multi-level prevention and intervention structure designed to simultaneously address students’ academic development, social-emotional-behavioral development and English Language development. Similar to the widely-known Response to Intervention, AAF features a team-based structure in which cross-functional groups of teachers and others consider individual student cases, identify appropriate tiered interventions, and engage in progress monitoring. The AAF Service Team Facilitator, appointed by the principal, facilitates a team of colleagues as they engage in this work. The teachers who serve as AAF Service Team Facilitators have opportunities to participate in orientation, professional development, and other support activities, but are not required to do so; nor are they compensated for the role.

The tasks of the AAF Service Team Facilitator fall primarily within three domains.
The AAF Service Team Facilitator is expected to assist the professional learning of his/her Service Team members by guiding the data-based problem-solving processes of the Service Team (Domain III). She/he collaborates on construction of the process, monitors adherence to the process, and identifies challenges to the implementation. This Facilitator is also charged with collecting and leading use of student data by the Service Team (Domain V). The AAF Service Team Facilitator guides the Service Team in using the data to make decisions about student progress and select the appropriate assessment tools. In fulfilling these tasks, the AAF Facilitator is also asked to perform many of the types of functions outlined within Domain IV: Facilitating Improvements in Instruction and Student Learning.

**School Team Leaders.** Since the role of team leader does not exist in all Boston schools and responsibilities vary from school to school, we based our analysis of the school team leader role on a job description template created by the TLRC and offered to principals in 2011 to aid schools to move toward formalizing these important roles. Our job description template is a compilation of written job descriptions we had collected from throughout the district. Team leaders may receive a small stipend when principals are able to carve funds out of their budgets for this purpose.

Three domains of the Teacher Leader Model Standards encompass the skills that team leaders are regularly asked to apply and be knowledgeable about in their role. Team leaders in most schools are responsible for facilitating data-based inquiry (Domain V), guiding colleagues to make instructional decisions (Domain IV), and supporting effective instructional practice (Domain III). The team leader usually serves to as a liaison between the team and school administration, perhaps even serving on the school leadership team, to ensure that school-level decisions are informed by ongoing communication between teachers and administrators.

An effective team leader also needs to create a culture that fosters shared learning among the team in order to support instructional changes for improved student learning (Domain I). This concept appears on our model job description template, and it is critically important, but it is not common for schools to state this explicitly.

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6 This resource is available for download from the TLRC resource library: [http://www.bpe.org/teachers/teacherleaders/resourcelibrary](http://www.bpe.org/teachers/teacherleaders/resourcelibrary)
Mentors. In the design of our certificate, we focused our attention on two mentoring roles: New Teacher Developers (NTDs) and mentors serving the Boston Teacher Residency (BTR) program. Teacher leaders in these two positions are charged with guiding the development and improvement of new teachers’ instructional practice. NTDs are recruited and trained directly by the Boston Public Schools while BTR mentors are recruited and trained by the Boston Teacher Residency program. BTR mentors receive a stipend of approximately $3,000 and generally work in teams to mentor groups of student or “resident” teachers, while most NTDs receive a stipend of 5% of their salary for the additional work hours spent supporting one assigned novice teacher. (A small number of NTDs are released full-time to work with 10-12 novices.) NTDs and BTR mentors are both required to participate in over 30 hours of professional development activities related to their role.

The functions and responsibilities of NTDs and BTR mentors are highly aligned with Domains I, III, IV, and V of the Teacher Leader Model Standards. Both mentor types are expected to identify and address the professional learning needs of novice teachers (Domain III) in order to support improvements in instructional practices (Domain IV). The mentors also work with novice teachers to identify appropriate student assessments and analyze student data (Domain V). BTR mentors, like NTDs, need to be knowledgeable about techniques for collaborating with novice teachers. But, NTDs are also explicitly expected help to establish a collaborative culture in the school (Domain I).

Summary. Looking across the four reform roles, we find three domains of the Teacher Leader Model Standards that are commonly reflected in the documentation of the roles. This overlap makes sense due to the fact that these domains nearly define the roles. As outlined in Boston’s Acceleration Agenda, district improvement calls for data-driven decision-making and enhanced teaching and learning (Boston Public Schools, 2010). Thus, it would be expected that the teacher leadership roles chosen to receive the attention of the BTLC program would be those that require teachers to be skilled in using data (Domain V), are focused on improving instruction and student learning (Domain IV), and build capacity for the professional learning of colleagues (Domain III).

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7 The Boston Teacher Residency program is run by BPE, a non-profit partner and public education fund for the Boston Public Schools.
Table 3: Alignment of Target Roles and Core Courses of the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate with the Teacher Leader Model Standards

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Leader Model Standards</th>
<th>Target Roles</th>
<th>Core Courses</th>
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<td></td>
<td>LAT Facilitator</td>
<td>AAF Facilitator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domain I: Fostering a Collaborative Culture to Support Educator Development and Student Learning</td>
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<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain II: Accessing and Using Research to Improve Practice and Student Learning</td>
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Furthermore, all of the roles involve the teacher leader working alongside fellow teachers, school administrators and/or parents. In order to succeed, the teacher leaders selected for these positions need to be knowledgeable and skilled in establishing an environment of trust and inclusivity for effective collaboration among the various individuals involved in the school improvement process (Domain I). Yet, Domain I is only explicitly referenced in the job documentation of the Team Leader and Mentor roles. It would seem that LAT Facilitators would also need to be able to foster collaboration, as they
regularly lead meetings with colleagues and parents of ELL students. Similarly, this domain seems important to an AAF Service Team, comprised of cross-functional members who may not work regularly with one another. The fact that Domain I is not explicitly referenced in the tasks and responsibilities of an LAT Facilitator or AAF Service Team Facilitator illustrates the common discrepancy between how a role is described and enacted. And, it has implications for how teachers might be identified (or misidentified) for the role and for how teachers may be prepared (or under-prepared) for the work.

LAT Facilitators are the only ones whose functions dictated outreach and collaboration with families (Domain VI) and advocating for students (Domain VII). Of course, these skills are also critical components of good teaching, and we would expect all teacher leaders to have these skills, especially mentors who must model them for the novices with whom they work. These skills are not specifically referenced in the documentation of these roles. This may be due to the fact that these skills are not required for effective enactment of the leadership tasks of the mentoring role.

Interestingly, there is one domain that is not reflected in the job descriptions of any of the reform roles. None of the role documentation we collected required teacher leaders to access or use research in order to improve practice and student learning (Domain II). But again, where domains were not referenced in the documentation of these reform roles, it does not necessarily mean that the domain is not a function of the role, but it was not explicitly referenced by the authors of the role.

We pursued this analysis seeking to determine whether and how teacher development programs aligned to the TLM Standards would appear to serve these roles. This analysis would suggest that certain domains are unnecessary for certain roles. This, however, does not ring true, and it directs our attention to the fact that teacher leaders in these positions find themselves performing a wide range of additional tasks or requiring knowledge and skills that are not written into the job description or handbook. Further examination of the roles in action and conducting member checks would enable us to better estimate the match between the domains and these roles.

By overlaying this analysis of the tasks of the target roles with the analysis of the BTLC course curricula, we see an alignment that suggests that—taken together—the four BTLC core courses do offer teacher leaders the opportunity to strengthen the full range of
skills required for success in their roles, as defined by the documentation of the roles. We also see that certain courses may be more aligned to certain roles than others. For example, LAT Facilitators would want to be sure to take the Using Data and Shared Leadership courses, as they provide guidance that other courses do not for two skills critical to that role: collaborating with families (VI) and advocating for student learning (VII). Similarly, the Supporting Instruction course might be the first port of call for mentors. But these conclusions are based upon documentation of the roles, not on how the roles are enacted in situ and the skills teachers feel are most important. Thus, next we explore teachers’ perceptions of their work, challenges and needs.

Analysis of Program Participant Data

Having identified the domains of the TLM Standards that our target roles require and the domains that we teach in our program, we wondered also about which domains teachers feel are important to their roles. A goal of our work is that teacher leaders are both effective in and feel satisfied by their roles. At this early stage in program implementation, we are monitoring teachers’ own reports of what skills they feel they need and are learning that are useful. At the end of each course session, teachers complete an online exit slip on which they indicate the extent to which each week’s course session has given them a deeper understanding of course content, had an engaging and interactive process, and was relevant to them in the context of their role. [See Appendix D] For the following analysis, we coded exit slip data received from the Shared Leadership and Using Data courses between February 15, 2011 and March 15, 2012. This includes 54 teachers over eight course sections, four of which are still in progress. Mentors have not been participating in the program long enough to be included in the analysis and the Supporting Instruction course was not included because it is still in its pilot phase. All comments in which course participants described a skill they learned as useful or identified a skill they needed were considered as indicators that this skill topic was important to their efficacy and satisfaction within the role.

Domain I. The Supporting Instruction course provided participants with the opportunity to reflect on the level of trust that currently exists in their teams and schools and to learn strategies to improve it. “Trust is so key and so obvious, but not often thought
about explicitly,” one teacher reflected. Some participants indicated that they discovered a real lack of trust among their teams and in their schools despite the importance of trust, and they understood that a lack of trust can have negative effects on communication, performance, and feelings of self-efficacy. Building trust is difficult in “a community where everyone works so hard to appear...unified,” one noted, or in an environment in which there “are so many wary relationships, questions about competence, instability, blatant gossiping and competition.” Participants were very interested in learning strategies for building trust, and remarked favorably when they did so: “The activity we did and the action plans we developed were very good for helping me understand the process for developing trust within a group.” Fostering a collaborative culture (Domain I) begins with trust.

Participant comments also reflected the difficulty and importance of fostering a cohesive team. One participant wrote, “Our team may not be aware that they are a team, despite the word 'team' in its title.” There was also an interest in helping colleagues to recognize the skills that they bring to the team: “How can we help make team members more aware of the skills/their own learning styles that they bring with them to the meetings?” Another participant wrote, “I am focusing on surveying the teachers about things that would help them. I plan to begin this task by showing willingness to be a resource/tool for them.”

In bringing their teams together, many participants commented on the desire to learn strategies to overcome resistance from colleagues and “how to work with more difficult members of a team and those who do not seem engaged.” Some participants wrote that other colleagues might be “resistant to change” or “feel intimidated by what they perceive as the ‘motive’ to increasing trust among our teams.” Participants in the Shared Leadership course were particularly interested in skills related to building a team, overcoming barriers from difficult colleagues, and fostering participation. On the other hand, participants in the Using Data course were more interested in ways to engage and garner commitment from colleagues to work with data given the time obligation needed to meaningfully use data as well as a general lack of knowledge and sometimes fear of using data.
**Domain II.** The two courses in this analysis touched only briefly on education research and in neither case did it catch participants’ attention enough to warrant mention in the exit slips. The only situation in which participants seemed to take note of research was with regard to the readings. One teacher noted, "I found the readings very insightful. I wish I had more time to actually study and develop my thinking about these ideas." Another teacher referenced the strategies presented in a particular reading that would “be really helpful in my position." These readings do represent research-based resources that can be applied to improve teaching and learning, and in a few cases teachers did note them as useful.

**Domain III.** Promoting professional learning was important to these teachers. Course participants were not only eager to apply the skills they learned in BTLC courses to their own classrooms but also to share what they were learning with colleagues at their school. In our weekly exit slips, they regularly puzzled about how to take the learning back: “How can I make this accessible to my colleagues as well?” They made commitments to do so: “I am committed to putting to use many of the principles of the Using Data course to drive change.” And they frequently described their successes in doing so: “Having access to the data enabled me to see how the students were doing if they were growing as a student or not and I was able to bring this to the principal’s attention. It became possible to begin to question and together with other teachers to think of possible reasons the students’ growth is not what it should be.”

While our BTLC courses expand the professional learning in schools, they also expand the learning across schools. The courses gave participants the opportunity to learn from colleagues with similar roles and with whom they may not otherwise have the chance to work. This was viewed as helpful: Activities in the course were “helpful to not only work through content and shared leadership ideas, but also to hear about what’s going on in other schools and other PLCs.” This can be fun: “I enjoy learning from my colleagues in the profession. I do not have all the answers and I appreciate having a safe space where I can learn and thrive. I appreciate working with people who share many of my beliefs on fundamentals in education.” This can be reassuring: “I felt affirmed in the issues I see in my school because everyone else seemed to be having the same issues.” It can be inspirational: “This data stuff is so much more exciting than I thought! Still absolutely
terrified about how to use it, but I love hearing what my colleagues are doing at other schools!” And it can feel important: “I feel that this is an important venture for professional development and one that is way overdue.”

When teachers discussed the value of learning from colleagues, some recognized that it is a two-way street: “Listening to my colleagues today allowed me to hear from teachers who are not working in my building. I feel that I can learn from them as well as offer some thoughts and ideas around leadership.” The collaborative structure of the course enabled participants to feel validated and recognize that they have knowledge and experience to share that is genuinely useful to others. It nurtured their confidence in their professional expertise and positioned them to be promoters of professional learning in their buildings.

**Domain IV.** Participants’ comments frequently referenced ways they could or wanted to facilitate improvements in instruction and student learning (Domain IV). Some examples are: “It is easy to want to begin to use these skills in my own teaching and planning because it will be extremely beneficial both to my students and myself.” “The steps that I learned today will be very useful in both my work for this class and my future teaching work.” “It’s practical and perfect timing for me in terms of what is happening at my school.”

Some Shared Leadership course participants wrote about how the skills they learned are directly applicable to the work they are doing in their teams: “With each tool discussed, I found myself thinking about my team and how different individuals might react and which tools might get different individuals to open up.” On the other hand, the participants in the Using Data course wrote more about how the skills can be applied to improving instructional practice and student learning. One participant wrote: “I am really interested in the data I am looking at, I am trying to use it to improve my own teaching this year and in coming years, and I am hoping that we begin using these data cycles in our subject-specific groups and use it to improve teaching and learning across our department.” Although many participants felt that the skills they learned would help them to facilitate improvements in instruction and student learning, they also frequently identified important challenges to applying these skills: “I’m excited about the possibility of using data to inform instruction, however, I’m concerned about the time required.” Additionally,
“there is not a lot of time or structure for collaboration with other teachers.” Or, “The only worry I have... is with those colleagues who are overtly opposed to different new ideas and procedures.” Their expressions of concern that they might not be able to apply these skills were taken in this analysis as evidence that they felt it would be helpful or important to be able to do so.

**Domain V.** The use of assessments and data is promoted in all BTLC courses. However, this domain goes the deepest in the *Using Data* course, in which teachers identified a variety of specific technical skills that they developed and valued. These include: accessing various data systems available to Boston teachers, downloading data into Excel, manipulating it for analysis (e.g. using filter, sort, vlookup), and displaying it (in high-tech and low-tech ways). Initially, some questioned the utility of these challenging workshops. One participant questioned early in the course, “As of yet it is still not clear to me how I am going to acquire/use the necessary skills in my role/school.” But over time the benefits became obvious: “I learned from my team partner how to put some of my critical data into Excel, and it will make it much easier to analyze my ELL students’ needs.” Another teacher wrote: “I am working through my issues with Excel, and am excited to incorporate this information into a better system of tracing data for my classes, and maybe even my department.” Teachers clearly saw that these skills would make them both more effective and more efficient in using data to promote improvement.

Another prevalent theme in participants’ exit slips was teachers’ appreciation for the opportunity to learn about new data sources. “How will I find the ‘right’ data to help my ELL students?” “What is the best way to triangulate data?” “What types of data do I use to measure progress in a meaningful way?” Teachers understand that the analysis is only as good as the data and they were largely able to answer these questions for each other. As teachers shared the data sources that they are finding or creating at their own schools, they all gained valuable new ideas about data sources that could serve their needs.

Confidence was also commonly identified as an important factor around data use. One teacher noted toward the beginning of the course: “I’m not sure I understand enough yet (Excel wise) to be able to lead a meeting relying on it. That’s the hard part. I will eventually be able to put these skills to use - I do feel like I am moving towards getting better.” Another queried: “How I am going to present my inquiry cycle to my peers? I feel

(Berg & Souvanna, 2012)
anxious about starting to put it together and make it worthwhile for my colleagues.” But generally, what the course presents, which was refreshing to teachers, is an opportunity to practice. In their roles, teachers are simply expected to lead data use, but they are not supported to learn how first. In contrast, “This class makes it easy to bring the skills back to my teammates because I have had time to practice beforehand. My colleagues are looking forward to our work with the data in the future based on what I have told them.”

Within the Shared Leadership course, participants found it useful to have strategies for collecting data on the level of trust, the unity of vision or the stages of concern of their team members. They were able to use these diagnostic data to create a plan for improving those teams.

**Domain VI.** Working with families and community was a more prevalent theme among participants of the Using Data course than the Shared Leadership course. In Using Data, participants remarked about the new ideas they had gotten from reflecting on the course or from one another for "ways to really get my school and the parents working together.” Some also talked about the value of identifying and building cultural competency and its relationship to data use. And some extended their enthusiasm to their work with students: “I’m really excited about the idea of communicating with data with my students. I think that will be challenging but potentially will have a big payoff.”

Interestingly, although there is a component of the Shared Leadership course that addresses the involvement of families and community in school leadership structures, our course participants did not make any mention of this topic from the course in their exit slips.

**Domain VII.** According to Domain VII, teacher leaders should be able to use their knowledge of research, policy and instruction to advocate for student learning and the profession. While discussing parent engagement, some participants in the Using Data course readily saw how to put their skills to use: “I’m thinking now about the importance of communicating data with parents. We don’t have strong parent involvement at my school and I know parents have a lot of misunderstandings about what their children need to do to be successful in high school (be promoted to 10th grade and also to be on track to graduate). Before this I hadn’t thought much about how to keep parents in the loop about their students’ data, and now I’m thinking about what info would be useful to parents and
what they can do to help support their students.” Another teacher saw promise in advocating for students with colleagues beyond her usual team: “I’m thinking about taking the idea of parental involvement to a different audience - the guidance counselor and other student support staff, rather than the teachers and administrators that I most often work closely with.” Generally, teachers found the power of data inquiry inspiring. One teacher queried: “Based on the readings so far, I am thinking about what impacts the effective use of data at the systems level. I am wondering about how the big picture (macro level?) affects how I use data at the micro level of my small group of students. How, if at all, are the decisions that I make based on my own data focus creating meaningful changes within the system in which I operate?”

As previously mentioned, an important aspect of the Using Data course seemed to be the opportunity to practice and build confidence in working with data, and this includes using data to advocate for teaching and learning. The sentiment of several teachers is expressed by one participant who said: “The work we did this week will make telling the story of the data easier. Assessment 3 forces us to practice sharing our ideas, data findings, and suggested practices with colleagues. This definitely will make me more comfortable to research, compile, and present data in the future.”

The Shared Leadership course has aspects that address Domain VII directly. However, teachers in this course did not make mention of advocacy as a skill they learned or needed.

**Summary.** Two strong themes were apparent in teachers’ reports of what they needed to do their jobs well, yet both fall outside of the domains of the TLM standards because they are not skills.

Participants in all roles repeatedly identified the need --and difficulty-- they have for negotiating the contextual conditions required to apply learned concepts to their teams and school. Primary among these is the lack of time with colleagues and the lack of access to resources they need such as data. According to Domain VII, “the teacher leader advocates for access to professional resources, including financial support and human and other material resources, that allow colleagues to spend significant time learning about effective practices and developing a professional learning community focused on school improvement goals” (p. 20). Yet the question remains for these teachers: If I have been
asked to support colleagues in instructional improvement and I have no time allocated and protected to meet with colleagues, what is my responsibility?

Table 4: Alignment of BTLC Program Participant Data, Target Roles and Core Courses with the Teacher Leader Model Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Leader Model Standards</th>
<th>BTLC Program Participant Data</th>
<th>Target Roles</th>
<th>BTLC Core Courses</th>
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A second theme we noted in their responses is safety. Teachers regularly reported their appreciation for the course as a safe place to learn, experiment, vent, take risks, and be supported. As one teacher explained, “I do not have all the answers and I appreciate having a safe space where I can learn and thrive.” In context of the fact that many of these teachers have held their teacher leadership role for some time and have already been

(Berg & Souvanna, 2012)
presumed expert, it is a cathartic experience for some to let down their guard and open themselves up to learning how to do what they have already been expected to do. Yet there was also a tension for some teachers: How safe is our teacher leadership community? Might my comments be used against me?

After adding this analysis to the prior ones, we see confirmation of the pattern in which Domain II—accessing and using research—is underrepresented. In comparison to the other domains, this domain had far fewer instances of teachers citing a relevant need or interest. Accessing and using educational research is not a priority for these teachers and building skills to do it well is not of concern to them in their roles.

Implications & Recommendations

One of the goals of the TLM Standards is to “stimulate dialogue among stakeholders of the teaching profession about what constitutes the knowledge, skills, and competencies that teachers need to assume leadership roles in their schools, districts, and the profession” (p. 3). In employing the Standards as an analytical framework for examining the BTLC program content, the program’s target roles and teachers’ perceptions of the competencies they need, we recognized areas for consideration and exploration in both the BTLC program and the TLM Standards. What follows is a discussion of the implications of our findings for the BTLC program, as well as our recommendations for the Standards.

Implications for the BTLC program. Our analysis of the program’s curriculum, target roles and the perceived needs of course participants revealed to us that there are areas in our program that could be adjusted to better support teacher leaders:

- **Sequencing the courses based on the needs of the target roles.** The analysis of our target roles highlighted the fact that the skills and competencies of some courses are more critical for certain target roles than others. Sequencing the courses based upon the needs of the target roles may help ensure that teachers have their most urgent needs addressed first.

- **Enhancing curriculum to address advocacy skills.** Teacher leaders are up against contextual conditions that regularly limit their ability to be effective: inadequate time to fulfill role expectations, insufficient time with colleagues, lack of access to
the resources or information needed to do the job, dysfunctional professional norms, etc. These conditions lie outside of teacher leaders’ immediate control. However, the salience of this issue raises the question of whether there might be skills and strategies we can teach teacher leaders to do something about this themselves. Domain VII claims that teacher leaders “advocate for access to professional resources, including financial support and human and other resources” (p. 20). What knowledge and skills could a person learn to help them succeed in such advocacy within a school? Our newest course, *Professional Expertise*, which is still in draft form, can be the beneficiary of this analysis. In it we could increase the emphasis we place on helping teachers to hone skills for advocating for the conditions they need to do their work well.

In addition to the above adjustments to our program, our analysis leads us to believe that we could better support the teacher leaders in our program through the following actions beyond our Certificate program:

- **Examining in greater depth the skills needed across all the teacher leadership roles in Boston.** We learned from our roles analysis that certain domains of the TLM Standards are critical across all of our target roles. This piques our interest in learning about the extent to which our four target roles represent the range of types of roles available in Boston and therefore whether these domains are likely to be critical across all or most roles in the district. We would like to think that teachers who earn the BTLC certificate have built the skills they need to be successful—not only in the roles they hold now, but—in new roles they may hold in the future. It would be worthwhile now to look beyond our target roles to see if there are distinctly different types of roles in the district to add to our analysis.

- **Engaging with the district on ways in which role responsibilities and expectations can be more clearly communicated.** The range of written documentation available for each target role in our analysis varied, and we suspect that many additional role expectations have been communicated orally and therefore potentially inconsistently over time. In our analysis, for example, certain domains from the TLM Standards were not referenced explicitly in role documents, when our experience tells us that they are in fact critical components of the role.
Having clear, comprehensive job documentation of the expectations of the role (e.g. a job description, handbook, etc.) helps teachers know what they are getting into when assuming a role, aides colleagues to know what they can and should not expect from these teacher leaders, and heightens school and district administrators’ attention to the support that will be needed.

And, as we expand the program and identify resources to increase the range of support beyond the certificate program, we should consider the following:

- **Extending the teacher leadership development continuum.** As we reflect on the fact that our course participants routinely remark that they appreciate having a safe place to experiment with and practice their leadership skills, we note that they also suggest that they wished they had learned these ideas, skills and strategies sooner. Our program currently addresses the middle of the teacher leadership development continuum. It offers teachers who already hold roles an opportunity to strengthen their skills. It also offers a small number of experienced teacher leaders (our course facilitators) the opportunity to hone their skills for leading a rigorous, practice-based, graduate-level course. It would be worthwhile to extend this continuum of teacher leadership development in both directions. What aspects of teacher leadership development can be introduced in pre-service training or novice teacher induction? In an ideal situation, which skills would early career teachers develop before they assume teacher leadership roles? At the other end of the spectrum, how can we identify accomplished teacher leaders? How can we expand the opportunities for these accomplished professionals to learn and lead so that they do not feel the only opportunities for advancement are out of the classroom?

- **Preparing school and district leaders for teacher leadership.** We have noted that teachers report their greatest challenges to be those related to the contextual conditions in their schools or the district. In our program, we aim to empower teachers to identify what they can do that is within their control, and as already mentioned, we can enhance the curriculum to increase teachers’ advocacy skills so that when they do face challenges beyond their control related to resources, school culture, and authority, for example, they can educate those who are in a position to do something. But at the same time, it would be worthwhile to identify allies within
the district who have a learning orientation and are open to co-constructing with us a vision of coordinated teacher, school and district leadership. What would that look like? How can we prepare teachers and leaders for the changes it would likely require? Under what conditions would they see this as necessary?

**Recommendations for the Standards.** Using the Standards as an analytical framework brought to light not only insights about the BTLC program and teacher leadership in Boston but also ways in which the Standards could be enhanced to make them more valuable for teacher leadership development. Based on the findings of our analysis, we recommend the following:

- **Clarifying the language used in describing the domains.** We found that the domains describe ideas that are not discreet but often overlap, making this framework difficult to apply as a consistent coding scheme. For example, facilitation skills such as listening, presenting ideas, and leading discussions to advance professional learning are part of both Domains I and III. Facilitating analysis of student learning data is part of Domain II and V. The fact that the domains describe ideas that are not discreet but bleed together makes it challenging to achieve inter-rater reliability when using them as a coding scheme. Clarification of the language in the TLM Standards will aide researchers to employ it more reliably as a framework for examining teacher leader programs.

- **Stating the standards as teachable skills.** The TLM Standards do not represent a list of the knowledge and skills that teacher leaders need to learn. They describe the domains of actions teacher leaders might be asked to enact. However, from a teacher leadership development perspective, it is of limited usefulness to state that “the teacher leader serves as an individual of influence and respect.” This is not within the teachers’ control. It is not a teachable skill that a teacher leadership development program can address. As they currently exist, the TLM Standards specify the realm of things that teacher leaders could do rather than the specific skills and competencies that teachers need in order to grow into effective teacher leaders. This is what is needed in order to support teacher leadership development.

- **Forging a distinction between effective teaching and teacher leadership.** Those
who endeavor to create teacher leadership development programs inevitably stumble upon questions about which skills are true hallmarks of a teacher leader versus which skills are simply important for effective teaching practice. The distinction is important, as it has implications for where these skills are expected to be introduced and mastered in the career continuum. For this reason, it would be useful to have a set of model standards that could shed light on the distinction between good teaching and teacher leadership. In the case of the TLM Standards, few would argue against the idea that “improving outreach and collaboration with families and community” (Domain VI) is the provenance of all teachers. In fact, in today’s education climate, it would not be hard to argue that Domains V and VII are part of the new basic skills for all teachers: “promoting the use of assessments and data” and “advocating for student learning and the profession.”

Discussion

The Teacher Leadership Resource Center was established to be a learning organization with built-in routines for data collection and review that enable us to continually improve the work based upon participants’ experiences within the program. This paper presented the welcome opportunity to stand back and look at our program from the outside. From this perspective, we have taken notice of some of the theoretical underpinnings that seem to be giving our nascent program some traction. In the interest of furthering the dialogue on teacher leadership development, we identify these key ideas here and describe how they have led to our current approach, then we provide a new iteration of our model, one that incorporates the findings from this analysis and that we hope can fuel further thinking about teacher leadership development.

First, we believe basic principles of instructional design should be applied to teacher leaders as learners. Teacher leaders need a system of aligned standards, assessments (or performances) and instruction that can strategically address their development needs. When accomplished classroom teachers perceive student learning needs, they drill down into the tasks being presented to students, identify gaps between what the task requires and what students know, and devise an instructional program that can bolster the
necessary skills. Further, the task or target must be of the right grain size. That is, when we want students’ math scores to improve we don’t just help them with “math;” we dig into the data and examine student performance to identify which specific sub-skills are in need of work. This approach is increasingly being applied to teacher learning. Where we once we had school-wide workshops on “writing instruction,” today’s teachers often have opportunities for professional learning that are focused on improving a specific aspect of their instructional routines based on identified patterns in their students’ writing performance.

But principles of good instruction—aligned standards, assessments and instruction—have rarely been applied to teacher leader learning. This may be due to the fact that teacher leadership is often regarded as a disposition, not recognized as a professional specialty requiring a skill set. It may also be due to the fact that there is such a wide range of informal and informal teacher leadership roles and significant variation in the skills they require. Further, given the lack of time and resources and the great variation in how these roles are assigned or taken up, it is often unclear who should assume responsibility for providing the supervisory support of assessing and instructing teacher leaders.

Second, we theorize that teacher leadership as a field of learning would benefit from being parsed into the major skills and sub-skills that are important for common teacher leadership roles. While it is true that not all skills apply to all roles, having such a schema of the range of possible skills would enable teacher leaders and those who aim to support them to have a comprehensive and common point of reference as they strive to strengthen their skills, including those skills they don’t know they don’t know.

Further, we argue that that the best way to identify the core skills and sub-skills required across all teacher leadership roles is to start with a few specific roles and investigate them deeply. Accomplished teachers know that in the classroom an in-depth study of student performances from a few individual struggling students will benefit the entire class. As we come to understand how these students have interpreted or misinterpreted an assignment and we devise strategies to both clarify the assignment and student understanding, we expand our experience with the range of possible interpretations and we deepen our own understanding of what they need. Similarly, an in-
depth look at a few specific teacher leadership roles is necessary to get a detailed, realistic and on-the-ground picture of the true needs of roles, a picture that is specific enough to enable us to conduct a task analysis and capture the nuanced challenges of the role and to identify the skills required to address them. By doing this in Boston, we believe we have created a skills framework that is useful far beyond just our four target roles. And, we believe that it is still just a framework. The range of informal and formal roles teacher leaders hold in schools varies widely, is expanding rapidly, and is different from school to school. Therefore, any skills framework would have to be adapted locally and revisited for revision periodically.

Finally, we believe teacher leadership development should be done collaboratively and in context of a specific role. We are learning from our work that the largest share of the challenge of teacher leadership roles comes not from being able to carry out work tasks skillfully, but from workplace variables that make it challenging to carry them out at all. If teachers do not have the resources they need, the authority to put what they are learning to use, or a school culture that can support the learning to take hold, their roles will have limited impact and teachers will grow frustrated. Under these conditions, teacher leadership can lead to the attrition of teachers instead of their retention. These types of challenges cannot fully be addressed through traditional knowledge and skill-building channels; they are better mediated by structuring the learning experience so that teacher leaders are learning from one another’s experience with shared work.

To illustrate this idea, we could look at the role of data team leader. To perform this role well, a teacher must have strong assessment literacy and be familiar with a large repertoire of assessment tools and strategies. They must also know how to collect, analyze and display data in compelling ways and for different audiences. A strong curriculum could provide the training for teachers to learn all of these competencies. But it is not enough to have these skills; teachers have to know how to apply them in the complex settings of their schools. Data leaders often face the political challenge of trying to ensure what they are learning is heard in their schools. They face cultural challenges as they shake up the norms of privatized practice and press colleagues to examine and share their instructional expertise. Sociological puzzles come into play for these teachers as they try to understand and negotiate their stance half-way between being “just a teacher” and being a formally-
recognized leader. Logistically, they have to know how to access data systems that are available locally. From a psychological and possibly economic perspective, data leaders may struggle with questions about what they are really getting out of this and whether it is all worth the time and effort.

The salience of these “workplace variables” (Johnson, 1990) has strong implications for programs of teacher leadership development. They suggest that it is not sufficient to address only the skills required for the role. To be successful in carrying out their roles, teacher leaders require a learning experience that prepares them for the place-based challenges of enacting the role. This can only come from those who have already faced those challenges: other teacher leaders. It is not necessary for each individual to learn these lessons based on their own trial-and-error; they can learn from one another.

**A New Model for Teacher Leadership Development**

As a result of this analysis, we have been able to refine the model we have had in use in Boston and articulate it in a way that may be informative to others. The content of the model is still organized by four core skill areas that are discreet, yet interdependent. Each area is described here with associated sub-skills that identify specific, teachable knowledge, skills and strategies that make up the content of that skill area. [See Appendix E for a visual representation of the skills framework.] In addition to this framework of competencies, we also describe two design features that we feel are important to ensure that this content is acquired with attention to what will best support teacher leaders’ success within their given workplaces.

**Using Data.** The *Using Data* course enables teacher leaders to lead strategic improvement efforts. It helps ensure teacher leaders can answer the following important questions with their colleagues: Do we understand the problem? Are we solving the right problem? Do we all understand what needs improvement and why? Are we on track?

To address these questions in their roles, teacher leaders need knowledge, skills and strategies for:

- Accessing and collecting quantitative and qualitative data
- Manipulating and analyzing data
• Creating data displays
• Identifying a priority problem using data
• Progress monitoring
• Goal setting
• Conducting a root cause analysis
• Identifying appropriate instructional or programmatic responses to data
• Engaging stakeholders in looking at data
• Leading a diversity-conscious data team
• Communicating with data to a variety of audiences

This course does not focus on helping teacher leaders to make informed decisions about what interventions might work to address the problem. They will deepen skills for this in the Professional Expertise course. It also will not help them to ensure instructional interventions are implemented with quality, as that is the focus of the Supporting Instruction course. Skills and strategies from the Shared Leadership course will also support strong data use; in this course they will learn to manage unified, effective teams prepared to share ownership of the problem and organized to address it. In this way, the four skill areas complement each other and can be seen as interdependent, but we have found it necessary to separate them for the purpose of effective, focused skill-building. Without further elaborating the interconnectedness of these skill areas, the remaining three skill areas are described below.

**Supporting Instruction.** While examining evidence of teaching or learning (achievement data, student work, classroom videos, low-inference transcripts of an instructional sequence, etc.) teachers can not only be motivated to address a problem of practice but often have ideas of what they need to strengthen. In the Supporting Instruction course, teacher leaders learn to address these questions: What do our students need us to improve in our instructional practice? How can we support each other to take the risks needed to learn it? How can we effectively identify and learn to effectively utilize appropriate new instructional resources and strategies for our students?

For this, teacher leaders need to have knowledge, skills and strategies for:
• Understanding adults/teachers as learners
• Facilitating growth-oriented dialogue & reflection
• Planning, implementing and evaluating professional learning experiences
• Looking at student work to improve instruction
• Using observation to improve instruction
• Establishing focus questions or improvement goals
• Cultivating a professional learning community
• Creating a safe space for risk-taking and growth
• Identifying and evaluating instructional resources
• Leveraging instructional technology

**Shared Leadership.** In schools organized for improvement, educators collaborate in teams in the interest of teaching and learning. But they do not always have a clear goal in sight or the organizational capacity to arrive at that goal. In the *Shared Leadership* course, teacher leaders address the questions: Do we all agree on what we're doing? Do we have a system for getting there? Are we ready for the changes that we'll have to make for improvement? Are our actions adding up to something in concert with those around us?

Teacher leaders will not be able to address these questions without knowledge, skills and strategies for:

• Understanding the team/group dynamics
• Building collective accountability
• Building trust
• Establishing a shared vision of improvement
• Understanding and managing change
• Managing a team
• Leading with cultural competency
• Communicating within and beyond the team
• Systems thinking
• Engaging stakeholders and leveraging community assets
• Promoting and sharing team learning

**Professional Expertise.** The *Professional Expertise* course helps ensure that teacher
leaders and their teams are making the best possible decisions. Educators (both teachers and leaders) are accustomed to being autonomous decision-makers, which unnecessarily restricts students from benefiting from the sum of our profession’s knowledge base. Are we using all of the expertise we have to make strong decisions? What other professional resources or research might be useful and how can we access it? How can we use what we know and are learning to make a bigger difference for teaching and learning? Teacher leaders will be able to address these questions after the Professional Expertise course.

It is important that teachers who want to answer these questions build knowledge, skills and strategies for:

- Accessing and evaluating professional resources
- Accessing, understanding and evaluating education research
- Responding to problems of practice with professional resources and education research
- Leading reflective dialogue: turning tacit knowledge into shareable knowledge
- Applying rules of copyright and fair use in sharing expertise
- Identifying and tapping expertise within a group
- Understanding policy and politics
- Advocating for conditions required to support success

Our skills framework gives direction to programs of teacher leadership development regarding the content with which teacher leaders need to be familiar, but experience has shown and the findings from this analysis have revealed that the contextual conditions inside schools have a significant impact on whether teacher leaders will be able to effectively apply these knowledge and skills. Therefore, our model of teacher leadership development also finds the following design considerations important.

**Led by teacher leaders.** While teacher leadership development as a field of professional learning is relatively new, teacher leadership is not. Teacher leaders have been influencing instructional improvement in significant formal and informal ways for decades, and individuals who have been engaged in this work are an important source of expertise for this work. By creating a structure in which teacher leaders are the ones
collaborating to help design and facilitate the professional learning, teacher leadership development programs will be able to support these teachers to turn their individual expertise into a shared professional knowledge base. Experienced teacher leaders understand the subtleties of how teacher leadership overlaps with school leadership, they recognize which resources from other literatures are useful and they have developed routines, strategies and workarounds for negotiating the unique characteristics of their workplaces. As a result, they are able to teach these skills to others in ways that are directly relevant and make sense in context.

**Learning by doing, and by doing it together.** Many teachers are already engaged in leadership work. We advocate for turning the work of their roles into learning experiences by requiring participants to experiment with the ideas, strategies and skills of the course in their roles, to reflect individually and together with others in similar roles on their learning, and to problem-solve collaboratively to address and learn from the obstacles in their work as they arise.

This model has been developed by teacher leaders for teacher leaders in Boston, and it is constantly being refined based upon what we are learning from teachers about their experiences and challenges in teacher leadership roles. At the same time, we feel the model presented here is worth sharing as yet another contribution to the dialogue on the competencies for teacher leadership.

**Conclusion**

As teachers are tasked with an increasing load of leadership responsibilities, we need to more seriously consider how to systematically support teachers to develop the skills and knowledge needed to be effective in their teacher leadership roles. The Teacher Leader Model Standards has initiated an important national dialogue about how best to support the professional learning of teacher leaders. We took up this invitation for dialogue and uncovered new insights about our own Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate program, the TLM Standards, and the development of teacher leaders in general.

To better support teacher leaders participating in the BTLC courses, the BTLC program will need to consider: (1) sequencing the courses based on the needs of the target
roles, (2) enhancing curriculum to address advocacy skills, (3) examining in greater depth the skills needed across all the teacher leader roles in Boston, and (4) engaging with the district on ways in which role responsibilities and expectations can be more clearly communicated. With expanded resources it could also collaborate with local partners toward: (1) extending the teacher leadership development continuum, and (2) preparing school and district leaders for teacher leadership.

Our recommendations for the TLM Standards include: (1) clarifying the language used in describing the domains, (2) stating the standards as teachable skills, and (3) forging a greater distinction between the skills required for effective teaching and teacher leadership. While the Standards provide a good foundation for discussions around teacher leadership, the field needs to move beyond describing all the actions teacher leaders can take and begin to identify the range of skills teacher leaders need to develop.

Teacher leadership can be a viable solution to schools’ need for increased leadership capacity as well as teachers’ need for satisfying career advancement opportunities. To accomplish this, teachers need opportunities to develop the requisite knowledge and skills for their roles and as well as support for navigating the workplace variables within their schools and district. We believe teacher leaders themselves should lead this work, and we offer our teacher-driven model to further the dialogue on teacher leadership development.
References

(Berg & Souvanna, 2012)


Appendix A
National and Local Leadership Frameworks Used to Inform the Design of the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate Program

**Teacher Leadership**
- “Teacher Leadership Skills Framework” from the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (2009)
- “Model Teacher Leaders Standards” (draft) from the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium (2010)
- “New Teacher Center Mentor Academy” at University of California, Santa Cruz (n.d.)
- “Teacher Leader Model Standards” from the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium (2011)

**School Leadership**
- “BPS Dimensions of Effective Leadership” from the Boston Public Schools (2005)
- “MA Professional Standards for Administrators” of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2009)
- “National Board Certification for Educational Leaders” from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2010)
- “National Educational Technology Standards for Administrators” from the International Society for Technology in Education (2009)
Appendix B
Logic Model of the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate Program

(Berg & Souvanna, 2012)
Appendix C
Domains and Functions of the Teacher Leader Model Standards

The Teacher Leader Model Standards are published online, together with exemplars from the field, at: http://www.teacherleaderstandards.org

Domain I: Fostering a Collaborative Culture to Support Educator Development and Student Learning

The teacher leader is well versed in adult learning theory and uses that knowledge to create a community of collective responsibility within his or her school. In promoting this collaborative culture among fellow teachers, administrators, and other school leaders, the teacher leader ensures improvement in educator instruction and, consequently, student learning.

Functions
The teacher leader:
  a) Utilizes group processes to help colleagues work collaboratively to solve problems, make decisions, manage conflict, and promote meaningful change;
  b) Models effective skills in listening, presenting ideas, leading discussions, clarifying, mediating, and identifying the needs of self and others in order to advance shared goals and professional learning;
  c) Employs facilitation skills to create trust among colleagues, develop collective wisdom, build ownership and action that supports student learning;
  d) Strives to create an inclusive culture where diverse perspectives are welcomed in addressing challenges; and
  e) Uses knowledge and understanding of different backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, and languages to promote effective interactions among colleagues.

Domain II: Accessing and Using Research to Improve Practice and Student Learning

The teacher leader keeps abreast of the latest research about teaching effectiveness and student learning, and implements best practices where appropriate. He or she models the use of systematic inquiry as a critical component of teachers’ ongoing learning and development.

Functions
The teacher leader:
  a) Assists colleagues in accessing and using research in order to select appropriate strategies to improve student learning;
b) Facilitates the analysis of student learning data, collaborative interpretation of results, and application of findings to improve teaching and learning;

c) Supports colleagues in collaborating with the higher education institutions and other organizations engaged in researching critical educational issues; and

d) Teaches and supports colleagues to collect, analyze, and communicate data from their classrooms to improve teaching and learning.

Domain III:
Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement

The teacher leader understands that the processes of teaching and learning are constantly evolving. The teacher leader designs and facilitates job-embedded professional development opportunities that are aligned with school improvement goals.

Functions
The teacher leader:

a) Collaborates with colleagues and school administrators to plan professional learning that is team-based, job-embedded, sustained over time, aligned with content standards, and linked to school/district improvement goals;

b) Uses information about adult learning to respond to the diverse learning needs of colleagues by identifying, promoting, and facilitating varied and differentiated professional learning;

c) Facilitates professional learning among colleagues;

d) Identifies and uses appropriate technologies to promote collaborative and differentiated professional learning;

e) Works with colleagues to collect, analyze, and disseminate data related to the quality of professional learning and its effect on teaching and student learning;

f) Advocates for sufficient preparation, time, and support for colleagues to work in teams to engage in job-embedded professional learning;

g) Provides constructive feedback to colleagues to strengthen teaching practice and improve student learning; and

h) Uses information about emerging education, economic, and social trends in planning and facilitating professional learning.

Domain IV:
Facilitating Improvements in Instruction and Student Learning

The teacher leader possesses a deep understanding of teaching and learning, and models an attitude of continuous learning and reflective practice for colleagues. The teacher leader works collaboratively with fellow teachers to constantly improve instructional practices.

Functions
The teacher leader:

a) Facilitates the collection, analysis, and use of classroom- and school-based data to
identify opportunities to improve curriculum, instruction, assessment, school organization, and school culture;
b) Engages in reflective dialog with colleagues based on observation of instruction, student work, and assessment data and helps make connections to research-based effective practices;
c) Supports colleagues’ individual and collective reflection and professional growth by serving in roles such as mentor, coach, and content facilitator;
d) Serves as a team leader to harness the skills, expertise, and knowledge of colleagues to address curricular expectations and student learning needs;
e) Uses knowledge of existing and emerging technologies to guide colleagues in helping students skillfully and appropriately navigate the universe of knowledge available on the Internet, use social media to promote collaborative learning, and connect with people and resources around the globe; and
f) Promotes instructional strategies that address issues of diversity and equity in the classroom and ensures that individual student learning needs remain the central focus of instruction.

Domain V:
Promoting the Use of Assessments and Data for School and District Improvement

The teacher leader is knowledgeable about the design of assessments, both formative and summative. He or she works with colleagues to analyze data and interpret results to inform goals and to improve student learning.

Functions
The teacher leader:
a) Increases the capacity of colleagues to identify and use multiple assessment tools aligned to state and local standards;
b) Collaborates with colleagues in the design, implementation, scoring, and interpretation of student data to improve educational practice and student learning;
c) Creates a climate of trust and critical reflection in order to engage colleagues in challenging conversations about student learning data that lead to solutions to identified issues; and
d) Works with colleagues to use assessment and data findings to promote changes in instructional practices or organizational structures to improve student learning.

Domain VI:
Improving Outreach and Collaboration with Families and Community

The teacher leader understands the impact that families, cultures, and communities have on student learning. As a result, the teacher leader seeks to promote a sense of partnership among these different groups toward the common goal of excellent education.
Functions
The teacher leader:

a) Uses knowledge and understanding of the different backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, and languages in the school community to promote effective interactions among colleagues, families, and the larger community;

b) Models and teaches effective communication and collaboration skills with families and other stakeholders focused on attaining equitable achievement for students of all backgrounds and circumstances;

c) Facilitates colleagues’ self-examination of their own understandings of community culture and diversity and how they can develop culturally responsive strategies to enrich the educational experiences of students and achieve high levels of learning for all students;

d) Develops a shared understanding among colleagues of the diverse educational needs of families and the community; and

e) Collaborates with families, communities, and colleagues to develop comprehensive strategies to address the diverse educational needs of families and the community.

Domain VII:
Advocating for Student Learning and the Profession

The teacher leader understands the landscape of education policy and can identify key players at the local, state, and national levels. The teacher leader advocates for the teaching profession and for policies that benefit student learning.

Functions
The teacher leader:

a) Shares information with colleagues within and/or beyond the district regarding how local, state, and national trends and policies can impact classroom practices and expectations for student learning;

b) Works with colleagues to identify and use research to advocate for teaching and learning processes that meet the needs of all students;

c) Collaborates with colleagues to select appropriate opportunities to advocate for the rights and/or needs of students, to secure additional resources within the building or district that support student learning, and to communicate effectively with targeted audiences such as parents and community members;

d) Advocates for access to professional resources, including financial support and human and other material resources, that allow colleagues to spend significant time learning about effective practices and developing a professional learning community focused on school improvement goals; and

e) Represents and advocates for the profession in contexts outside of the classroom.
Appendix D
Exit Slip Used in the Core Courses of the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate

This BTLC exit slip is a Google Form linked to each of our course websites. As a requirement of the course, participants must complete it within 24 hours of each session.

The “content-process-context” framework of the exit slip was adapted from the Standards for Staff Development published by the National Staff Development Council in 2001.8

TLRC Exit Slip
Please take 10 minutes right now to provide some data about the Content, Process, and Context of this course:

Name

Date

Content Intro: The content-focused goal of the course is to support participants to have the knowledge and skills to effectively support instructional improvement in their schools/the district. How are we doing?

1 2 3 4 5 6

hit the mark off-track

Content Q1: This week I have a deeper understanding of…[one of the following]

- For the Using Data course: …data and/or new skills for leading data use.
- For the Shared Leadership course: …leadership and/or new skills for leading teams.
- For the Supporting Instruction course: …instructional improvement and/or new skills for leading colleagues to improve their professional practice.

1 2 3 4 5 6

stronger understanding and skills no change in understanding or skills

Content Q2: As of this week, I still/now have questions about...

8 After we designed this exit slip, the NSDC Standards were updated in 2011 as Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning. However, we find this older framework more concise and useful for this purpose.
Process Intro: The process-focused goal of the course is to strengthen teachers’ confidence, commitment and capacity to be resources for one another. How are we doing?

Process Q1: This week I had an opportunity to learn from my colleagues.

Process Q2: I was an active participant (Yes/No) because... Please select Yes/No and briefly identify anything including the features of the course process that helped or hindered you this week from being an active participant.

Context Intro: The context-focused goal of the course is to support teachers to put their learning to use in their teacher leadership roles, and in their schools and/or in the district.

Context Q1: I will be able to use this week’s skills or ideas in my role/school.

Context Q2: What makes it HARD/EASY to put these skills or ideas to use is... Please choose HARD or EASY and briefly describe your choice.
Anything else? Feel free to use this space if there are any other comments, critiques, questions, suggestions, or ideas you'd like to contribute.
The Boston Model for Teacher Leadership Development

- Accessing and collecting quantitative and qualitative data
- Manipulating and analyzing data
- Creating data displays
- Conducting a root cause analysis
- Identifying appropriate instructional or programmatic responses to data

Using Data

- Identifying a priority problem using data
- Progress monitoring
- Goal setting
- Engaging stakeholders in looking at data
- Leading a diversity-conscious data team
- Communicating with data to a variety of audiences

- Responding to problems of practice with professional resources and education research
- Leading reflective dialogue: turning tacit knowledge into shareable knowledge
- Applying rules of copyright and fair use in sharing expertise

Professional Expertise

- Understanding adults/teachers as learners
- Facilitating growth-oriented dialogue & reflection
- Planning, implementing and evaluating professional learning experiences
- Identifying and evaluating instructional resources
- Leveraging instructional technology
- Understanding the team/group dynamics
- Building collective accountability
- Systems thinking
- Engaging stakeholders and leveraging community assets
- Promoting and sharing team learning

- Accessing and evaluating professional resources
- Accessing, understanding and evaluating education research
- Identifying and tapping expertise within a group
- Understanding policy and politics
- Advocating for conditions required to support success

Supporting Instruction

- Looking at student work to improve instruction
- Using observation to improve instruction
- Establishing focus questions or improvement goals
- Cultivating a professional learning community
- Creating a safe space for risk-taking and growth
- Building trust
- Establishing a shared vision of improvement
- Understanding and managing change
- Managing a team
- Leading with cultural competency
- Communicating within and beyond the team

- Building collective accountability
- Systems thinking
- Engaging stakeholders and leveraging community assets
- Promoting and sharing team learning

Shared Leadership

- Understanding policy and politics
- Advocating for conditions required to support success
- Identifying and tapping expertise within a group
- Understanding policy and politics
- Advocating for conditions required to support success

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Please contact us with comments, questions, critiques or suggestions: BostonTLRC@bpe.org

(Berg & Souvanna, 2012)