

Gestalt Community Schools

Superintendent Acknowledgment

I, Yetta Lewis, as director of Gestalt Community Schools, Charter Management Organization, acknowledge the efforts of staff members from our district who have served on the Tennessee Teacher Leader Network during the 2014-15 school year to develop a teacher leader model for our school district.

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MODEL SUMMARY

D³ (Discover-Develop-Deliver) Teacher Leader Model

Gestalt's D³ Teacher Leader Model is a framework that includes four teacher leader positions: culture brokers, content leaders, master teachers, and instructional coaches. These teacher leaders will have a shared vision and will exhibit a growth mindset and a focus on student achievement and growth.

Through the D³ Teacher Leader Model, Gestalt schools will give these teachers opportunities to share their knowledge and expertise with other educators. The peer-driven professional learning of this model will improve the skill level of all staff members and increase student achievement. The implementation of this model will also build leadership capacity among staff, improve teacher effectiveness and retention, and strengthen school culture and climate.



5

schools in the district

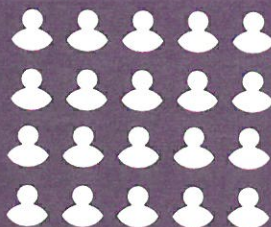


2,135

student population

143

teachers in the district



\$ 8,000.00

per pupil expenditure

RATIONALE

The mission of Gestalt Community Schools (GCS) is to leverage community assets to empower citizens who will be college ready, career ready, and community ready. Collaboration is the key to personal growth and neighborhood revitalization. Gestalt believes that consistently high performing schools embrace shared leadership as a model. Opportunities for teachers and administrators to partner in leading a school are at the heart of the D³ Teacher Leader Model. A teacher leader is an effective teacher whose influence creates collaboration, trust, encouragement, and systemic change that ultimately drives student achievement. This program will build learning leaders by increasing teachers' knowledge and skills to meet the unique and pressing needs of their individual schools and the network.

Teacher leaders believe:

- in promoting a growth mindset.
- in modeling our expectations.
- in supporting others in the work.
- in speaking to inspire others.
- In learning to become better teachers.

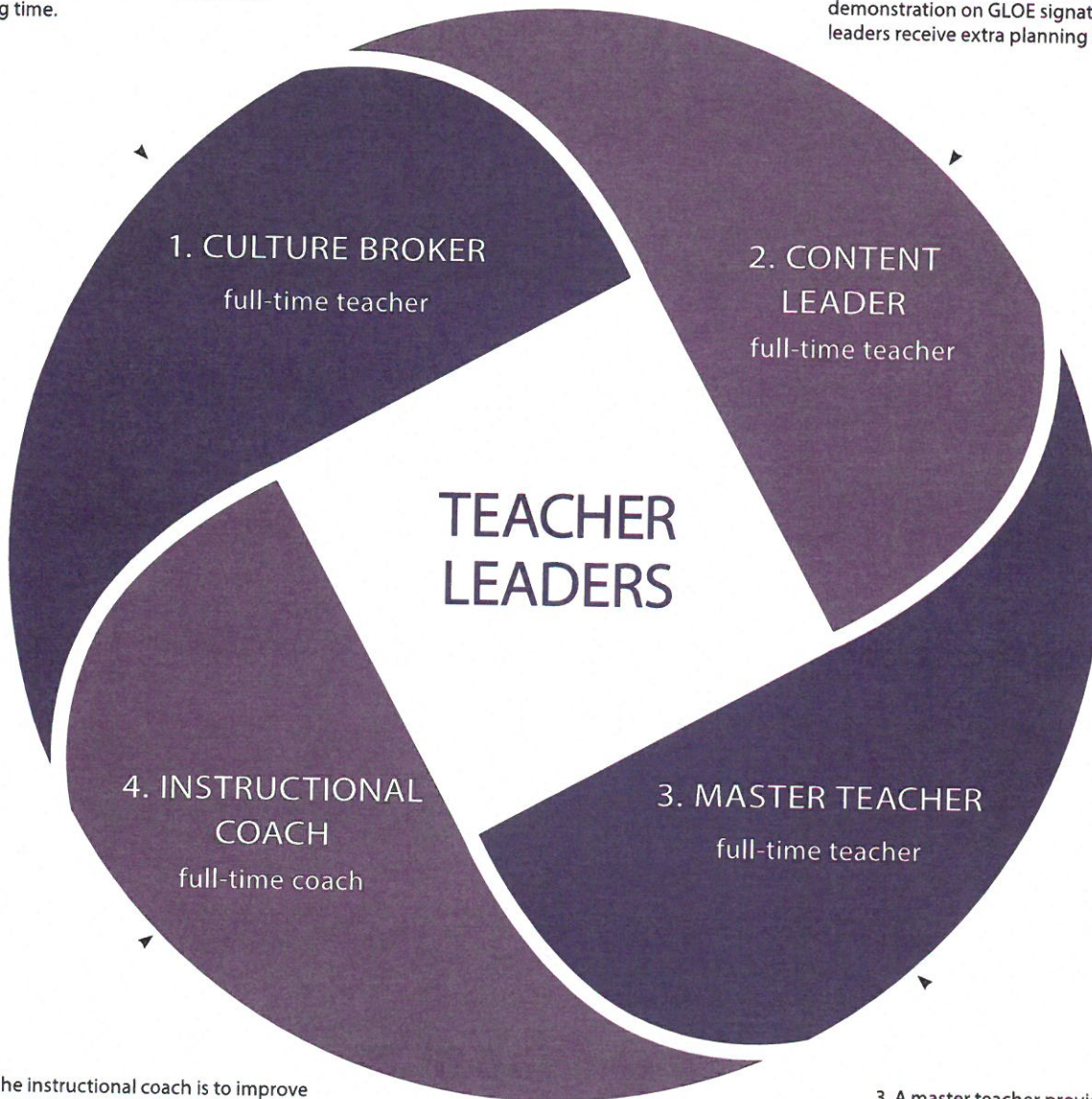
Teacher leaders have capacity to:

- create conditions that encourage reflection among peers, administrators, and central office staff members.
- capitalize on their own strengths, leadership styles, and passions, and engage in ethical practice, developing trust and credibility with others.
- communicate messages that will spur others to pursue positive change.
- build relationships intended to promote action based on a shared vision, deeply rooted in the needs of students
- effectively use data to make instructional decisions that lead to improved student learning.
- establish strong content knowledge and pedagogy in themselves and others.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The role of the culture broker is to support the school leader in assessing, creating, and refining school culture. They are brokers of our community, "selling" the vision to their schools and the network. Culture brokers are full-time teachers who receive extra planning time.

2. Content leaders will work together to impact their classroom practices in ways that will lead to better results for their students, for their team, and for their school. Their role will include leading school and network PLCs, participating in action research projects, and presenting workshops and demonstration on GLOE signature strategies. Content leaders receive extra planning time.



4. The role of the instructional coach is to improve student achievement by building teachers capacity and understand of instructional practices through co-planning, modeling, and providing feedback to teachers. Instructional coaches support the instructional development of all teachers, which means they are generalists who will work with teachers in a variety of subject areas. While instructional coaches may bring a particular subject-area expertise, their focus is on improving instructional quality across all subject areas.

3. A master teacher provides mentoring and coaching to new teachers during an entire school year. The master teacher is committed to helping others achieve their potential, and has a particular desire to provide a strong start for a novice teacher. Master teachers receive release time.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

1 IDENTIFY

- Identify teachers who are respected by peers and administration
- Identify teachers who are committed to the mission and core values of Gestalt Community Schools
- Identify teachers who are skillful in the use of data analysis to drive instruction and student learning
- Identify teachers with a strong working knowledge of and belief in the GLOE framework

2 SELECT

- The selection process includes criteria related to experience, positive student outcomes, respect of peers, and professionalism
- An interview team consisting of teachers, school leaders, and the Charter Management Office (CMO) will select candidates for specific roles

3 RETAIN

- Provide continuous feedback and evaluation on the impact of their work through self and peer assessments, surveys, and student data
- Provide expert support with curriculum and assessment in the classroom
- Provide in-depth, individualized professional learning
- Offer incentives, stipends, and/or expanded leadership opportunities
- Provide top consideration for school leadership roles
- Recognize exceptional contributions and successes

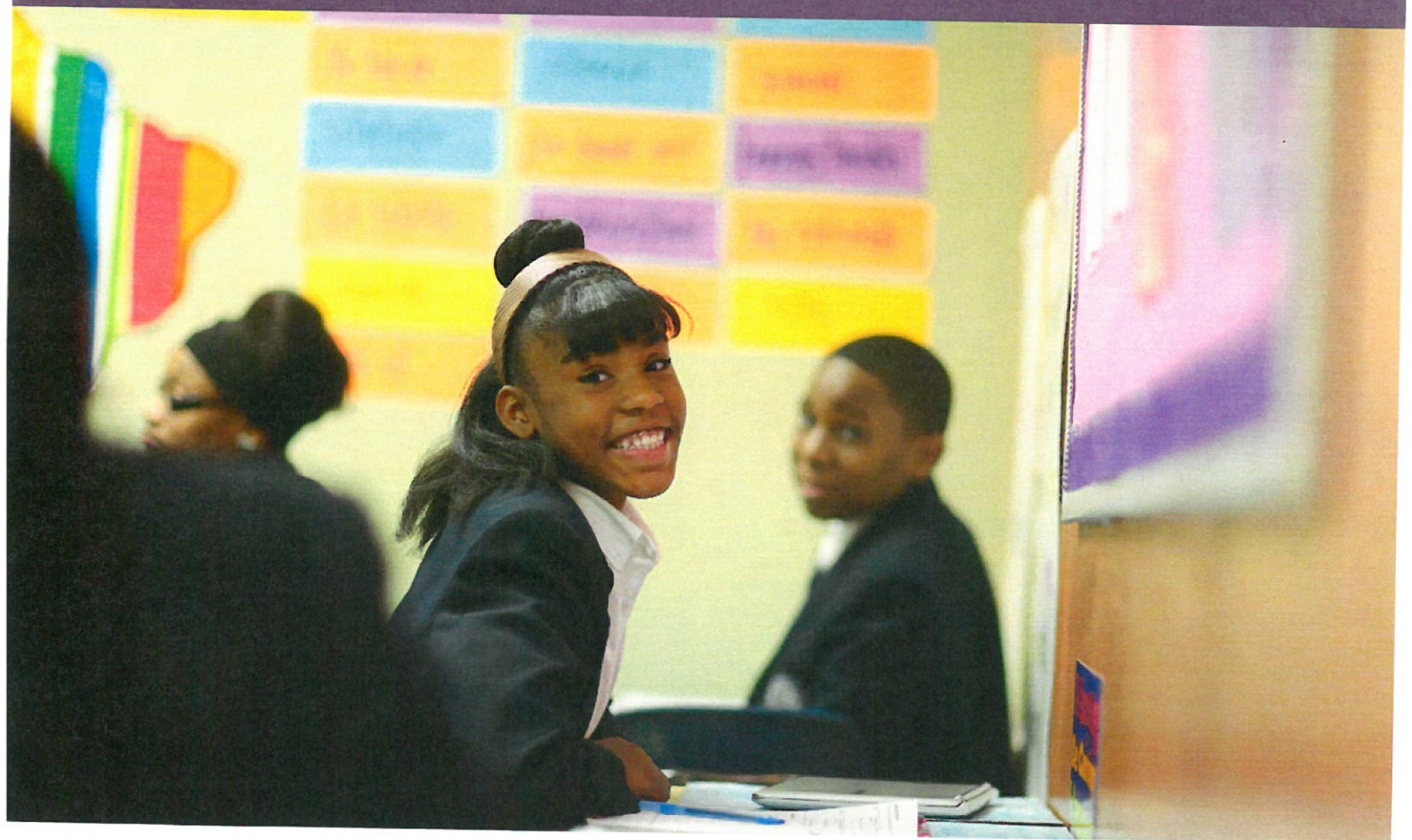




BUILDING CAPACITY FOR TEACHERS TO LEAD

Implementation of this teacher leader model requires preparation for teacher leaders, school staff, and school and district leaders. The following are suggested best practices for effective implementation.

- Develop specific roles and responsibilities specific to individual schools and districts.
- Provide training for formal and informal teacher roles.
- Share resources necessary to accomplish mission, vision, and goals.
- Ensure time for collaboration between administration, teachers, and teacher leaders.
- Encourage collegial participation by including teacher leaders in school- and district-level decision making.



IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

The planning and building of GSD's D³ Teacher Leader Model has been ongoing since June 2014. The process began with researching various successful teacher leader models and analyzing the needs of GCS schools. In August 2014, GCS launched a pilot to determine the criteria and skills needed each position, as well as the potential impact for each school. In February 2015, the application, interview, and hiring process began. As planning for instructional growth for students and teachers begins, orientation and training are prioritized, as well as identifying the schools' greatest needs for teacher leaders. The reflection and evaluation of this model will be ongoing during the first year of implementation in the 2015-16 school year. As a result of these findings, the plan will be revisited to make necessary adjustments.



NOVEMBER 2013 - JUNE 2014
The Teacher Leader Network researches successful models and visits various schools to determine best framework, then determines what data will be used to assess effectiveness.



AUGUST 2014 - FEBRUARY 2015
The teacher leader pilot is launched in each school. Selected teachers receive training to implement the roles of culture brokers, content leaders, and master teachers. Data is collected to refine roles and responsibilities.



FEBRUARY - MARCH 2015
GCS's academic team and school leaders select the following roles based on the school's needs: culture brokers, content leaders, master teachers, and instructional coaches.



APRIL - JUNE 2015
ONGOING
Teacher leaders and school leaders are supported in professional learning.



JULY 2015
The D³ Teacher Leader Model is launched.



DECEMBER 2015
Analyze and reflect on program impact through self assessments, peer assessments, professional learning documentation, and student data.



MAY 2016 - JUNE 2016
Teacher leadership program and support coaches are evaluated and next steps are established.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The district's strategic plan, which will be communicated and available to all stakeholders, will lay the foundation for the D³ Teacher Leader Model in alignment with GCS's mission, vision, core values, and goals. Leadership development must be explicitly linked to the Gestalt's vision and goals. GCS believes a well-developed pathway for teacher leaders is one that is embedded within the culture of the school and district.

The key to sustaining a culture of teacher leadership is being proactive and cultivating a system of well-trained candidates over an extended period of time. When teachers are growing professionally, a culture of sustained leadership will thrive. GCS must commit to a model that continuously develops and retains teacher leaders. Teachers want to be recognized as the professionals they are and given opportunities to demonstrate their expertise.

Support for teacher leaders will be included in frequent communications from the CMO (e.g., teacher talent, academic team, and human resources) and each school. Principals and school leaders will monitor all teachers throughout the year for potential teacher leader candidates. The process for selection will be advertised through the Gestalt website, newsletters, social media and community information sessions.

Current teacher leaders will be highlighted throughout the school year and will be available for questions from future candidates. School administrators will diligently seek opportunities to communicate the importance of teacher leadership to teachers, parents, and the community. Teacher leaders will be recognized in school and Gestalt communications, as well as at quarterly board meetings. The work and efforts of teacher leaders will be celebrated at various points throughout the year. Teacher leaders will know they are valued members of the leadership team.

Teacher leaders will play a significant role in school improvement by communicating to their peers and community the Gestalt's plan for student mastery and growth. They will also have opportunities to work together for their own professional growth as well as facilitate growth for others. They will be invited to monthly leadership meeting during the school year. School administrators will support their work and foster collegiality by attending and participating in teacher-led professional growth activities. Administrators will seek opportunities at the school- and district-levels where teachers can lead the discussion and learning for other teachers. GCS will also offer teacher leaders compensated professional learning opportunities throughout the year and supported during the summer months.

BEST PRACTICES

Using a set of guiding questions, Gestalt Community Schools thoughtfully considered best practices that would support implementation of their teacher leader model.

- District and School Supports
- Evaluation of the Teacher Leader Model
- Pre-Existing Capacity in District

District and School Supports

- Creative/flexible scheduling
- Planned release time
- GCS school leadership program
- Partnership with local, state, and national higher education institutions
- TEAM evaluation model

Evaluation of the Teacher Leader Model

- Teacher leader surveys and forums
- Principal and peer feedback surveys
- TEAM analysis
- Formative and summative data points



Pre-Existing Capacity in District

- School-based, teacher-directed professional learning opportunities
- Coaching support from academic team
- Budget allocations for professional learning and stipends
- Site-based management of flexible scheduling

COST & SUSTAINABILITY

The funding for teacher leadership positions will be sustained through general-purpose funds set aside for stipends, grants, and fundraising efforts. The chief academic officer and school board have dedicated budgeted funds of \$76,000 for teacher leadership positions through a grant that lasts through 2018.

MASTER TEACHERS

$$\begin{array}{l} 9 \\ \text{positions} \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{c} \text{|||||} \\ \text{|||||} \end{array} \times \begin{array}{l} \$3,000 \\ \text{per position} \end{array} = \$27,000$$

CONTENT LEADERS

$$\begin{array}{l} 14 \\ \text{positions} \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{c} \text{|||||} \\ \text{|||||} \\ \text{|||||} \end{array} \times \begin{array}{l} \$2,000 \\ \text{per position} \end{array} = \$28,000$$

CULTURE BROKERS

$$\begin{array}{l} 14 \\ \text{positions} \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{c} \text{|||||} \\ \text{|||||} \\ \text{|||||} \end{array} \times \begin{array}{l} \$1,500 \\ \text{per position} \end{array} = \$21,000$$