

Sumner County Schools

Superintendent Acknowledgment

I, Del Phillips, as director of Sumner County Schools, 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

Teacher Leaders

Given the urgent need to build leadership capacity among teachers, Sumner County Schools developed a sustainable structure that would create a prepared applicant pool for school and district leadership. The design of the Teacher Leaders model supports the district's viable and guaranteed curriculum. A teacher leader is a professional educator who, through transparent practices, acts as a change agent to build capacity in self and others. A teacher leader increases effective educator practices and improves student learning. The phrase "teacher leader" delineates those educators who, in addition to their full-time teaching responsibilities, serve as leaders within their individual schools. Teacher Leaders design and lead professional learning, mentor others, and utilize their planning periods to serve in a leadership capacity. The phrase also identifies teachers who serve in a full-time leadership role.



49

schools in the district

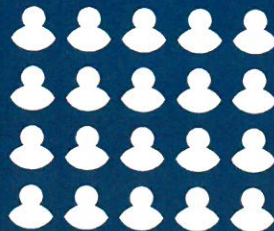


28,516

student population

1,954

teachers in the district



\$ 8,181.00

per pupil expenditure

RATIONALE

The Sumner County Teacher Leaders program was designed to build capacity across all levels of leaders. The purposes of the program are to support initiatives and to grow active leaders of change who optimize student achievement. Teacher Leaders also serve as liaisons between administrators and teachers. They share leadership responsibilities, conduct fidelity checks of programs, promote instructional best practices, and implement initiatives.

Teacher leaders believe:

- they are responsible for improving instructional practice as well as to becoming lifelong learners, continually focused on improving their craft and reaching students.
- students deserve superior classroom instruction.
- a collaborative culture builds trust, which is vital to the relationships.
- peer observation and modeling of best practices helps teachers grow.
- evaluation of formative data is integral to teacher and student success.
- the design of school-based professional learning should be collaborative, practical, and should involve analyzing student data and student work.
- the school's SMART goals and strategic improvement plan are critical to success.

Teacher leaders have capacity to:

- attain superior results within their own classrooms.
- engage adult learners in meaningful professional learning experiences.
- effectively communicate with students, teachers, administrators, and families while building trust among a community of learners.
- identify and model best practices.
- lead critical conversations about race, ethnicity, and linguistic diversity, and apply strategies to bring a faculty closer to closing achievement gaps.
- monitor programs for success and make adjustments accordingly.
- exhibit a strong sense of moral and ethical behavior.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

LEADERSHIP

- Develop and build highly effective leaders through high-quality professional learning to foster shared leadership
- Support teachers, lead educators, principals, and district staff in working together toward common goals
- Serve as the liaison between administrators, coordinators, and staff
- Collaborate with lead educator in RTI² implementation

CORE INSTRUCTION

- Support Tier I core curriculum best practices
- Support and provide guidance regarding scopes of work
- Support English language arts and math initiatives (e.g., close reading, writing with textual evidence, SRSD, math practice standards, conceptual knowledge, task, etc.)
- Increase student outcomes through best practices and data-driven instruction and assessments

DATA

- Support school-wide data analysis and SMART goal process
- Analyze Tier I district-wide and school-wide data from quarterly assessments.
- Collaborate with lead educator on RTI² data management system and train building staff

COLLABORATION

- Cultivate a culture of continuous improvement through job-embedded coaching and interdependent work to achieve common goals
- Maintain a collaborative culture that focuses on learning for all; achieve results; and promote collegiality and shared responsibilities
- Foster an increase in teacher effectiveness through professional learning and collaboration of best practices
- Collaborate across schools

Responsibilities of Teacher Leaders

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

1 IDENTIFY

- Elicit support from all stakeholders (director of schools, building-level administrators, and board members).
- Distribute information and recruitment posters to all teachers framing teacher leader model.
- Designate a page on district website for links to documents (application, job description, roles and responsibilities, etc.).
- Host informational meetings (district- and school-level) for interested teachers.
- Market the teacher leader model as an opportunity for teacher advancement.
- Budget an appropriate number of teacher leaders for the district and schools.

2 SELECT

- Candidate criteria reflects overall level of effectiveness scores of at least a four.
- Communicate the selection process to teachers and principals.
- Conduct a two-phase interview process including a school-level interview and a district-level interview.
- District administrators interview with school administrators' "short list" of applicants.
- Conduct performance-based district interview – candidates examine real school data, present a school improvement plan, answer questions based on the school data provided at the interview time.
- District administrators collaborate with principals on the selection of each teacher leader.
- Place teacher leaders strategically in strong content areas based on individual school needs.

3 RETAIN

- Partner with Lipscomb University to design and implement an instructional coaching certificate program. This ensures teacher leaders are prepared and equipped with the tools to be successful in their leadership roles.
- Deliver ongoing professional learning aimed at program success to administrators and teacher leaders throughout the year.
- Monitor the effectiveness through peer feedback and surveys.
- Continually evaluate and evolve the teacher leader model.
- Provide instructional technologies as support (i.e. iPads).
- Create an environment for collegiality, accountability, and networking through the single-cohort learning experience.



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.

- Prepare teacher leaders via Lipscomb University's instructional coaching certificate (12 credit hours).
- Provide professional learning opportunities for teacher leaders each semester.
- Establish communication process for addressing issues among teacher leaders, teachers, and administrators.
- Provide personal and professional support through regularly-scheduled PLC times.
- Develop and communicate clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- Create and sign teacher leader contracts identifying commitment, expectations, and fidelity to the model.
- Provide protocols for school meetings, professional learning activities, and coaching experiences.
- Involve teacher leaders in their schools' strategic planning meetings and school improvement planning processes.
- Develop and encourage a common language and common understanding regarding coaching, PLCs, data, SMART goals, etc.



IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

In the spring of 2013, Sumner County Schools included 45 schools with 1,826 teachers and 28,045 students, ranking as the ninth largest district in the state of Tennessee. At the time, Sumner County had four instructional coaches to support these 1,826 teachers, and all four positions were funded through the district's Race to the Top grant. Knowing the importance of job-embedded coaching and sustained personalized professional learning, district leaders felt it imperative that they offer more instructional support to teachers and school-based administrators in an effort to improve student outcomes. This led to the district applying for and receiving a TNLEAD grant. The grant paid for the tuition of the first cohort of teacher leaders (one per school) so they could complete 12 graduate credit hours at Lipscomb University, resulting in each teacher leader receiving an instructional coaching certificate. From there, the program has grown to include two teacher leaders in every building, 22 full-time lead educators, 72 mentors, and seven high school focus educators. A ladder to district and school leadership opportunities now exists, and a sustainable plan is in place.

2013



- Sumner County Schools receives a TNLEAD Grant.
- Teacher leaders are selected.
- First cohort of teacher leaders complete instructional coaching certificate through Lipscomb University.
- Professional learning topics for teacher leaders and school administrators include: SMART goal setting, PLC norms, data digs, and school improvement.
- Avenues through which to assess the program's effectiveness are researched and implemented.
- PLCs in place in all schools.
- Data teams and data walls are in place in all schools.
- Leadership teams are in all schools.
- Formative assessments are used in all schools.
- Student data is used to establish SMART goals and school improvement plans.
- Principals and teacher leaders present school improvement plans at strategic planning meetings.

2014



- Second cohort of 22 full-time lead educators complete instructional coaching certificate through Lipscomb University, and begin supporting teachers, administrators, and students.
- Professional learning becomes school-based, not district-based. Teacher leaders use data to assist school leadership teams in designing and presenting professional learning opportunities.
- Built-in calendar days are added for professional learning.
- Sumner County School Board recognizes 46 teacher leaders and 22 full-time lead educators for their commitment to the students of Sumner County.
- From the first cohort of teacher leaders, 25 stories of upper movement were reported: three became assistant principals; seven became full-time lead educators; six went on to complete their master's degree; and nine used the 12 graduate credit hours as a springboard to complete their education specialist degree.
- The teacher leader model is analyzed for effectiveness.

2015



- Another cohort of 47 teachers begin the Lipscomb University instructional coaching certificate program, allowing for each school to have two trained and equipped teacher leaders.
- Principals and teachers are asked to provide feedback regarding the impact their teacher leader and lead educator have had on their students, their school, and their own professional growth.
- All schools (and thus, teachers) to be supported by a lead educator, two teacher leaders, and multiple mentors.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

In March of 2013, Dr. Jennifer Brown, the Assistant Director of Schools for Instruction, presented to the Board of Education the need for and the research supporting teacher leaders. She emphasized the compelling district leadership needs that could be addressed by an impactful teacher leader program. She also presented current research that promotes teacher leaders and their impact on student learning, teacher growth, school improvement, and change implementation. She presented the vision for the teacher leader model – data-driven instruction and continuous, embedded school improvement.

In June of that same year and after being awarded the TNLEAD grant, Dr. Brown shared the goals, roles, responsibilities, and expectations with all district and school administrators at the annual K-12 Principals' Learning. She also shared the course offering and content that teacher leaders receive while completing their coaching certificate. At this meeting, a shift occurred from district-focused professional learning to school-focused professional learning.

The following month, the Sumner County Professional Learning Summit took place where Dr. Brown shared all of this information with all of the teachers of Sumner County. The role of teacher leader was clearly defined and the expectations for improvement were set forth for all teachers. Teacher leaders were recognized for their commitment and dedication to the students and teachers of Sumner County. Collaboration versus cooperation was discussed at length, and the need for PLCs centered on student needs was stressed. Teachers brainstormed possible PLC groups and specific needs at their individual schools.

Since then, the district has been very intentional in communicating what it is doing and why it is doing it in regard to increasing teacher leader capacity. The teacher leader model's effectiveness is discussed at every principal meeting and at every teacher leader meeting. The broader expansion of the program has been discussed at all levels of the district at least once a semester. These levels include teacher groups, principal groups, district staff, and board members. Student growth and achievement resulting from teacher leader impact is continuously recognized and celebrated. The district's website underwent a major overhaul in order to accommodate the collection of best practices and resources accumulated by teacher leaders.

BEST PRACTICES

Using a set of guiding questions, Sumner County 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

- TEAM evaluation model
- Partnership with Lipscomb University for prescribed professional learning and instructional coaching certificate
- Building administrators', teacher leaders', and lead educators' alignment of beliefs and goals
- Monthly alignment meetings with instructional coordinators to maintain focus on instructional initiatives
- Prescribed professional learning opportunities to support teacher implementation of district instructional initiative
- Recognition in front of the Sumner County School Board and local officials
- Creative and flexible scheduling

Evaluation of the Teacher Leader Model

- TEAM evaluation model
- SWOT analysis
- Monthly district meetings
- PLC reflection forms
- Principal and teacher quotes regarding the impact of the program
- Extended contract logs
- Professional learning feedback forms
- Student and school data
- State teacher support survey document
- Leadership rubric
- Principal and peer feedback surveys

Pre-Existing Capacity in District

- Instructional leadership team
- School-based professional learning
- Shared vision
- Support from Sumner County School Board
- Budget allocation for professional learning

COST & SUSTAINABILITY

In Sumner County, the teacher leader model is funded from various budgets. Teacher leaders are paid ten extra contract days through the general purpose budget. They are also compensated with a \$2,000 per year stipend through Title II funds.

