

Promising Practices and Implementation Tools–Final Template

1. Name & Position: Mr. Dave Sawyer, Assistant Superintendent

Email & Phone: HYPERLINK "mailto:DSawyer@Attleboroschools.com"

DSawyer@Attleboroschools.com Phone: (508) 222–0012 x 1166

3. District(s) Where Implemented: Attleboro Public Schools

4. Lever Addressed and Title of Promising Practice: Teacher Leadership

5. How This Practice Reflects District’s Mission & Core Values:

The Attleboro Public Schools set a goal to build a strong core, jointly, of committed teacher leaders and administration. Teacher leadership is seen as a critical part of any reform effort at both school and district levels. Administrative leaders understand the importance of involving and drawing on the wisdom and expertise of those being asked to implement decisions, initiatives and change in a district.

Goals of This Practice:

If purposeful and sustainable change is to occur, the teachers need to be involved in the decision–making, and not only the implementation process. A related goal is to work reducing hierarchically based obstacles to collaborative work among teachers and administrators.

7. Description of This Practice:

(1) Administrators have fostered a culture of teacher leadership by asking teachers what they would like to see district leaders doing that would support them in their jobs. Administrators encouraged teachers to voice their ideas, respond to the ideas of others, and continually offer feedback to administration. Teachers noted administration's genuine commitment to involving them in important decision-making, which increased their willingness champion needed changes. If teachers are empowered in decisions related to their curriculum and instruction, school culture is stronger, and outcomes for students are predicted to be more positive.

(2) District and school Leaders involved as many teachers as possible. It is often the same teachers who "do everything". The district created a variety of leadership opportunities that would draw on different strengths and interests in more teachers- for example, subject interest, special interests or experience related to specific district goals or initiatives - to spread leadership more equitably and widely.

(3) Leaders met with teachers whose potential to do more in a leadership role was observed, and leadership opportunities took different forms. Several teachers appreciated being invited into leadership roles and rose to the challenge, some just by virtue of being asked.

(4) The district created four different structures for potential teacher leaders:

(a) **Instructional Leadership Teams (ILT)**: These are teams of administrators, coaches and teachers that represent a cross section of their schools respectively, and meet regularly to review and analyze data

on student learning and achievement. The goal is to transform ILT's into decision-making, not just information-dissemination bodies, driven by School Improvement Plans.

(b) **Best Practice Classrooms at Attleboro High School:** Teachers volunteer to open their classrooms for observation by peers. Teacher leaders encourage as many teachers as possible to offer their rooms for observation. The goal is to create a culture in which observing and being observed is a norm and the group meets regularly to discuss their observations and reflections. Participants have a website and a twitter feed. The hope is to spread this practice to other grade levels and a concerted reach-out effort is in place.

(c) **Learning Walks:** (1) **District Walks:** Schools are asked to look at different topics or themes and the observers are administrators across the district. The principals determine what the focus will be in their schools, and use their School Improvement Plans as the guide. Personnel from outside a given school provide another set of eyes for leadership in each building. Observers share what they learned and saw with each other, and also take new ideas back to their own schools. Teachers observed by the leadership groups receive feedback after the observers have debriefed together – typically given by the school principals, and it is affirming and helpful. (2) **Building Walks:** Teachers do the observing of other teachers to gain different perspectives and ideas for their own classrooms and growth. The idea is to step outside of one's own classroom, absorb ideas, and try them. Additionally, those who are

observed receive feedback. Historically, only administrators did learning walks. When teacher leaders were trained and assumed this role too, they developed a deeper understanding of the goals and experience of observing, and providing feedback. They also reflected more on their own practice, based on observing others.

(d) **Professional Development:** The PD Committee has refined its process and decisions to reflect teacher input and feedback. Teachers are invited to teach and train other teachers, based on their areas of expertise – for example, New Teacher induction Workshops are being run by Mentors in the district.

8. Applicable Grade Levels: Pre K–12

9. How This Practice Was Implemented So It Was More Successful Than Others Used:

This practice was implemented through a process of involving teachers every step of the way where the joint work was considered the priority. There was no top–down decision–making and the belief in the importance of engaging the voices of those who would be in the front lines of implementing change drove the collaborative work.

10. Criteria For This Particular Lever Most Exemplified In This Practice:

District has identified, defined and developed teacher leadership roles with the highest leverage for improving student outcomes in

the local context

District has a plan for how teacher leaders will be utilized, and for implementation. It provides a clear job description for each role which focuses teacher leadership in instructional improvement.

Support structures, professional development and schedules enable teachers to have the same regular opportunities to meet with colleagues to collaborate

Leadership teams at the school and district level allow teachers and administrators to collaborate and share decision-making. Teacher leaders' roles, administrator roles, and leadership team functions are well defined to enable those purposes

District has established a process for identifying, recruiting, training and supporting teacher leaders

11. How This Practice Changed The District or School:

Engaging teachers as leaders in a collaborative framework has helped to reduce the gap between what administration is trying to accomplish and change and what the work is like for teachers in the trenches. One outcome of increased teacher-administration collaboration resulted in the choice of new core literacy and math programs, as well as professional development to support these new programs. Literacy and Math scores began to rise and the 2012 MCAS scores showed an increase in the percentage of students in the proficient and advanced categories.

12. Resources (time, money, materials etc.) Required For Successful Implementation:

Tools Used To Implement Or Advance This Practlce (surveys, needs assessments, technology tools, rubrics, feedback Forms etc.)

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