
Teacher Leadership Recommendations to Illinois State Board of Education

Illinois P-20 Council

Teacher Leadership Subcommittee

November 2, 2011

History and Purpose

Illinois reform efforts have focused on improving student performance through increasing the quality of leadership, teaching, and learning practices. Illinois has a new teacher certification and endorsement model to improve the quality of teachers and leaders that recognizes the career continuum from pre-service teacher to classroom teacher, to teacher leader, principal and beyond. This includes strengthened teacher certification and preparation and a new, more rigorous principal endorsement. These efforts recognized the need for an enhanced teacher leadership endorsement that was created as part of SB 1799. University preparation programs that offer the Type 75 General Administrative certificate and the previous teacher leader endorsement will not be able to admit candidates after fall 2012 under the old program requirements and must be approved by 2014 under new program requirements or face program closure.

In creating this new teacher leadership endorsement, Illinois has recognized the critical importance of teacher leaders in improving schools. The new teacher leader endorsement will:

- Create a career path to retain and develop high-performing teachers for leadership roles
- Formalize, define, and build the competencies necessary for high-quality leadership to improve student learning
- Recognize and encourage shared leadership and decision-making in schools to maximize outcomes for children

Through the Illinois P-20 Council Teacher Leadership subcommittee, a wide variety of constituents collaborated to make recommendations to the Illinois State Board of Education on the rules for the new teacher leadership endorsement. These recommendations are based on international, national, and state research, policy, and best practices around teacher leadership. Committee members represented public and private universities, school districts, state agencies such as ISBE and IBHE, education and professional associations, teacher and principal practitioners and policy and advocacy groups.

The Role of the Teacher Leader

Unlike principals, for example, teacher leaders act in a variety of roles and contexts. It is important for ISBE to define teacher leadership in order to guide districts and universities and

inform high-quality teacher leader preparation. In both improving teaching and learning practices and developing the capacity of teachers and others, teacher leaders:

- I. Harness the collective knowledge of teachers to impact teaching and learning and school and student success
- II. Promote shared governance and leadership in schools by working effectively with the principal and other adults in the school, with a consistent focus on student learning and achievement
- III. Model excellence in teaching with a strong foundation in improving school/classroom climate, curriculum, instruction, assessment and intervention
- IV. Provide guidance, coaching, mentoring, influence, direction and support to teachers to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning
- V. Promote and influence change to improve school and student outcomes

The rules should not require the teacher leadership endorsement for specific roles in school districts. However, there are specific roles that universities should consider when designing their teacher leadership endorsement programs, including:

- i. Curriculum Specialist (i.e., identifying, designing and implementing curriculum and school/district improvement)
- ii. Coach (i.e., providing coaching to other teachers and staff on instructional practice and methods)
- iii. Mentor teacher (i.e., providing mentoring to new and/or other teachers)
- iv. Department Chair or Lead Teacher
- v. Content Specialist (i.e., leading instructional programs in a specific content area)
- vi. Teacher leaders responsible for supervising others
- vii. Teacher leaders who lead programs relating to school/classroom climate, curriculum, instruction or assessment
- viii. Other roles that emerge from TSR and TCIS data reported by districts

Teacher Leadership Program Design

Universities should provide evidence that their teacher leadership programs are aligned with the Model Teacher Leader standards and Illinois competencies and requirements for this endorsement. The Model Teacher Leader Standards are national standards for teacher leadership developed by the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium.

In addition to alignment to the Model Teacher Leader standards, evidence should be provided that teacher leadership programs were designed to achieve the following Illinois-specific coursework requirements:

- I. Leadership
 - Knowledge of leadership frameworks and models of shared governance
 - Understanding of teacher evaluation models and training

- Ability to hold self and others accountable for results
 - Ability to lead teams in setting goals and achieving results
- II. Designing Professional Development to meet teaching and learning needs
- Understand, apply, and evaluate the specific needs of new teachers for induction and mentoring
 - Ability to coach teachers and staff
 - Ability to understand, apply, and evaluate models of effective professional development
 - Ability to observe instruction and provide coaching, mentoring or development feedback to teachers
- III. Building school culture that focuses on student learning
- Understanding of diverse learners (including Special Education, ELL, underrepresented students and other subpopulations) and their families and communities
 - Ability to analyze and interpret data around school culture, working and learning conditions and climate
 - Understanding of the impact of instructional models and practices on improving culture, climate, and learning
 - Ability to understand and apply the Social-Emotional Learning standards
- IV. Using assessments to improve student learning and foster student achievement
- V. Building collaboration with teachers and stakeholders

Programs should also enhance leadership effectiveness either through program prerequisites, elective courses, or specialized programs that build on the content expertise essential for improving teaching and learning practices.

Programs should demonstrate evidence they are competency-based to build the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions through integrated coursework, embedded field experiences, and assessment. This includes these recommendations:

- Programs should have well-defined formative and summative assessments for the evaluation of candidate performance.
- A statewide standardized performance-based assessment should be developed to ensure consistency and quality.

Teacher leadership program coursework should also articulate to the principal endorsement, if offered, in order to encourage career progression into future school leadership roles.

Additional Policy Recommendations

- ISBE should encourage universities to develop schemes in which candidates can demonstrate both leadership and specific content knowledge and expertise, including, when applicable, program and candidate assessments around content areas.
- Because teacher leaders with this endorsement who have received training in compliance with Section 24A-3 will be able to perform evaluations, programs can either use program faculty to provide the training or send candidates to a third-party vendor to allow elective training to candidates to which it applies.
- ISBE should also collect additional data on how districts use the teacher leadership endorsement for specific roles. When a district reports that a teacher has a teacher leadership endorsement, the district should also have to report whether the district requires the teacher leadership endorsement for that specific role. Data should be shared, in the aggregate, with universities for consideration in the design of teacher leadership programs. ISBE could provide guidance on the program approval site of other roles that emerge from TSR and TCIS data reported by districts.