

Teacher Leadership Collaborative

Rural areas are experiencing a shortage of qualified teachers. Engaging in collective teacher leadership work has been linked to increased self efficacy for teachers and improved retention.

Introduction

Over the past four years, we have coordinated the Teacher Leadership Collaborative (TLC), a voluntary group of teacher leaders from across the state of Maine (and beyond) and in a variety of career stages that meet monthly to engage in collective inquiry and non-positional mentoring.

Framework



The TLC is founded in a framework we developed for teacher leadership that has four pillars: inquiry, social justice, an expanded role, and career spanning.

This process supports the development of key leadership capacities in teachers across the career span, including preservice and novice educators

Conclusion

Supporting the retention of effective teachers in rural spaces is key to rural revitalization. Our collaborative work demonstrates the value of non-hierarchical teacher leadership communities as re-moralizing spaces for educators who may otherwise feel isolated. This is particularly salient in rural areas, and we have used a combination of virtual, in-person, and hybrid structures to create connections that cross boundaries of geographic and institutional space.

Process

Over the last four years, we have met monthly via Zoom to engage in collaborative inquiry, shared reading, and informal mentoring. The group has grown and shrunk organically over time, and our process and goals are shaped by the needs of the TLC members. We have conducted participatory action research alongside the TLC members, which has been presented at international conferences and produced a co-authored publication.

Findings

1. Boundary Crossing: *“The monthly meetings became sacred and were often my only outlet for processing and working through my demoralisation.”*
2. Teacher Voice: *“The TLC helped me to build confidence to share more at my current position while also bringing my knowledge and resources outside of the classroom through online professional learning communities.”*
3. Non-positional Mentoring: *“My membership in the TLC has completely changed my experience as a first-year educator”*

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