



ECI Monthly

Publication of the Educator Compensation Institute
www.edcomp.org

August 2007

Career Scaffolds and Teacher Leadership

Building Systems that Provide Professional Options and Encourage Professional Fluidity - Third in a Four Part Series

The previous two issues of *ECI Monthly* have explored the idea of careers scaffolds – workplace systems for teachers that provide professional options designed to permit teachers to assume a variety of leadership and professional positions at different points during a career. This month, a closer examination of specific teacher leadership positions will be conducted through the explanation of two examples.

Fairfax, Virginia

As the Superintendent of the Fairfax County Public Schools, Dr. Jack Dale testified before the House Committee on Education and Labor last May in its hearing on ESEA reauthorization. In his testimony, Dr. Dale explained a new system being built in Fairfax. Dr. Dale explained, “As part of our redesign, we recognized that many adults now wish to have multiple careers inside and outside of education. We recognized that people enter the profession to work with children. Teachers typically do not aspire to become administrators, yet they want to have a voice in the decisions impacting their classrooms, their working conditions, and the education of today’s youth.”

Within this redesigned work and compensation system, five realities are recognized:

1. Teaching is a full-time profession and can no longer be viewed under an “hourly” employment paradigm of so many hours per day and so many days per year.
2. Teachers no longer “just teach.” They must perform a multitude of duties in and out of the classroom.
3. There can be multiple careers within the teaching profession, none of which need include the title of “administrator.”
4. Educators must be competitively compensated as well as comparably trained professionals.
5. We must look within a school system’s current resource pool to make changes. Additional resources may become available if we restructure the work of teachers and their work year.

Dr. Dale's new system proposes the establishment of seven distinct teacher roles. Because the time demands are different, each will require a different work calendar, but all new roles are based on twelve-month contracts instead of the current ten. The proposed roles are in addition to the normal teaching responsibilities with students and include the following:

1. **School Improvement Teacher Leader** – includes school leadership responsibilities, shared with the principal, including analysis of school performance, program changes, and staff development needs.
2. **Feeder/Cluster Improvement Teacher Leader** – focuses on connections and collaboration with schools within a K-12 cluster that students would attend during their school years, particularly content alignment and performance expectations.
3. **Instructional Improvement Teacher Leader** – includes instructional innovation, curriculum mapping, developing strong teams of teachers and refining instructional skills.
4. **New Teacher Trainer/Mentor** – focuses on training new teachers prior to the start of school and mentoring the new staff during the first several school years.
5. **Extended Student Learning** – focuses on tutoring and nurturing students performing below grade level or who need some pre-teaching of content. Such work would be done after school, during school breaks, etc as needed to leave no child behind.
6. **Student Transition Leadership** – includes analysis and coordination of support services for children needing social/transition skills. It would also include system guidance as students craft learning plans.
7. **Traditional Role** – 180 school days plus the typical additional 5 to 15 contracted days; this includes "normal" duties that are essentially the same as current teaching duties.

The model assumes that 75 percent of the staff would be needed to fulfill all the roles. Initial survey data suggests that between 70 and 80 percent of a school staff would be interested in serving in one of the twelve month positions.

In conclusion, Dr. Dale said, "The model does re-professionalize teaching and substantively change the work/compensation system to become more aligned with current reality.

[Plymouth, Wisconsin](#)

Several years ago, the Plymouth (Wisconsin) School District and the Plymouth Education Association collaboratively negotiated a new agreement crafted to facilitate the meaningful acquisition of skills and knowledge that can be directly applied to the classroom and student learning. This professional development program was designed with the following beliefs:

- ✧ Teachers can direct and facilitate their own professional growth through data-driven decision-making that can improve student achievement.
- ✧ Professional development goals, when aligned with district and building goals, can create a synchronistic system that leads to improved decision making and growth.
- ✧ An outstanding education system requires continuous improvement and encourages risk taking in order to grow and become successful.
- ✧ Professional development activities should be meaningful and applicable to the classroom.
- ✧ A professional development system that is results-based and provides quality feedback will enhance decision-making and classroom instruction.

This new program consists of six components:

1. New Teacher Development
2. Mentor Program
3. Professional Development Council
4. Professional Development Academy
5. Leadership Cadre
6. Professional Growth Plan

Of the six components, the Professional Development Council and the Leadership Cadre emerged as new teacher leadership roles.

Professional Development Council

The Professional Development Council is a governance structure made up of elected representation from all levels of teaching. It will set the framework for guiding the Professional Development Academy and directing the Leadership Cadre. It will oversee the Professional Growth Plans and help to identify organizational and individual needs. It will guide assessment and help to develop a professional development culture focusing on district wide goals to improve student learning.

The Professional Development Council will help to educate people on the process of the professional development system. The governance structure will develop a handbook or manual for operation.

Members of the Professional Development Council will be expected to serve for a minimum of four years and must complete a training session describing the expectations and operations of the council.

Council Responsibilities

1. The Charge of the Council
 - ✧ Direct the Leadership Cadre
 - ✧ Guide Professional Development Academy

- ✧ Develop framework or criteria used to develop the Professional Growth Plans
 - ✧ Assessment
 - ✧ Oversee recommendation for licensure
 - ✧ Identifies organizational and individual needs
 - ✧ Educate people on the process of the Professional Development System
2. Governance Structure
- ✧ Director of Curriculum and Instruction
 - ✧ One Elementary Teacher
 - ✧ One High School Teacher
 - ✧ One Middle School Teacher
 - ✧ One High School Administrator
 - ✧ One Middle School Administrator
 - ✧ One Special Education Teacher
 - ✧ One Board of Education Representative
 - ✧ One Elementary Administrator
 - ✧ One Member from the Pupil Service Team
3. Criteria
- ✧ Must complete a training session
 - ✧ Minimal five years teaching experience (rotation will be used for exiting)
 - ✧ Will develop a handbook for operations
4. Commitment
- ✧ Must be willing to serve a four-year term with rotation beginning at the end of the first four years.
 - ✧ Will be able to apply a level movement at the end of each two-year term (this will not be applicable at this time).
 - ✧ Two personal days will be given per year for council members beginning the 2004-2005 school year. These days can not be accumulated.

Leadership Cadre

The Leadership Cadre will be made up of professionals who are considered experts in their field. Their responsibilities will include assisting teachers by coaching and modeling in the classroom, researching curriculum initiatives and best practices, and teaming with other leadership members to plan and provide input to the Professional Development Council. The work will be defined by sources such as; needs assessments, school improvement plans, Professional Growth Plans, and other data collections.

Teachers will be accepted from an application process to the Leadership Cadre. The term of commitment will be three years with a rotation beginning after three years. This means that the first committee to serve may have members that remain on the cadre for more than three years. This will help to keep consistency during rotation.

Members of the Leadership Cadre will be expected to work fifteen extended contract days, receiving a \$7,500.00 annual stipend. A professional, flexible use of time will be expected as these members will be released each afternoon to work with others and to gain knowledge and skills for their own professional development. Members of the Leadership Cadre will be provided with training in areas such as mentoring, coaching, grant writing, and data analysis.

Leadership Cadre Responsibilities

1. Assist individual teachers
2. Model in the classroom
3. Research and curriculum development
4. Providing input to leadership council
5. Assist in the writing of grants
6. Mentoring and coaching
7. Data analysis

Summary

Fairfax and Plymouth are but two examples of many where school systems are exploring the utilization of teacher leadership roles. When incorporated into a fluid career scaffolding system, the impact can be revitalizing and, as Dr. Dale said, re-professionalizing.

Next Month

Because of the potential complexities created by the professional fluidity built into career scaffolds, the next issue of *ECI Monthly* will examine specific structural considerations and accommodations.

Thanks for reading and for your support of the Educator Compensation Institute.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Carlson
ECI President
carlson@edcomp.org