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The Future of Instructional Teacher Leader Roles

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Abstract

In response to increased performance expectations, schools and districts are turning to nonsupervisory, school-based, instructional teacher leader roles to help improve teachers' instruction and enhance student learning. Increased opportunities to learn about teacher leadership may facilitate the implementation and institutionalization of instructional teacher leader roles. We discuss how institutions of higher education could develop programs for instructional teacher leaders, provide related coursework to school administrators and preservice teachers, and educate school communities about the potential usefulness of these roles.

Key words: *instructional teacher leaders, school improvement, teacher leadership.*

In response to increased performance expectations, schools and districts have been turning to nonsupervisory, school-based, instructional teacher leader roles as a way to improve teachers' instruction and enhance student learning. These positions offer two unique benefits: They bring a level of specialized knowledge about teaching to the school setting, and they do so outside the line of school authority to promote the development of trust between teachers and the instructional leader. Instructional teacher leaders commonly perform an array of activities: conduct professional development workshops, co-plan and model lessons, observe teaching and provide feedback, collect and analyze data, facilitate dialogue and reflective critique, and promote shared practices among peers. Thus, the work of the instructional teacher leader aims to improve teaching for the purpose of increasing student learning. In

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this article, we ask the following questions: What does research tell us about instructional teacher leadership as a means for school improvement? Also, given that research, what is the likely future of teacher leader initiatives?

Much has been made of the contributions that teachers can make to school leadership, in general, and to instructional leadership, in particular (Hart 1995; Katzenmeyer and Moller 1996; Crowther et al. 2002; Harris and Muijs 2004; Lieberman and Miller 2004). Teachers' connections to the classroom—creating learning opportunities for students, assessing student performance, and adapting their teaching practice accordingly—provide them with a situated perspective on the core technologies of teaching. This knowledge, combined with teachers' ability to influence instruction, suggests that, in addition to being the gatekeepers of instructional change, teachers may also be the logical leaders of changed practice. Distributed theories of leadership further emphasize teachers' leadership potential by defining leadership as the process of people's interaction with one another and with their situation (Gronn 2000; Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond 2004; Spillane 2006). As such, teachers, in interaction with one another, have the potential to lead instructional improvement efforts despite a lack of positional leadership authority.

Though much of the literature on teacher leadership trumpets the ability of all teachers, regardless of position, to contribute to school improvement, there has been a resurgent interest in the formalization of instructional teacher leader roles. Leadership roles for teachers were a common reform strategy in the 1980s and early 1990s. Positions such as master, lead, and mentor teacher were seen as a way to decentralize authority, include teachers in shared decision making, improve morale, enhance teachers' work, and tap into previously underused resources (Conley 1991; Firestone and Bader 1991; Lichtenstein, McLaughlin, and Knudsen 1992; Hart 1995; Heller and Firestone 1995). Despite the possible benefits, these positions were criticized for focusing on individual job enhancement rather than on collective improvement and for directing teachers' energy toward managerial tasks rather than instructional domains (Hart 1990; Smylie 1997). Thus, new roles—aimed at instructional improvement and collective work enhancement—began to emerge, putting teacher teaming, teacher as researcher, and coaching initiatives at the forefront of school reform efforts (Smylie, Conley, and Marks 2002).

Formal instructional teacher leader positions are becoming increasingly common (Murphy 2005). These positions have received support from federal initiatives, including Reading First and the Math Science Partnership; private foundations, such as the Small Schools Coaches Collaborative, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; large-scale, comprehensive school reform models, such as America's Choice and Success for All; and professional organizations, such as the National Staff Development Council. As a result, formal instructional teacher leader roles have been evident in large-scale school reform efforts as demonstrated in New York, San Diego, Boston, and Chicago (see Datnow and Castellano 2001; also see Elmore and Burney 1997; Stein 1998; Hightower et al. 2002; Stoelinga 2006), as well as in more localized contexts (see Mangin 2005; 2006).

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The proliferation of instructionally focused teacher leader roles has been fueled by emergent knowledge of effective professional development. This literature suggests that professional development may be most useful when it focuses on instruction, occurs within the school context, and includes collaborative interaction that is sustained over time (Hawley and Valli 1999; Garet et al. 2001; Richardson and Placier 2001; Hallman, Wenzel, and Fendt 2004). Such professional development may increase instructional capacity, resulting in improved practice and contributing to overall school improvement (Elmore and Burney 1999; Cohen and Hill 2001). These potential benefits have led to a growing emphasis on the development of quality training opportunities for teachers to enhance their skills, deepen their knowledge, and improve their practice. In theory, instructional teacher leader roles can facilitate instructional improvement by providing teachers with contextualized, sustained, instructionally focused, and thus effective professional development.

Instructional teacher leader initiatives are also bolstered by education policies that pressure school and district leaders to seek effective ways to increase student achievement. Educational mandates that focus on student testing outcomes, teachers' educational attainment, and standardized curriculum focus greater attention on instructional improvement as the primary pathway to educational reform. This pressure has become especially pronounced with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. As a result, schools and districts have embraced instructional teacher leader initiatives as one possible pathway to increasing instructional achievement. Paradoxically, these initiatives are being implemented without conclusive evidence that they lead to increased student achievement. This appears to contradict the federal emphasis on research-based educational initiatives. Thus, it seems that the pressure to improve instruction exceeds the pressure to implement initiatives with evidence of student learning outcomes.

This increased pressure to improve instruction has prompted districts to invest both human and financial resources in the creation of instructional teacher leader positions. For example, in 2001, the Chicago Public Schools launched the Chicago Reading Initiative, which included the implementation of 114 school-based instructional teacher leaders (referred to as reading coaches and tasked with providing professional development to teachers), a number that expanded to 580 by 2005–2006. The cost of hiring and training these instructional teacher leaders was estimated at nearly \$20 million (Kelleher 2002). In addition to the steep financial cost, instructional leader positions also prompt a shift, and potential loss, of scarce human resources as teachers move out of classrooms and into specialized roles. Given these human and financial considerations, and the growing momentum behind these roles, a clear need exists to examine what we know about instructional teacher leadership roles.

What Research Says about Instructional Teacher Leadership

Two sources of information—practitioner-based literature and scholarly research—are available to schools and districts implementing instructional teacher leader initiatives. The growing body of practitioner-based literature provides invaluable information about the daily struggles of instructional teacher leaders, including how to build instructional capacity, gain teacher trust, and juggle competing priorities (Sweeney 2003; Gabriel 2005;

Toll 2005; Allen 2006; Stone and Cuper 2006). Though many of these resources are informed by content-area research, research on teacher leadership is not generally integrated into these guides (Taylor 2008). At the same time, scholarly research on instructional teacher leadership has been thin. In their review of the literature, York-Barr and Duke (2004) described the existing teacher leader research as asynchronous, atheoretical, and incomplete. Clearly, the need exists for stronger research on instructional teacher leadership as a path to instructional improvement.

Here we focus on contributing to the scholarly literature by examining new research findings, drawing primarily from a compilation of studies that used diverse methodologies to describe and analyze instructional teacher leadership in varying contexts. For a more comprehensive treatment of these authors' findings, see the original text: Mangin and Stoelinga (2008). Though these studies do not examine the effect of instructional teacher leadership on student outcomes, they do provide important information about the knowledge and skills that teacher leaders need in order to improve instruction and the nature of the contexts in which these leaders work. Examining this body of research can increase understanding of the potential and future viability of instructional teacher leader roles.

Knowledge and Skills

The depth of teacher leaders' content knowledge affects their ability to influence instructional improvement and thus the overall effectiveness of teacher leader initiatives. In a study of mathematics teacher leaders and the teachers with whom they worked, Manno and Firestone (2008) found that content experts recognize the deficiencies in their colleagues' content knowledge and focus their work on those areas, contributing to teachers' understandings of desired practice and providing the necessary knowledge and skills to enact that practice. In addition, teacher leaders' content expertise led teachers to perceive them as advocates for children's learning, facilitating trust and increasing teachers' propensity to use the teacher leaders' services. These findings align with earlier research that emphasizes the influence of subject-matter knowledge on school leadership (Burch and Spillane 2003).

In addition to content knowledge, instructional teacher leaders must possess the procedural knowledge necessary to facilitate collective instructional improvement. Procedural knowledge includes knowing *how* to deliver content to teachers in a way that promotes collaboration, dialogue, and trust. In their three-year investigation of mathematics and science teacher leaders, Lord, Cress, and Miller (2008) found that teacher leaders essentially "show and tell" teachers how to change—they "show" through direct modeling, and they "tell" through planning and advising. Showing and telling can provide images of complex instructional practice, promoting improvement in the knowledge and skills of individual teachers. Though promising in terms of individual teacher development, the teacher leaders lacked the procedural knowledge needed to deliver "hard" feedback, characterized by collegial critique, which could lead to continuous improvement on a large scale. These findings are corroborated by evidence that reflective group discussion is more likely than modeling to promote broad instructional improvement (Mangin 2006).

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In addition to providing hard feedback, instructional teacher leaders may also need skills related to data analysis and utilization. Halverson and Thomas (2008) examined how principals created data utilization systems to improve instruction. They found that principals relied on staff members with data analysis expertise derived from their training associated with individualized education plans. As such, student services personnel, such as school counselors and psychologists, played a leadership role in developing and maintaining support programs to help all students and teachers meet the demands of high-stakes accountability. These findings emphasize the importance of data analysis and utilization skills in identifying instructional needs and targeting areas for improvement—skills that are critical to the work of instructional teacher leaders. These conclusions are further supported by school and district leaders' claim that poor data analysis and interpretation skills limit their ability to make informed decisions about instructional matters (Stoelinga 2007).

Though research demonstrates that content and procedural knowledge can positively affect a teacher leader's level of instructional influence, the extent to which these skills are being developed is unclear. For example, only half the teacher leaders that Manno and Firestone (2008) studied were content experts. Moreover, districts report that few applicants for teacher leader positions have the necessary combination of qualifications, prompting them to leave positions vacant (Camburn, Kimball, and Lowenhaupt 2008) or to hire based on "willingness" rather than on expertise (Mangin 2008). The complex content and procedural knowledge necessary for effective teacher leadership makes it difficult to find appropriately qualified candidates, potentially compromising the intended benefits.

Facilitating and Constraining Contexts

Recent research also provides new information on the contextual conditions that facilitate effective instructional teacher leadership. When these contextual factors exist, instructional teacher leader initiatives are more likely to contribute to instructional improvement. At the same time, research points to conditions that constrain teacher leadership, making institutionalization difficult. Here we discuss some conditions that can alternately facilitate or constrain instructional teacher leadership.

One critical source of support for instructional teacher leadership is school principals. Mangin (2007) found that principals who were knowledgeable about the responsibilities, functions, and goals of teacher leadership and who engaged in frequent, high-quality interaction with teacher leaders were more likely to provide support. Principals provided support by setting expectations for teachers to improve instruction and to interact with the teacher leader. These findings are corroborated by research indicating that lack of knowledge and support contributes to teacher leaders' perceptions that principals will not "vouch for" their work or that the principals will not protect them from conflicting duties that would undermine the role (Hallman, Wenzel, and Fendt 2004). Both these studies point to the principal as an influential source of support.

School norms are another contextual factor that can influence support for instructional teacher leader roles. Lord, Cress, and Miller (2008) found that norms governing

access and accountability challenged teacher leaders' ability to move beyond one-on-one relationships, constraining the potential of teacher leadership to contribute to collective instructional improvement. In the absence of professional norms of collaboration, dialogue, and trust, teachers may be reticent to share instructional practices (Stoelinga 2008). Moreover, where norms of autonomy and egalitarianism endure, teachers are likely to resist assistance, limiting teacher leadership to nonthreatening interaction that fails to focus on instructional improvement (Mangin 2005).

School structures constitute another context that facilitates instructional teacher leadership. Building time into the school day for teachers to discuss and share instructional practices enables teacher leaders to work closely with teachers on instructional improvement (Mangin 2005). Moreover, schools that formally dedicate time to teacher leadership communicate to teachers that the work of the teacher leader—instructional improvement—is a priority (Mangin 2007). Conversely, when school structures distribute teacher leaders too thinly over too many teachers, they lack the time necessary to do their work. Camburn, Kimball, and Lowenhaupt (2008) found that a lack of time for teacher leaders to attend meetings, meet with supervisors, and complete time logs hindered effectiveness. Departmentalized school structures can also limit the usefulness of formal teacher leader roles by creating strong informal collegial networks and decreasing the need for formal teacher leaders (Supovitz 2008).

Another contextual factor influencing the effectiveness of instructional teacher leadership is the degree of goal coherence. At the school level, instructional program coherence has been linked to positive school outcomes, including a broad base of teacher involvement in school improvement planning and norms focused on student learning, both essential to the work of instructional teacher leaders (Newmann et al. 2001). Similarly, when informal leaders and formal teacher leaders share similar goals, the informal leaders positively influence the institutionalization of teacher leader roles (Stoelinga 2008).

District goal coherence also contributes to effective instructional teacher leadership enactment. Districts that use communication networks to facilitate common understandings of teacher leadership receive greater school-level support for formal teacher leader initiatives (Mangin 2008). Conversely, when districts offer competing instructional guidance to schools, teacher leader initiatives are compromised. Camburn, Kimball, and Lowenhaupt's (2008) study of a large decentralized district demonstrated that limited goal coherence at the district level led to differential enactment of the coach position at the school level, compromising the role's instructional focus and decreasing effectiveness.

In sum, research demonstrates that instructional teacher leaders' content and procedural knowledge, principal leadership, school norms, school structures, and overall goal coherence have a critical influence on the work of teacher leaders. Ultimately, these factors influence the extent to which teacher leaders can contribute to the improvement of instructional practice. The research on instructional teacher leadership indicates that schools and districts need to focus on this set of interrelated components to deepen the potential effectiveness of instructional teacher leader roles for improving teaching.

The Future of Teacher Leadership

We are at an important juncture in the development of instructional teacher leadership. Given the challenge of implementing these research-based practices, what does the future of teacher leadership look like? Is there anything to suggest that instructional teacher leadership might persevere? Here we discuss how the national education policy context has resulted in a set of factors that appear to converge in ways that predispose schools toward continued reliance on teacher leadership as a means to instructional improvement.

Possibly the most pressing factor influencing the rise of instructional teacher leadership is the current commitment to accountability, most notably articulated in the federally legislated NCLB Act (2001), which measures the success of schools, educators, and students based on results from standardized assessments. In response, districts across the nation have dedicated increased resources to the development of curriculum standards and the alignment of curriculum to teaching and to these assessments. Additional pressure comes from Title II of NCLB, which calls for increases in teacher quality to be attained, in part, through effective professional development. Instructional teacher leaders are being called on to lead these efforts, providing professional development to teachers that mirrors the standardized curriculum and assessments.

The rerouting of time, energy, and resources toward addressing accountability mechanisms has fundamentally altered the work of teaching. Teachers have substantially less autonomy because they must adhere to externally defined standards, typically described as the content of standardized assessments and their related curriculum. As a result, teachers find themselves faced with new tasks, such as data collection and analysis, that were not previously part of their work. Moreover, teachers must differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of individual students in an effort to optimize each child's opportunity to learn. Formal instructional teacher leaders may serve as a resource to teachers in the process of using data and individualizing instruction.

An additional factor promoting the development of instructional teacher leader roles is the push to "scale-up" reforms. The trend to increase the scope of reform, extending it to broader populations, has grown out of accountability pressures that require improvement for all students, schools, and districts. Efforts to expand the reach of school reform have led to greater reliance on teacher leaders. Instructional teacher leaders can facilitate change across teachers and schools, increasing the scope of change efforts. This potential has prompted an increase in the number and an expansion of the function of instructional teacher leader positions.

Moreover, in the current reform environment, more is at stake when schools and districts fail to reach improvement goals. Teachers may face diminished morale and sense of self-efficacy, increased pressure to improve student performance, and, potentially, reassignment or firing. For schools, the consequences can include parental choice that allows students to transfer, increased monitoring, restructuring, and reconstitution. Students, parents, staff, and community members face the stigma associated with having a "failing" school. Districts may face administrative shake-ups, possible state takeover, or changes in

the allocation of funds. As a result, districts are increasingly eager to improve achievement and avoid the stigma and external interventions associated with school failure.

The education policy context, characterized by increased external accountability, pressure to improve teaching, demand to scale up reform, and high stakes for noncompliance, creates a favorable environment for instructional teacher leader roles. By aligning the work that teacher leaders do with school improvement goals, instructional teacher leaders can become a key resource for improving instruction, increasing learning, and meeting state and federal mandates. As long as accountability policies are based on instructional outcomes, districts seem likely to continue to view instructional teacher leaders as a resource for improving school performance.

At the same time, current education policies also create a national mood that challenges the fidelity of the instructional teacher leader role. Instructional teacher leaders are intended as resources for teachers—sources of support for instructional improvement. The push to satisfy accountability pressures threatens to transform instructional teacher leader roles into another part of the supervision-and-evaluation system, potentially distorting the non-evaluative aims of teacher leadership. Another challenge to the fidelity of teacher leadership comes from the rapid expansion of these roles in the midst of increasing demands on schools. Hurried development may blur or dilute the role's intent, transforming instructional teacher leaders into all-purpose resources—"handy men," of sorts—rather than instructional resources for teachers. Thus, in the current policy context, districts and schools are challenged to design and implement instructional teacher leader positions in accord with research while maintaining fidelity to the intentions of the role.

Addressing the Challenges and Smoothing the Way

Instructional teacher leadership may be a useful reform approach for districts struggling with school improvement, but it will remain attractive only if it yields the desired improvements. As discussed earlier, it is not easy to implement instructional teacher leader roles in accord with the information that research gives us about effective practices. Moreover, accountability pressures that lend support to the development of teacher leader roles simultaneously threaten the aims of instructional teacher leadership. Given these challenges, what can be done to improve the implementation and institutionalization of effective instructional teacher leader roles?

Foremost, institutions of higher education should develop training programs to identify, prepare, and provide resources for instructional teacher leaders and to educate school communities about the potential usefulness of these formal roles. Some institutions have begun to respond to this need, creating masters or certificate programs in teacher leadership. Unfortunately, the development of these programs tends to be hindered by the departmentalized nature of colleges of education, which traditionally locate "teaching" and "leading" in separate departments. Interdepartmental collaboration is necessary to develop effective teacher leader programs that attend to developing both subject area knowledge and leadership skills. Working across departments and drawing on the existing research will enable universities to create appropriate educational programs for aspiring and acting instructional teacher leaders.

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As universities develop specific programs for educating instructional teacher leaders, they should also develop coursework for future administrators and preservice teachers. Administrators need to learn about shared leadership and ways to effectively empower, support, and organize teacher leaders. Preservice teachers should be introduced to the concept of teacher leadership as a source of instructional support, which may facilitate greater receptivity to the work of teacher leaders and perhaps introduce them to the possibility of pursuing teacher leader positions in their careers.

To some extent, professional associations have already begun to provide practitioners with information and training related to instructional teacher leadership. The most prominent example is the National Staff Development Council, which produces publications and conducts training for coaches (e.g., see the e-newsletter *Teachers Teaching Teachers*). Teacher leader training also comes from unions, state associations, and for-profit organizations. These types of programs can serve as examples for universities. At the same time, both universities and professional associations must maintain a commitment to research-based practices as the foundation of their courses, seminars, and certificates. New evidence of the knowledge, skills, and work conditions needed for successful teacher leadership should guide the content of teacher leader preparation programs. Teacher leadership is a challenging role requiring sophisticated skills. This complexity should be recognized and addressed in the training and education of teacher leaders.

Increased opportunities to learn about instructional teacher leadership are likely to result in more effective teacher leader initiatives. School communities will better understand the aims of the role and its importance as a non-evaluative resource for teachers. Informed district administrators may be more intentional in their distribution and use of teacher leaders. They may be more likely to dedicate adequate resources including ongoing professional development that includes both subject area content matter and procedural skills. Informed school-level administrators will better understand the importance of professional norms for effective teacher leadership, making them more likely to foster norms of collective improvement. School principals may also be more apt to support the work of instructional teacher leaders, dedicating adequate time and resources to the position and communicating its value to teachers. In turn, teachers' increased understanding may lead to greater receptivity and, ultimately, increased instructional improvement.

The Continued Need for Research

To be certain, effectively adding new roles into longstanding institutional structures is complicated. If schools hope to benefit from instructional teacher leadership, the implementation of these initiatives must be informed and intentional. Despite a growing body of research, significant gaps in knowledge remain, making it difficult for schools and districts to know what practices might yield the most positive results. Continued research on teacher leadership and the incorporation of that research into practice will be imperative for the success of teacher leadership as a means to instructional improvement and increased student achievement. Several avenues of research appear especially important to the future development of formal instructional teacher leadership. We explore them in brief here. For a more thorough exploration, see Mangin and Stoelinga (2008).

Increasing Knowledge and Skills

Though scholars have begun to demonstrate the importance of subject area content knowledge (Manno and Firestone 2008) and procedural knowledge (Halverson and Thomas 2008; Lord, Cress, and Miller 2008), the relationship between subject area, content expertise, delivery method, and effective instructional teacher leadership remains unexplored. Does teacher leadership in the areas of math or science, as studied by Manno and Firestone, require a different type of delivery or approach than teacher leadership in literacy or another subject area? Moreover, what kind of procedural knowledge facilitates sharing content knowledge? New studies that document the form and function of both content and procedural knowledge across subject areas are necessary to extend our understandings of their influence on teacher leader effectiveness.

In addition to research on procedural and subject area content knowledge, the need also exists to further examine the training of instructional teacher leaders. Evidence of the importance of teacher leaders' expertise (Camburn, Kimball, and Lowenhaupt 2008; Mangin 2008) must be augmented by additional information about effective preservice training and ongoing professional development for instructional teacher leaders. What kind of training best prepares teacher leaders? How frequently should professional development occur, and who should provide it? What content should be presented and in which formats? Future studies that include evaluation of teacher leaders' opportunities to learn can facilitate a better understanding of the connections among preparation, enactment, and outcome.

Existing research points to school norms as a contextual condition influencing the enactment of instructional teacher leader roles (Lord, Cress, and Miller 2008; Stoelinga 2008; Supovitz 2008). More research is needed to deepen our understanding of norms as a precondition or an outcome, or both, of teacher leadership. What kinds of professional norms might facilitate the development of instructional teacher leadership, and can these norms be developed to increase the effectiveness of enactment? Alternatively, can mandates and high-stakes accountability practices promote instructional teacher leader enactment and facilitate professional norms as an outcome? Future research that explores the role of professional norms in teacher leadership can lead to a deeper understanding of the conditions that facilitate and constrain teacher leader initiatives.

The structural contexts that encompass instructional teacher leader initiatives also are in need of further examination. We know that organizational structures at both the school and district levels can alternately facilitate or constrain instructional teacher leadership (Camburn, Kimball, and Lowenhaupt 2008; Mangin 2008; Stoelinga 2008; Supovitz 2008). Thus, future research should pay attention to structural components—such as departmentalization or common planning time—that shape the manner in which teacher leaders influence instructional practice. Moreover, new research should examine the role that other school-level leaders—both formal and informal—and district-level leaders play in creating the organizational structures necessary for effective teacher leadership. For example, how might these other leaders facilitate goal coherence and communication networks? These types of studies can promote the design of teacher leader positions that fit into the existing school structure, yet have the potential to facilitate the structural changes necessary for effective teacher leadership enactment.

The larger policy environment and the resulting emphasis on accountability have profoundly influenced the development of instructional teacher leader positions. Thus, the need exists for systematic research on how state and federal policies influence the development and enactment of teacher leader initiatives. For example, the current focus on “data-driven instruction” and “high-quality” teaching has implications for teacher leader roles. Also, trends in “standardized testing” and “instructional differentiation” contribute new ways of thinking about instructional teacher leadership. Hence, policy-related studies are essential for deepening our understanding of the influence of policy on teacher leader role development.

Finally, and most importantly, future research must begin to examine the influence of teacher leadership on student-level outcomes. The current body of research measures the effectiveness of teacher leader roles based on a range of goals, including teacher leaders’ influence on instructional practice (Lord, Cress, and Miller 2008; Manno and Firestone 2008), teacher leader role enactment (Mangin 2008), the depth of institutionalization of teacher leader roles (Stoelinga 2008), and the integration of the role into a coherent initiative for school reform (Camburn, Kimball, and Lowenhaupt 2008). Future research should include measures of influence on instructional improvement and student achievement. Moreover, cost-benefit analyses that weigh the high financial cost of teacher leader initiatives against associated outcomes would provide critical information necessary for efficient school improvement. Thus, investigating the relationship between instructional teacher leader positions, instructional practice, and student outcomes is a critical next step for scholars.

The future of instructional teacher leadership hinges on our ability to incorporate and build on new understandings from research. As practitioners and school leaders, we must use the existing body of knowledge to revise and refine instructional teacher leader roles to make their work more meaningful. As researchers and providers of leadership preparation, we must use the current research to deepen inquiry, open doors to conversation with practitioners, and promote more effective instructional teacher leadership. Together, we must focus on the ultimate goal of student learning, keeping in mind the promises of instructional teacher leadership as well as the lessons to be learned.

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