

# Teacher Leadership: Research Roundup

## Learn From the Newest Research in Teacher Leadership

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While there has been a growing body of research on teacher leadership over the past 2 decades, a small portion of these studies have made significant contributions to the overall literature. Recently, studies published in prominent education research journals have focused on the impacts of teacher leadership on instructional practices and school culture. Specifically, Bradley-Levine (2022) and Supovitz et al. (2020) found that teacher leaders play a major role in promoting positive school climate, communication across educators and administrators, and overall collaboration. Gningue (2022) found that not all teacher leaders or teacher leadership models are associated with positive school culture. Regarding teacher leader efficacy, Supovitz et al. (2020) found that teacher leaders were reported to have a statistically significant impact on teacher practice, yet Doraiswamy et al. (2022) found that teacher leaders needed time to develop key competencies for their roles beyond the “developing” level. Weins and Beck (2022) found that although teacher leaders tended to be less experienced and educated than their teaching peers on average, they used research-based practices more than other teachers. Bradley-Levine (2022) and Supovitz et al. (2020) also found that teacher leaders can effectively serve in both a coaching and evaluative role with teacher trust and buy-in, but those who work with teachers who serve in coaching-only roles may feel negatively toward having teacher leaders with an evaluative role as well.

### Bibliography

Bradley-Levine, J. (2022). Teacher leaders' participation in teacher evaluation. *International Journal of Teacher Leadership*, 11(1), 50–72. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1342977.pdf>

This study is a follow-up to a 2017 survey to further explore how a district teacher evaluation system influenced teacher practice via the supports of teacher leaders. The study included both self-reported data via interviews and observation data (primarily from teachers) and examined their perspectives on their participation in teacher evaluation and the role of teacher leadership. The study found that teacher leaders helped promote a culture of teamwork and collaboration, shared expectations for non-negotiable aspects of teaching (e.g., analysis of student data), and a culture of professional growth and reflection. The combined coaching and evaluation role of teacher leaders was successful due to the teacher leaders' focus on building positive relationships and being transparent about their own strengths and weaknesses, which helped build trust and buy-in for the evaluation process.

Doraiswamy, N., Wilson, G., Czerniak, C. M., Tuttle, N., Porter, K., & Czajkowski, K. (2022). Teacher leader model standards in context: Analyzing a program of teacher leadership development to contextual behaviours of teacher leaders. *European Journal of Educational Management*, 5(1), 49–62. <https://doi.org/10.12973/eujem.5.1.49>

This study analyzed a series of courses designed to develop teacher leader competencies in science educators so that they could subsequently improve the quality of science teaching in their respective schools. The study analyzed videos of 23 teacher leaders facilitating professional learning sessions, using a rubric aligned to the Teacher Leader Model Standards. The learning content of the courses and the competencies defined by the Teacher Leader Model Standards were aligned. The study found that teacher leaders demonstrated 31 out of 37 competencies to some extent, although most were only demonstrated at a developing level. The authors conclude that these findings indicate a need for more focus on specific teacher leader competencies within specific disciplines or content areas, more time for teacher leaders' competencies to develop, and more school-level structures to support ongoing learning.

Gningue, S. M., Peach, R., Jarrah, A. M., & Wardat, Y. (2022). The relationship between teacher leadership and school climate: Findings from a teacher-leadership project. *Education Sciences*, 12(11), 749. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12110749>

This study surveyed teachers to explore whether there was a relationship between teacher leadership and positive school climate. While the study did not find an overall association between teacher leadership and positive school climate, schools that encouraged teacher collaboration had teachers who were more likely to show personal growth and development. This study indicates that although there are several other studies that emphasize how teacher leaders promote positive school climate, this may not be a widespread benefit of teacher leadership and may depend on the school context. It may also indicate that the specifics of teacher leader roles are significant, as teacher leaders often promote collaboration in their work.

Supovitz, J. A., Margolis, J., Harrison Berg, J., & Comstock, M. (2020). *The influence of teacher leadership programs on teacher leaders, teachers, schools, and districts*. CPRE Research Reports. [https://repository.upenn.edu/cpre\\_researchreports/115](https://repository.upenn.edu/cpre_researchreports/115)

This study gathered feedback from educators in four districts with teacher leadership programs (two district-based programs and two districts implementing state teacher leadership programs). The goal of the study was to understand teacher experiences with teacher leadership and describe its impacts. The study had several key findings that generally fell into two categories: the impact of teacher leadership and the teacher leader role design.

- Regarding impact, the study found positive and statistically significant relationships between teacher leader supports and changes in instruction, although both were self-reported. The activities most associated with changes in instruction were small-group

professional development and instructional planning. In addition, the study found that teachers believed that teacher leaders had a major positive impact on school and district culture and helped advance district priorities.

- Regarding role design, teachers' beliefs tended to align with the model of teacher leadership used in their district: those with teacher leaders with a combined coaching and evaluative role felt positive about both aspects, while those with teacher leaders as a coach only felt negative about teacher leaders also serving as evaluators.

Overall, the study found that role clarity benefited successful teacher leadership programs, but these programs still required active efforts to be sustained.

Wiens, P.D., & Beck, J. S. (2022). But are they good teachers? Examining who takes up teacher leadership and how their instruction differs from their peers. *School Leadership & Management*, 42(4), 381–401. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2022.2111413>

This study examined responses from a national social studies survey of secondary (e.g., middle and high school) teachers, with the aim of understanding how teacher leaders differed from other teachers in instructional practices and other actions. The study found that most social studies teachers who responded to the survey participated in some form of teacher leadership; however, this finding may be influenced by the broad definition of teacher leadership used in the study (from Wenner & Campbell, 2017). This finding raises the question of whether there are different patterns in teacher leadership across subject areas, as there is also enthusiasm for teacher leadership in STEM, particularly computer science. The study also found that those in teacher leader roles tended to be less experienced and less educated than the average of their teaching peers but used more research-based instructional techniques. This finding raises questions about whether the individuals who take on teacher leadership roles tend to have different dispositions or priorities than teachers in general.



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