



**Richard Wilson
Associate Director
NJEA Professional Development
And Instructional Issues
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Introduction

In September, 2015, Governor Christie signed into law a bill that created a Teacher Leader Endorsement as an option to be added to the standard instructional certificate for teachers in New Jersey. The law, which was the result of several years of work by NJEA and other educational stakeholders around the state, also created an eleven member Teacher Leader Endorsement Advisory Board (TLEAB) to make recommendations to the Commissioner of Education on the eligibility requirements for the endorsement, requirements for programs of study leading to the endorsement, and roles and responsibilities that might require the endorsement.

Although there are no statutory requirements for the length of the programs of study, there is a requirement that they be based on the Teacher Leader Model Standards (TLMS).

In January of 2016, the Governor appointed the members of the TLEAB, including four members recommended by NJEA, one member recommended by NJ AFT, two members from NJPSA, and one member each from NJASA, NJSBA, Higher Education and the NJDOE.

NJEA held a teacher leader summit in February, 2016 with 90 educators from across the state, representing a variety of stakeholder groups. Nine of eleven members of the TLEAB were in attendance.

The TLEAB began their work in February of 2016. The advisory board released a report of their recommendations in June 2017.

The New Jersey State Board of Education adopted final regulations for the Teacher Leader Endorsement in April 2019.

Included in the new law was a provision that permitted programs of study to be developed not just by colleges and universities, but also by other educational institutions. In the spring of 2016, NJEA created a temporary position to explore the potential for an NJEA Teacher Leader Academy that will lead candidates to the new teacher leader endorsement. This report lays out an outline for a proposed framework for the NJEA Teacher Leader Academy.

Conceptual Framework

The NJEA Teacher Leader Academy (TLA) will be based on three intersecting components. The first of these will be meetings of the larger cohort. In the pilot year, it is expected that this group will include roughly 35 candidates. The second component will involve the breaking down of the larger cohort group into regional, self-organized study groups that will meet regularly. The third component will be a field experience, which will be divided into some guided practical exercises as well as a larger self-directed practicum designed around the needs, interest, and expertise of each particular candidate.

The cohort meetings will serve as the platform of the program. Centered on the concept of four fold practice, they will serve as the conduit for helping candidates work through the challenges of developing the dispositions to serve as both a peer and an expert, which is imperative for success as a teacher leader.



The self-organized study groups will be responsible for exploring the content of the TLMS themselves. Since much of the literature on teacher leadership focuses on building the capacity of peers, these groups will work together to build the foundational knowledge of the standards.

Integrated into the cohort meetings and the self-organized study groups will be a series of field experiences, through which candidates can demonstrate their ability to transfer knowledge into practice. Some of these experiences will be structured to reinforce specific aspects of each of the modules, while others will be created by the candidates themselves to focus on their own individual differences.

A careful examination of Four Fold Practice and the TLMS reveals significant overlap between the two paradigms addressing the disposition and knowledge required of a teacher leader. The addition of field experiences that are based on both Four Fold Practice and the TLMS rounds out a robust experience that will allow candidates to transfer that knowledge into the skillset necessary for successful teacher leaders.

Four distinct modules also offer the opportunity for checkpoints that will allow for the assessment that will be required of any approved programs. The modules will be of varying lengths, depending on the content of each. It is safe to assume that the first two modules will take less time than the last two, and that the field experiences in the last two modules will be more individualized than the first two. This will also allow candidates sufficient time to plan for field experiences in the latter part of the program that will best meet their needs.

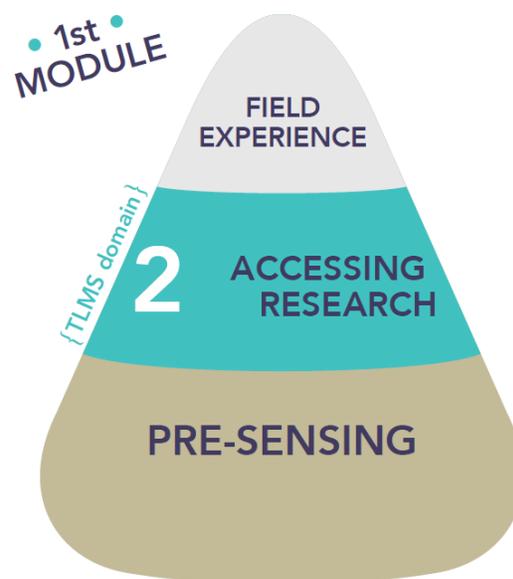
First Module: Ergo Cogito Sum

In his attempt to prove his own existence, French mathematician and philosopher Rene Descartes attempted to deny the existence of all that was around him, until he came to the philosophical proposition “I think therefore I am.” Successful teacher leaders will need to have a firm sense of themselves, and their own personal strengths and challenges, in order to build successful relationships with their peers and colleagues. This becomes the focus of the first module of the Teacher Leader Academy.

The first practice in four fold practice is Pre-sensing, that is, to be present. At this stage, candidates reflect on the importance of “showing up,” developing the ability to be clear about the needs of a community and understanding their personal contribution to that community. It allows for the personal curiosity that must develop in any inquiry based system. Intellectually, it is a matter of knowing what you know and knowing what you don’t know.

This dovetails well into Domain 2 of the TLMS, which is *Accessing and Using Research to Improve Practice and Student Learning*. In this domain, teacher leaders need to understand how research creates new knowledge, informs policies and practices, and improves teaching and learning. The teacher leader models and facilitates the use of systemic inquiry as a critical component of teachers’ ongoing learning and development.

The experiential component for this module could include identifying research to solve a particular problem that exists in the candidate’s educational setting and sharing with members of that community. Other experiences might include an exploration of the candidate’s worldview and how that intersects with the worldview of their organization, to allow them to be more effective in their interaction with their colleagues.



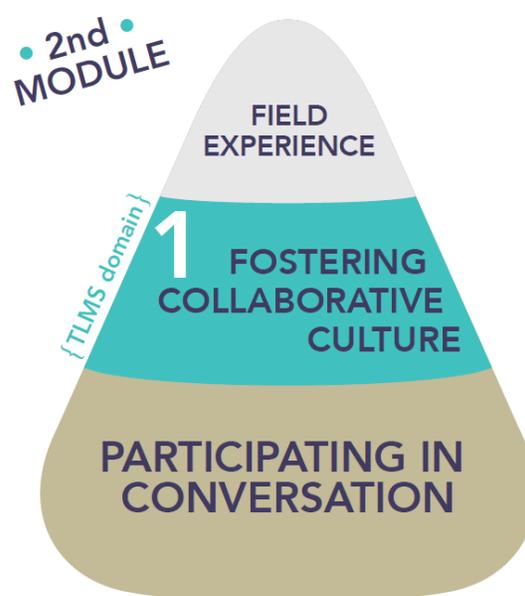
Second Module: I and Thou

In 1923, the German philosopher and theologian Martin Buber published his most well-known work whose English translation is *I and Thou*. The treatise lays out a framework for the connection between people that is based, not on objectification, but rather on relationship. That relationship is generative, in that it holds the potential to change both parties in the relationship. One of the challenges of being a teacher leader is to be both expert and peer simultaneously. Successful teacher leaders are able to travel this narrow path successfully, so it is imperative that the Teacher Leader Academy address this set of skills.

The second phase of fourfold practice is in participating in conversation with others. It demands that we listen carefully to one another and that we offer what we can in service of the whole. Through practicing skillful conversation, we can find our best practice together. This goes to a key disposition for teacher leaders. It is only through mindful conversation that wisdom and clarification can come through in a meeting or on a project.

It is in this module that candidates can consider TLMS Domain I: *Fostering a Collaborative Culture to Support Educator Development and Student Learning*. Building on their learning about research in the first module, as well as assessing individual strengths and weaknesses, in the second module, candidates concentrate their learning on the principles of adult learning as they look to develop a collaborative culture of collective responsibility in their schools.

Developing the skills of collaboration and creating the ability to be both expert and peer is key to being a successful teacher leader. Field experiences including such exercises as stakeholder interviews will help to build these skills.



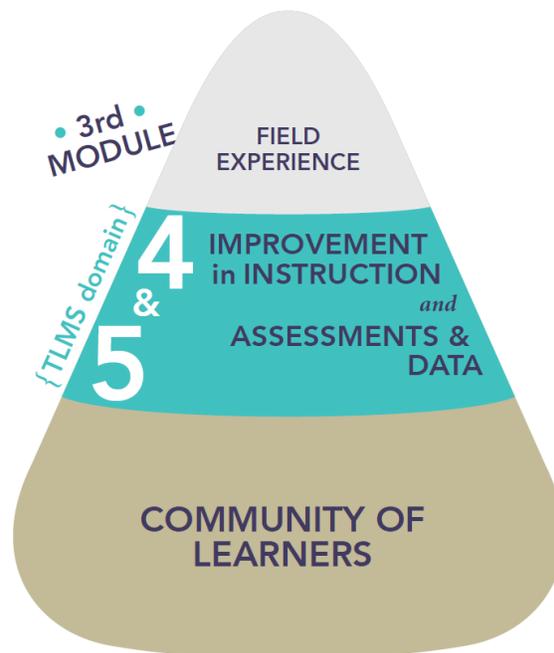
Third Module: Knowledge as a compilation of human-made constructions

The traditional Professional Learning Community in schools entails teachers working together to examine their practice, discussing student work, and discussing professional literature with the goal of improving teaching and student learning in the classrooms of each of the individual teachers.

In many ways, the first two modules set the stage for the third and fourth modules which get to the traditional concept of the work of teacher leaders. The third segment of four fold practice involves designing and contributing to conversations. “Hosting conversations” means taking responsibility for creating and holding the “container” in which a group of people can do their best work together. This practice is often considered the space of creating a community of learners. The cohort work in this module will be focused on meeting design that leads to the best results.

This work most closely aligns with two of the Domains of the TLMS, Domain 4: *Facilitating Improvements in Instruction and Student Learning* and Domain 5: *Promoting the Use of Assessments and Data for School and District Improvement*. Candidates in the program will use the skills developed in designing productive conversations to build the capacity of their colleagues to improve instruction and increase student learning.

Building on all that was learned in the first two modules, field experiences in this module will be on the practical applications of working with colleagues in ways most traditionally considered the work of teacher leaders. Field experiences might include but should not be limited to designing professional learning experiences that will build the capacity of colleagues to analyze data, discover and apply educational research and explore teaching strengths and weaknesses. As is the nature of this work, this should be completed within the context of improving teaching and learning in the classroom.



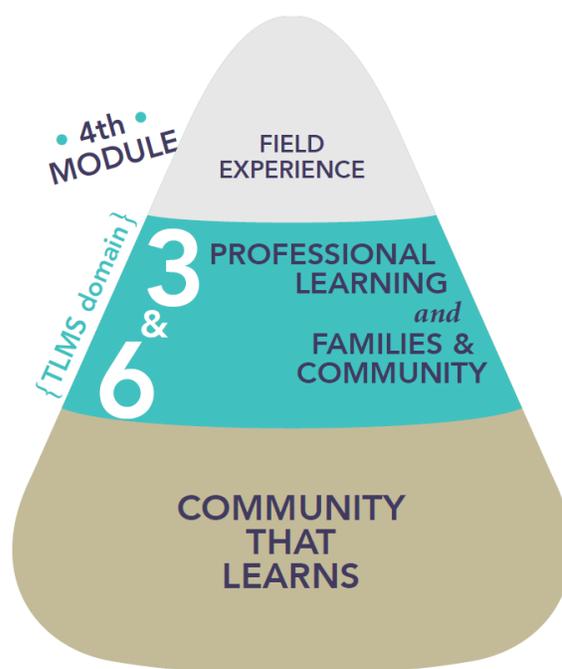
Fourth Module: Developing Systems of Co-Creation

Most teachers spend the majority of their time thinking about the learning of their own students and facilitating that learning by improving and enhancing their own professional practice. Teacher Leaders take on the responsibility of not just growing their own practice and building the capacity of others, but also being aware of their influence on the system that is their school or district. This systemic thinking allows teacher leaders to be engaged voices at the leadership table when decisions are being made.

The final module moves into the fourth phase of Four Fold Practice, the creation of a community that learns together. This is the space that allows for the co-generation of new ideas that move the community of learners forward to become an organic enterprise with the flexibility to learn its way into new strategies to deal with new challenges. This is the space of sustainability, where a collaborative field can create results in complex situations where multi-layered challenges need to be met simultaneously. Building on the meeting design work in the previous module, this module will focus on designing spaces that best reinforce collective efficacy with a mind towards ensuring equity and justice.

Because this module focuses on sustainability of the entire community, it makes sense that TLMS Domain 3: *Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement* and Domain 6: *Improving Outreach and Collaboration with Families and Communities* can best be addressed in this module. This work will focus on developing strategies to build both the external and internal capacity to create an integrated community in which the school and the learning of children are at the center. The work in this module must also be focused on ensuring equity and justice, both in our schools and in the larger community.

Field experiences for this module will allow candidates to practice the art of facilitating the creation of a community that learns and grows together. This could include the skillful use of practices that promote participatory leadership throughout the school community. Experiences should also reinforce the further development of cultural competence and awareness. Opportunities for advocating for the profession at the local, state, or federal level could also be explored in the field.



Domain VII: Advocating for Student Learning and the Profession

For the NJEA Teacher Leader Academy, this domain stands out and apart from the other TLMS. In the end, each of the other modules and domains are influenced by the creation of policy at the local, state and federal level. To have influence at the decision making table, the successful teacher leader will understand the impact of policy at each of these levels.

For this reason, the focus on policy implications will serve as an umbrella over all the modules, and candidates will be required, at each step along the way, to reflect on the policy implications of each of the modules.

Assessment

One of the requirements from the New Jersey Department of Education for program approval is an explanation of how the program provider will assess candidates' mastery of the standards. The modules offer a structure along the way for candidates to demonstrate their growth in the program of study.

Following each module, candidates will participate in a triad interview performance task. This protocol is explained in full in another document but requires candidates to work in triads in which each candidate will have the opportunity to present and reflect on evidence of their learning in the module. Using the interview protocol also allows each candidate to practice their coaching skills in bringing out the best in a colleague's work, and also offers the opportunity of giving both soft and hard feedback.

Scored on a rubric, the assessments will also offer the opportunity to measure satisfactory progress through the program, give feedback, and identify candidates who might be at risk of not completing the program in a timely fashion.

Faculty

Each component of the NJEA Teacher Leader Academy will require faculty to facilitate the learning of candidates. These faculty members will each serve in different capacities with varying levels of responsibility of the learning of the candidates.

Cohort Hosts: At the cohort level, faculty members will need to be knowledgeable in the concepts of participatory leadership with a full understanding of how those concepts connect to the TLMS. They will be responsible for designing the full cohort meetings and would work with Study Group Mentors to ensure that candidates are successfully working their way through the program.

Study Group Facilitators: These facilitators will work with each study group to ensure they are developing a full understanding of the TLMS in a way that is consistent with adult learning. They will be responsible for ensuring that members of the study group are making progress through the programs and will be responsible for monitoring the assessment process along the way. Since the study groups will be self-organized, it is the members of the group itself who will be responsible for the content of the learning, but the mentor will ensure that the learning is facilitated in a way that builds the capacity of the group. The Study Group Facilitators will need to have expertise in the TLMS as well as some successful experience in professional learning.

Field Experience Mentors: Mentors will work with candidates at the work site where they are carrying out their field experiences. They will work with candidates to transfer the knowledge of the standards into practice in a school setting. Mentors could come from either the administrative or teaching realm and could be a way to connect local Association leadership into the Teacher Leader Academy experience.

Four Fold Practice



Teacher Leader Model Standards

Domain I: Fostering a Collaborative Culture to Support Educator Development and Student Learning

The teacher leader understands the principles of adult learning and knows how to develop a collaborative culture of collective responsibility in the school. The teacher leader uses this knowledge to promote an environment of collegiality, trust, and respect that focuses on continuous improvement in instruction and student learning.

Domain II: Accessing and Using Research to Improve Practice and Student Learning

The teacher leader understands how research creates new knowledge, informs policies and practices and improves teaching and learning. The teacher leader models and facilitates the use of systemic inquiry as a critical component of teachers' ongoing learning and development.

Domain III: Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement

The teacher leader understands the evolving nature of teaching and learning, established and emerging technologies, and the school community. The teacher leader uses this knowledge to promote, design, and facilitate job-embedded professional learning aligned with school improvement goals.

Domain IV: Facilitating Improvements in Instruction and Student Learning

The teacher leader demonstrates a deep understanding of the teaching and learning processes and uses this knowledge to advance the professional skills of colleagues by being a continuous learner and modeling reflective practice based on student results. The teacher leader works collaboratively with colleagues to ensure instructional practices are aligned to a shared vision, mission and goals.

Domain V: Promoting the Use of Assessment and Data for School and District Improvement

The teacher leader is knowledgeable about current research on classroom and school based data and the design and selection of appropriate formative and summative assessment methods. The teacher leader shares this knowledge and collaborates with colleagues to use assessment and other data to make informed decisions that improve learning for all students and to inform school and district improvement strategies.

Domain IV: Improving outreach and Collaboration with Families and Community

The teacher leader understands that families, cultures, and communities have a significant impact on educational processes and student learning. The teacher leader works with colleagues to promote ongoing systematic collaboration with families, community members, business and community leaders, and other stakeholders to improve the educational system and expand opportunities for student learning.

Domain VII: Advocating for Student Learning and the Profession

The teacher leader understands how educational policy is made at the local, state, and national level as well as the roles of school leaders, boards of education, legislators, and other stakeholders in formulating those policies. The teacher leader uses this knowledge to advocate for student needs and for practices that support effective teaching and increase student learning, and serves as an individual of influence and respect within the school, community, and profession.

