Build Leadership Capacity
through the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate Program

Evidence of Impact

The Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate Program has been developing leadership capacity among teacher leaders in the Boston Public Schools since 2010. In this program, teachers who hold leadership roles such as mentor, data facilitator, team leader, LAT (ELL) team facilitator, or department head engage in a series of graduate-level, practice-based courses that enable them to connect across schools and strengthen the leadership skills they need for the roles they share.

What is the impact?

Influence on student learning through improved teaching practice: While 90.9% of course participants reported that the course they had taken would have a positive impact on their own teaching practice, 95% of course participants indicated that the course they had completed would improve their ability to have a positive impact on others’ teaching practice.

- Knowing that the work I do here will directly impact my teaching-- and not only my development as a teacher leader-- really motivates me to put forth the effort that will make this course effective.
- Having access to the data enabled me to see how the students were doing if they were growing as a student or not and I was able to bring this the principal's attention. It became possible to begin to question and together with other teachers to think of possible reasons the students’ growth is not what it should be.
- All of these ideas are just more strategies to improve my teaching so I’m so grateful to have this class to gain ideas from.
- I learned a lot from this course, especially about digging down and take a deep look at data. From this course, I have begun to look at data in a much more focused view and use multiple data sources of data to identify a problem area....It has helped me to grow professionally as a leader in my role as LAT facilitator.

Influence student learning through improved school culture: Course participants exert an influence on school culture that is palpable. Pre and post-course data shows that in reflecting on their schools’ professional cultures before and after the courses, teachers report an increase in ownership of student learning results, trust and shared core values, peer exchange, and peer observation.

- Working together on creating a shared vision in class was definitely helpful in helping me think through how to develop a shared vision for my own team.
- I am often asked by my headmaster and program director to share my meeting agendas and the protocols I have adapted for looking at student work, planning rubrics, and engaging in reflective dialogue with other program directors and teacher-leaders.
- I have a better understanding of the importance of meeting teachers where they are and then supporting them to push themselves a bit out of the comfort zone and to try new things.
- I will definitely be able to think about my awareness of colleagues - their motivations, concerns, ways of thinking, etc. as I interact with them both every day and as a facilitator during meetings.
- Several times this year, my agendas have served for templates for PDs in all departments. I believe that this is improving the quality of in-house PD in our school, as well as building our staff’s capacity to do some very powerful “reflection and action” work.

For more information on how your school or district can get involved...
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Influence student learning by increasing professional capital: Teaching and leadership require individuals to make decisions—big and small—for which the evidence is not always clear. They must use their professional judgment. To improve the quality of these discretionary judgments, the BTLC program helps teachers develop relationships with colleagues that bolster the quality of the decisions they make in their roles. Furthermore, it enables them to experience opportunities for practice and collaborative reflection that help them to perform their roles more effectively.

- I appreciate the opportunity to mix it up with other teachers. The discussions this evening pushed me to rethink a number of assumptions, or to think about ideas that I had not ever thought about.
- A few of the readings were challenging to analyze, but many colleagues shared relevant connections to their experiences that helped me build a more functional knowledge base.
- I like the set-up of the class in that it really does call on the expertise of teachers in order to run the class.
- The facilitators created a very comfortable learning community that allowed us to share ideas and make contributions. They tailored the course to meet our needs as they related to our leadership roles and thus made the content and research meaningful. They allowed us to collaborate around teaching and learning and share our expertise and learn from one another. It was an extremely powerful experience. I loved our time together!

Influence student learning through teacher retention: Our unique professional learning model—created by teachers, for teachers—is a renewing professional experience. After taking BTLC courses, the percentage of teachers who agreed or strongly agreed that they “sometimes consider leaving classroom teaching for other roles in education” dropped from 56% to 48%.

- This has made it possible for me to feel like and become an appreciated teacher!
- This course is helping me grasp everything I’m doing at school. It is coming full circle for me!!
- Helping to design and implement the Shared Leadership course gave me a sense of agency and excitement, as I was a part of creating professional development for teachers.

Influence student learning by adding value to existing initiatives: BTLC course readings, activities and performance-based assessments were developed by experienced BPS teacher leaders who understand how the specific leadership skills addressed by the courses contribute to role performance. As a result they have been able to create a professional learning program that is not an “add on” but which adds value to work in which teacher leaders are already engaged.

- I worked some on assessment 2 this week and I feel like it will be easy and helpful to implement with my team. I am actually excited to do that work with my team. It also fits perfectly in with our whole school goals.
- I have tied the problem of practice I plan on addressing in this course to my BPS Professional Goals.
- I can see the utility of what I am here for and it seems to open another window to me as a member in my school community.
- It will offer me collaboration and reflection within the context of actual instruction. It’s a relief to do work that—instead of displacing the time I need to improve my day-to-day teaching—will, itself, require me to plan more and better for real teaching. As a learner, I am envisioning usefulness and excitement.

School principals have also weighed in about the impact of BTLC courses in their schools...

- I wanted to let you know how powerful it has been to have 4 of [our school’s] teachers enrolled in the Teacher Leadership course currently underway. The teachers are on 3 different grade level teams and each of those team’s meetings have been positively impacted by the learning coming from the course. While I have always encouraged and sought to cultivate teacher leadership at the Edison I cannot think of anything that has had as much impact in so short a time as having teachers participate in the course.

- I was thrilled to see both [team leaders] really step up their leadership skills this year by taking on an active role and gathering, analyzing and presenting data to their teams in a coherent and organized manner. Since this was [our school’s] first year participating in the Academic Achievement Framework (AAF) network, [one of these teachers’] work in particular was very helpful to the process.

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