Strengthen Leadership Capacity through
Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate Program

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

Why is a “Teacher Leadership Certificate” program needed?
As schools strive to accelerate student learning, they increasingly depend upon teacher leadership roles in which teachers are called upon to lead their colleagues in analyzing data, collaborating to improve instruction, participating in shared leadership structures, and ensuring current research and practices are informing the school’s work. To perform these important roles effectively, teacher leaders must have a range of specialized skills, including many that lie beyond those required for effective classroom teaching. The Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate (BTLC) program was designed to support teachers to strengthen the leadership skills that schools need for improvement and reform.

What does the BTLC program involve?
The BTLC program offers four graduate-level courses. These semester-long fall or spring courses are scheduled over a period of 12 weeks in a schedule that includes eight weeknight sessions plus three Saturday sessions. Courses are held on site at various schools throughout the greater Boston area.

The four core courses are:

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<th>Course</th>
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<td>Using Data Access and collect multiple forms of data and build a repertoire of strategies for guiding teams to understand, analyze and use data in decision-making and to communicate results in ways that empower community members to envision their role in improvement.</td>
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<td>Shared Leadership Build approaches for building trust and unity of vision within a team, managing an affective and collaborative team, facilitating change, and improving coherence among efforts of individuals and teams within school and district systems.</td>
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<td>Supporting Instruction Apply principles of adult learning while learning and practicing strategies for observing teaching, examining student work collaboratively, analyzing instruction and instructional resources, facilitating growth-oriented dialogue, and planning effective professional learning experiences.</td>
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<td>Professional Expertise Practice strategies for guiding team reflection in a school in order to turn individual expertise into an organizational asset, while also building skills to tap the professional knowledge base of research and professional literature and to apply that knowledge to instructional improvement.</td>
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By completing performance assessments that form the core of each course, participants can demonstrate competency and earn a course Certificate. They can earn the full BTLC Credential by completing all four courses plus role-relevant training. Additionally, all courses offer the option of earning three graduate credits.

For more information on how your school or district can get involved...
Please contact Jill Harrison Berg at jhberg@teachers21.org or 781-416-0980 X210
Who can participate?

Since the BTLC courses are practice-based, all participants must be educators who already hold leadership roles, including team membership, in their schools or the district. Both teacher leaders and administrators can participate.

What makes the program unique?

In the “Collaborative Courses” of the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate (BTLC), teachers work together to strengthen the skills they need to complete the performance-based assessments well. The structure of these facilitated study groups is unlike traditional graduate courses.

- They are competency-based. The purpose of the courses is to support educators to build the knowledge and skills they need to demonstrate their capability with regard to course competencies. Participants do this by completing performance assessments that are aligned with the work they are already doing in their roles.

- They are dynamic and responsive. Information collected upon registration about participants’ relevant strengths and learning goals is used by course facilitators to refine the syllabus and maximize participants’ opportunities to be challenged by new material and to learn from one another.

- They are led by a facilitator, not an instructor. Course facilitators are not “experts” who will be “teaching” the material. Drawing from a collection of resources compiled to support the course and the strengths that participants bring, facilitators guide discussions, lead activities, facilitate sharing and connect teachers to resources that will enable the group to learn, practice and strengthen the specific skills they need to complete the course assessments well.

- They represent an evolving new model of professional learning. The BTLC courses were designed by teacher leaders in the 2010-2011 school year to meet the real needs of teacher leaders. These courses and their unique instructional design are continually refined and improved in response to participants’ feedback and experiences.

What participants are saying

“I feel that this is an important venture for professional development and one that is way overdue. The pairing and sharing is really helpful, not only for working through content and shared leadership ideas, but also to hear about what’s going on in other schools and other PLCs.”

“It was very helpful to do authentic assessments that were role specific. The expectations of the course were very clear and the materials very organized. The facilitators respected the needs of all learners in the class and supported us as needed so that we could become better in our roles.”

“I really liked the assessments. They were authentic and we were encouraged to make them useful to us as classroom teachers.”

“The focus was always on our growth as leaders and facilitators.”

“The readings and reflections...have already begun to reap results both within my team and on committees I sit in.”

“Overall, I feel like I learned a ton in this course! It has been very helpful with my situation and I feel more confident in my role as lead teacher since I feel like I have a bag of tricks for this part of my job.”

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