

# Approaches to Implementing the Five Components of the Ohio Leadership Framework

FOR SCHOOLS DISTRICTS



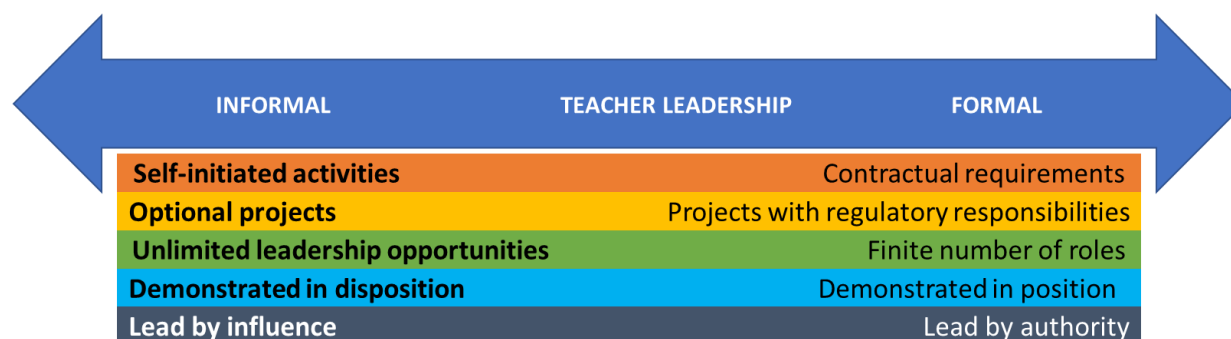
A positional leadership title is only one means for executing teacher leadership. Teachers often lead in informal ways that contribute to student success and increase collective and individual efficacy.

## What is Informal Teacher Leadership?

Informal teacher leadership involves educators influencing instruction and learning beyond a teacher’s own classroom without holding a formal leadership position. Informal teacher leaders advance the profession and enhance student success without positional authority.

The responsibilities that informal teacher leaders accept are not contractual. Projects with regulatory responsibility are more likely to be led by formal leadership positions, while projects pursued voluntarily in the school or district may have teachers informally leading the initiative. Because informal leadership emerges organically, the opportunities for teachers to lead are limitless. Informal leadership arises from a disposition or temperament to influence work beyond an individual’s classroom. While formal leadership focuses on carrying out the duties of a position, an effective formal leader, however, should also have the disposition found among informal leaders. See Figure 1 for an illustration of these teacher leadership components on a spectrum from informal to formal.

**Figure 1. Spectrum of Teacher Leadership**



Informal teacher leadership is often rooted in a sense that each individual teacher can make a difference in student learning beyond their classroom and build the collective impact in their department, school, district, state, or nation.



## Most Common Informal Teacher Leadership Activities

A series of case study visits to five Ohio school districts found the following informal teacher leadership activities:

- Creating and delivering professional development for fellow educators;
- Volunteering on school or district ad hoc committees;
- Taking on facilitation roles within a professional learning community;
- Inviting fellow teachers to observe their classroom for mutual learning;
- Sharing instructional tools and practices with peers;
- Providing feedback to fellow teachers, particularly new teachers;
- Passing along knowledge, information, and resources to other educators; and
- Supporting parent and community engagement beyond the parents of students in their own classroom.

## Value of Informal Teacher Leadership

The site visits and other research also identified the following benefits of informal teacher leadership:

- **Teachers showcase their talents and interests:** Teachers note increased fulfillment in their work when they can deploy and develop their talents and interests in service to student learning.
- **Teachers initiate the leadership opportunity:** Informal leadership is not confined by the number of seats on a committee or departments with a selected leader. Teachers can informally lead in a variety of ways.
- **Teachers can react quickly to solve problems and take advantage of opportunities:** When teachers have the latitude to lead informally, they can initiate strategies and projects to address needs and opportunities as they are presented. Districts reported that initiatives started and led by teachers were adopted more quickly than efforts led from the top down by administrators.



- **Teachers tap into a culture of positive professional courtesy:** Informal leadership, such as covering a peer’s class so that they can engage in professional learning and opening up one’s classroom to peer teachers, facilitate mutual aid and respect among peers. Professional courtesy fosters collaboration and builds relationships.
- **Teachers build camaraderie:** Many teachers who lead informally collaborate with other formal leaders on a committee and project. The teachers enjoy this shared sense of purpose in which the members of the team have affirmatively “opted in” to the work.
- **Teachers advance individual and collective teacher efficacy:** Increasing opportunities for teachers to lead provides the space for teachers to have an impact on student learning beyond the students assigned to their classroom. The sense that teachers can make a difference will continue to flourish in school and district.

## Value of Informal Teacher Leadership in Practice

The following exhibit is a list of practices for teachers to lead informally and live out components of the [Ohio Teacher Leadership Framework](#).

### Exhibit 1. Ways Teachers Can Lead Informally as it Relates to the Ohio Teacher Leadership Framework Components

**As a teacher, you can lead informally by...**

#### Fostering Collaborative Culture

- Taking on a rotation of PLC meeting responsibilities such as meeting facilitation, notetaking, timekeeping, etc.
- Finding ways to connect teachers socially (e.g., potlucks on in-service days, quarterly social activities), increasing the chance that it will lead to collaboration. However, do not expect that social connections are the foundation or purpose of team meetings: <https://education.ohio.gov/Media/Extra-Credit-Blog/October-2017/Forgetting-About-Friendship-Making-the-Best-of-You>.

#### Advancing Instruction and Student Learning

- Building expertise in your subject area, in various instructional techniques, and in other facets of teaching about which you are passionate.
- Designing and delivering professional development in your school, district, state or nation based on areas of expertise. This checklist for creating professional development may be an adapted resource: <https://ccip.ode.state.oh.us/documentlibrary/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentKey=81594>.
- Forwarding resources, articles, and professional development opportunities that may interest peers.
- Leveraging graduate school, teacher leadership program, and continuous education training to develop and lead initiatives and projects to improve instruction and learning.



## Exhibit 1. Ways Teachers Can Lead Informally as it Relates to the Ohio Teacher Leadership Framework Components—continued

### As a teacher, you can lead informally by...

#### Advancing Instruction and Student Learning—continued

- Modeling instructional practices—open your class for observation, bring instructional tools to professional learning communities for discussion and critique, co-teach lessons with a developing educator.
- Becoming knowledgeable about student data and various assessment data and participating in data-driven conversations and reflections in team meetings.

#### Driving Initiatives

- Starting a book study to create bonds around shared vision and understanding of culture, leadership, or education topics. As an example, please refer to one Ohio district's [Teacher Leadership Book List](#), which it used for its book study.
- Articulating pros and cons about initiatives to administration and leadership teams, and providing honest critiques to administrators.
- Making a clear, well-informed case for the implementation of your ideas.
- Creating SMART goals and appropriate metrics to track implementation and outcomes of initiatives.

#### Practicing Equity and Ethics

- Reflecting on personal practice to find ways to improve and strengths to continue to grow.
- Being equity minded and developing cultural competency to support learning of all students.
- Continuing to learn about today's students and the trends, experience, and needs of the ever-changing faces of the student body.
- Addressing peers, typically in private conversation, to point out when they are not acting ethically or equitably and encouraging them to take a different course.
- Acknowledging that everyone has something to contribute, regardless of tenure, experience, credential, background, etc.

#### Building Relationships and Partnerships

- Motivating and supporting peer teachers by expressing gratitude in private, such as individual comments to a person or a thank you note, and public means, such as recognitions during team meetings, formal awards, or highlights during building announcements.
- Approaching colleagues one-on-one, in person to discuss differences or provide criticism. Providing critical feedback in a manner that peers can receive the message—typically with an acknowledgement of care for the peer, strengths of the peer, intention of the feedback, or the impact on students and teachers: <https://www.teachpowered.org/guide/resources/crucial-conversations-tools-talking-when-stakes-are-high>).
- Visiting the rooms of, eating lunch with, and sitting by various teachers to learn about their personal interests and experiences as well as their professional interest, strengths, and needs.



## Exhibit 1. Ways Teachers Can Lead Informally as it Relates to the Ohio Teacher Leadership Framework Components—continued

### As a teacher, you can lead informally by...

#### Building Relationships and Partnerships—continued

- Reaching out to new teachers: Ask about their needs and challenges, explain more about the building and district culture, and support their onboarding process.
- Fostering relationships with parents and families by making contact early and routinely with positive (not just negative) information about their students.
- Developing processes to better integrate students and parents who enter the school in mid-year, including mid-term welcoming events, teacher team meetings that include non-core instructors to review student records/needs, etc.
- Encouraging team-wide deployment of ways to communicate with parents about what is happening in the classroom and school, including use of technology to remind them of events, send a word of encouragement, and access information.
- Connecting with local businesses and organization for projects tied to student learning including but not limited to career exploration.