

# Joint Statement in Support of the Teacher-Leader Endorsement

Following over a year of research and collaborative work, Heidi Olson, a special education teacher at Hopewell Valley Regional Public Schools and chair of the Teacher Leader Endorsement Advisory Board (TLEAB), delivered the board's report to the Office of the Commissioner of Education and State Board of Education. The TLEAB report provides recommendations for the establishment of the teacher leader endorsement.

The TLEAB was created through state law, *N.J.S.A. 18A:26-2.18*, enacted in September 2015, and its recommendations are also required by the statute.

Teacher leadership has always existed in New Jersey schools. However, the new teacher leader endorsement will highlight the importance of this invaluable component of successful schools. It will allow teachers' leadership skills to grow in alignment with the **Teacher Leader Model Standards** as referenced in the statute. It will encourage teachers to stay in the profession and do what they love — teach — and yet still be able to impact teaching and learning on a broader scale. The teacher leader endorsement offers significant possibilities in supporting collaboration among teachers, administrators, and school boards and their respective associations to improve student learning. As the TLEAB submits its report to the New Jersey Department of Education, we collectively support the principles that guided the work of this committee:

1. Teacher leadership grows in a culture of shared decision-making and shared responsibility. This leadership reaches its greatest potential when administrators embrace participatory leadership practices that value the voice of teacher leaders.
2. Teacher leadership exists in many forms and functions, in both formal and informal roles. Therefore, the endorsement should not be connected to specific job titles. Rather, the role and responsibilities of the teacher leaders will be dependent on the needs of the school or district.
3. Teacher leaders do not need the teacher leader endorsement in order to be teacher leaders. However, the TLEAB's recommendations provide an option for teacher leaders to participate in a high-quality program of study leading to the teacher leader endorsement. It is the hope of the TLEAB and each of the organizations represented on it that teachers who want to remain in the classroom, yet take on leadership responsibilities in their schools, districts, and profession, will use this opportunity to strengthen their leadership skills.
4. Teacher leadership thrives in cultures that support collegial, job-embedded professional learning, where teachers are engaged in reflective practice and sharing of craft knowledge. Such a culture allows leaders to emerge organically as they share their practice to enhance student learning.

We thank the Teacher Leader Endorsement Advisory Board for taking this excellent first step in making the teacher leader endorsement a reality. We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with all stakeholders as we embrace distributed leadership models that have the potential to build collaborative cultures where students benefit from both shared decision-making and shared accountability.



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