

Professional Publication Excerpt

From: [Giving teachers a voice in educational policy decisions](#)

“...when teachers are involved in developing new educational approaches, policies are more likely to be realistic, practical, and ultimately successful in the classroom.”

“When you include teachers in writing policy, you demonstrate trust and respect for their expertise. It’s essential to get input from teachers before introducing new policies — not after — to avoid creating untenable and unrealistic policies in practice.”

“When teachers are left out of the process of developing policies that impact them and their students, friction and resistance against initiatives is bound to occur.”

Strategies

Open door policy - Encourage a two-way flow of communication...Open communication ensures that those closest to the students have a say in what goes on in the classroom, and it builds a foundation of trust and respect between all parties involved.

Collecting teacher data to inform policy discussions - One-on-one discussions and surveys are great places to start.

One-on-one discussions - One way to collect relevant information from teachers is through one-on-one discussions. Set aside time during these meetings with individual teachers and solicit their opinions and insights into what is and is not working.

Informal surveys - You can use occasional informal surveys to ask them their thoughts on how educational policies could be improved. Likewise, administrators can use informal surveys to get quick feedback on various topics.

Offer professional development opportunities - Provide access to policy-focused professional development opportunities, it’s easier to help teachers develop a deeper understanding of how policies are written so they can be stronger educational leaders.

Professional Publication Excerpt

From: [A policy agenda to address the teacher shortage in U.S. public schools](#)

One of the principles for how to approach the teacher shortage problem: Treat teachers as professionals and teaching as a profession.

Our data showed that teachers' voices are systematically missing in decisions around their own working conditions. Specifically, our analysis in the Perfect Storm series looked at what teachers reported about their situations and found that the following are factors in the teacher shortage: A lack of teacher influence and autonomy, poor learning communities (i.e., environments in which teachers have little opportunity to learn from one another or through professional development activities), and low satisfaction with working conditions and appreciation for the profession.

One specific proposal in the policy agenda to address the teacher shortage: Elevate teacher voice, and nurture stronger learning communities to increase teachers' influence and sense of belonging.

Increase teacher autonomy and influence - A comprehensive strategy to address the teacher shortage must ensure that teachers have a say in the components of teaching that they are trained to master and that shape their daily activities and their professional lives. These components include the curriculum they teach, the classroom practices they follow, and the materials they use with their students, as well as the type of professional development they participate in. Their expertise should also be tapped when decisions about school policies are made. Research has pointed to the need for efforts to retain more experienced teachers by giving them "shared decision-making roles" (Sorensen and Ladd 2020). Top-down policies that ignore teacher expertise, misguided accountability policies that make teachers feel disrespected, and lack of attention to what teachers have to say about the policies in their schools and classrooms are critical obstacles in the way of the professionalism of the teaching profession.

Reporting more influence on school policy and classroom activities is associated with an increase in the probability that a teacher stays at his or her school. The effect of influence on a teacher's probability of staying is 15% higher in high-poverty schools than in low-poverty schools. As with cooperation and support, measures of influence are among the largest predictors of retention.

Professional Publication Excerpt

From: [3 Ways Administrators Can Include Teachers in Decision-Making](#)

Administrators can strengthen relationships at their schools by inviting teachers to participate in the decisions that concern them most.

Why are teachers so often excluded from decisions that directly affect teaching and learning? Three areas allow administrators to draw on teacher expertise to improve their schools: inclusive hiring, reciprocal coaching, and channels of communication.

Inclusive Hiring

When a new teacher comes on board, that can be cause for apprehension. What will it be like to work with this person? Will they be a supportive and flexible colleague, or will everyone be stuck with someone who doesn't pull their weight on the team? Quite often, teachers are not given any role in the hiring process even though it directly affects their working lives. Even though it might be a little extra work to be included in the hiring process, most teachers will gladly contribute the time if they are given the opportunity to weigh in on prospective colleagues and their expertise with curriculum and instruction.

Reciprocal Coaching

It may be tempting for teachers to keep instruction behind closed doors and not discuss classroom practice with administrators, but this results in a separation between school leadership and instruction. There is a significant benefit to reciprocal coaching, which allows teachers and leaders to engage in structured conversations that guide one another toward more thoughtful practice. Without the experience of sharing goals and observing one another in action, it is much harder for teachers to have professional empathy for administrators and for leaders to have the chance to benefit from a closer connection to classroom practice.

When school leaders outsource instructional coaches or assume that only those in supervisory positions are viable coaches, they miss opportunities to build teacher capacity. To create a culture that embraces coaching, begin by identifying strong teachers who hold positive influence in the building to act as the first round of coach trainers.

Channels of Communication

Administrators are often physically distant from teachers, even when they are in the same room, which can cause undue friction or misunderstandings. Increased opportunities for functional communication leverage teacher expertise by opening stronger interpersonal connections. The power of informal conversation is underrated.

Divided attention is another de facto norm of school leadership that acts as an impediment to clear communication because there are so many fires at any given time that require immediate attention. However, when teachers try to talk to administrators who are juggling multiple conversations or devices, it sends a powerful (if unintended) message that leaders are too busy running the school to care about their staff.

Professional Publication Excerpt

From: [Leadership Matters: Teachers' Roles in School Decision Making and School Performance](#)

Along with how closely schools focus on teaching and learning, a concern often arises in relation to school leadership: who or which groups should have a role in the decision making in schools. A long-standing aspiration of many school reformers has been to see that teachers are granted an important role in the leadership and decision making within schools, especially beyond the classroom. In recent years, efforts to expand teachers' roles in schools have increasingly come under the banner of "teacher leadership." These new roles for teachers have taken a number of different forms and have used a variety of mechanisms. The objective of these initiatives is to foster collective and shared decision making among key stakeholders in schools, specifically to include faculty. Often, such policies explicitly mandate that school teams and councils wield real authority over key decisions rather than simply serve in an advisory role.

Findings on Instructional Leadership

Schools are less likely to emphasize those elements of instructional leadership that entail recognition of, and support for, teachers and that are aligned with enhancing teacher "voice" and input into decision making.

Instructional leadership is independently, significantly, and positively related to student achievement, after controlling for the background characteristics of schools (such as poverty level), and this is so for both mathematics and ELA. Schools with the highest levels of overall instructional leadership rank substantially higher in both mathematics and ELA in their state than schools with the lowest levels of overall instructional leadership.

Schools are strikingly less likely to implement elements that enhance teacher authority and leadership, even though some of these have the strongest ties to student achievement. And conversely, schools are more likely to implement elements that enhance accountability and teacher evaluation, which have the weakest ties to student achievement.

Findings on Teacher Leadership

[Teachers] less often have a role in decisions that are schoolwide and beyond the classroom, both academic and nonacademic, such as establishing student behavior policies, engaging in school improvement planning, and determining the content of professional development programs.

Teacher leadership is strongly related to student achievement. The results clearly show that teacher leadership and the amount of teacher influence in school decision making are independently and significantly related to student achievement, after controlling for the background characteristics of schools, and this is true for both mathematics and ELA. Schools with the highest levels of overall teacher leadership rank substantially higher in both mathematics and ELA in their state than schools with the lowest levels of overall teacher leadership.



The data suggest that faculty voice and control related to student behavioral and discipline decisions are more consequential for student academic achievement than teacher authority related to issues seemingly more directly tied to classroom instruction, such as selecting textbooks, choosing grading practices, and devising one's classroom teaching techniques. School improvement planning is the decision-making area that has the next strongest association with student achievement.

We find an imbalance: schools often do not promote some of the most consequential areas of teacher leadership, instead giving teachers a larger role in areas that appear to be less tied to student achievement.