The Power of Teacher Leaders
Their Roles, Influence, and Impact
Edited by Nathan Bond
Now in its second edition, *The Power of Teacher Leaders*, copublished by Routledge and Kappa Delta Pi, serves as a resource for understanding the varied ways that teacher leaders foster positive change in their schools, profession, and communities. By definition, teacher leaders are teachers who stay in the classroom, maintaining their commitment to teaching students while assuming informal and formal leadership positions beyond the classroom. It is that commitment to teaching and their desire to improve student learning that motivate them to become teacher leaders.

Written by researchers and teacher leaders, each chapter describes a particular way that teachers are leading, connects to the relevant scholarly literature, and assesses the impact of the teacher leaders on students and communities. The second edition features new chapters on less common and unresearched teacher leadership roles, informal teacher leadership, and teacher leaders as social justice advocates. This edited collection shows how teacher leaders play an important role in the improvement of student learning, teacher professional development, and school and community climate.

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**The Power of Teacher Leaders, 2nd Edition**
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To my family, Bobbie, Jerry, Joe, Patio, and Bradley, for their continued love and support during my career as an educator.
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Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Bill Bechtol; and Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources Lester Wolff. A special thanks goes to Principal Julia Fortman, who served as the Eanes ISD program coordinator for PTEP and guided the teachers through the district’s side of the master’s degree program. Her supportive leadership contributed considerably to the success of PTEP. She continues her work today leading new initiatives in the district.

Second, all of us can name wonderful colleagues who have supported and offered advice throughout our careers. Dr. Marilyn Goodwin served as the Texas State program coordinator for PTEP and worked tirelessly to recruit and guide the teachers through the university’s side of the master’s degree. She asked me to teach the teacher leadership course in PTEP. I am grateful for this wonderful opportunity and her unwavering support. Another professor, Dr. Emily Summers from Texas State University, has been an incredible mentor to me, especially when I have questions about research methods. She always offers incisive advice that advances the scholarly projects I am undertaking. When I was working on this book, she shared her insights at various points. She and two of her doctoral students, Arun Raman and Katherine Salter, reviewed the methodological aspects of the many chapter proposals that were submitted for consideration. Their feedback aided the selection process for the chapters in the book. Although I value Dr. Summers’s professional advice, I cherish even more her friendship that now spans two decades.

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Kappa Delta Pi and Routledge asked me in 2015 to edit a book on teacher leadership. The goal of the book was to capture a snapshot of the field of teacher leadership at the time and create a guide for in-service teachers who wanted to positively influence the profession without leaving their classrooms and for undergraduate and graduate students who wanted to learn how to become change agents during their teaching careers. I issued a call for chapter proposals and then conducted an intensive review that ultimately yielded 19 chapters. I was thrilled with the quality of the chapters because they seemed to capture accurately the breadth and depth of teacher leadership. I was especially honored to include a chapter written by Dr. Ann Lieberman, my intellectual hero and one of the scholars who wrote about teacher leadership when the field was coming into its own in the early 2000s. That first edition contained three parts: the ways that universities and school districts were preparing teachers to become leaders; the varied roles that teacher leaders were assuming; and the influence and impact teacher leaders were having on their students, schools, communities, and profession.

When Kappa Delta Pi and Routledge approached me in 2020 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic to oversee a second edition of the book, I was honored to undertake the project. I had witnessed a considerable change in the field in the five years since the first edition, and I was eager to try again to deliver a so-called status report or update for educators. Teacher leadership was evolving, moving from a focus on the roles of teacher leaders to ways that teacher leaders can bring social justice to their schools. The evolution of the field mirrors the education profession as a whole. Education, it seemed, was also undergoing a seismic shift. Teachers were now teaching in-person and online and simultaneously responding to issues of inequity in schools and society at large. Like the first edition, the second edition has three parts. The first two sections are once again
on the ways teachers are becoming prepared to be leaders and the varied roles they are assuming. Scholars are still studying these aspects of teacher leadership, although they are now focusing more attention on previously unresearched areas. In response to the current situation in our society, the third section focuses on the ways that teacher leaders are bringing social justice to their work.

Both editions of these books are a culmination of a career that included teacher leadership. As I reflect on my 30-plus years as an educator, I see that teacher leadership is a strand that has run through all stages of my professional career. My initial interest and involvement with teacher leadership can be traced to the beginning of my educational journey when I taught Russian language courses in a local school district. I taught two sections of advanced Russian at a high school and four sections of introductory Russian at the feeder middle school. In addition to teaching, I sponsored a Russian club at both schools, chaperoned my high school students on three-week trips to our sister school in Russia, mentored student teachers who wanted to become Russian teachers (yes, there were a few!), served on the state-level committee that wrote the standards for world languages, and served as an officer in my state-level professional organization for world language teachers. Analyzing my actions now in light of the characteristics of teacher leadership, I realize that I was a teacher leader. However, at that time, I was unaware of teacher leadership and did not view myself as a teacher leader. I simply wanted my students to have the best possible learning experience.

A few years later when I became an education professor, I stumbled across Ann Lieberman and Lynne Miller’s book *Teacher Leadership*. When I discovered the field, I became fascinated with the ways that teachers were positively affecting their schools. As I learned more about teacher leaders, I realized that I had been one. In 2006, administrators from Eanes Independent School District in Austin, Texas, approached the administrators at my university about developing a master’s degree that would help the teachers in the district to become teacher leaders. I was honored when I was asked to teach the teacher leadership course in the program. My career took off in this direction. Over the years, it has been gratifying to study and interact with incredible teachers who are teaching, leading, and making a difference in schools and in the lives of students.
INTRODUCTION

The field of teacher leadership has evolved over time. When explaining how the field has changed, scholars often cite the classic study conducted in 2000 by Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan. These three researchers claim that teacher leadership has experienced “three different waves” (p. 779). In the first wave, schools created the managerial roles of department head, master teacher, and union representatives for teachers who were interested in serving in leadership roles. These positions focused on maintaining the effectiveness and efficiency of the school. The second wave was a time when schools narrowed their focus and tapped into teachers’ in-depth knowledge of instruction. Teacher leaders were colleagues who used their pedagogical expertise to improve the school by fulfilling roles such as team leader, curriculum developer, and staff developer. The third wave focused on ways to enhance the school’s culture. To bring about this change, teacher leaders were asked to:

- collaborate with other teachers; discuss common problems; share approaches to various learning situations; explore ways to overcome the structural constraints of limited time, space, resources, and restrictive policies; or investigate motivational strategies to bring students to a deeper engagement with their learning.

(Silva et al., 2000, p. 781)

Stated another way, teacher leaders in the third wave participated actively in the daily work of school and colleagues.

More than 20 years have passed since Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan published their history of teacher leadership using the wave analogy. This leads to two
questions: What has happened in the field during the past 20+ years? and Where is teacher leadership today? Let us address each question separately.

In 2017, Wenner and Campbell conducted a comprehensive literature review of the teacher leadership studies that had been published between 2003 and 2014. As part of the review process, these scholars searched relevant databases and initially identified 704 publications pertaining to teacher leadership. Applying a rigorous set of criteria, they winnowed the number down to 72 of the best articles in terms of scholarship. Several key findings emerged from their analysis of these studies. First, they formulated a definition of teacher leadership that many scholars have adopted and still use today. Up to this time, scholars could not reach consensus on the definition of teacher leadership. Wenner and Campbell, drawing from their analysis, stated that teacher leaders are “teachers who maintain K–12 classroom-based teaching responsibilities, while also taking on leadership responsibilities outside of the classroom” (p. 140). A second finding from their analysis was that teacher leaders tend to assume roles that support the professional learning of colleagues and/or provide opportunities to influence policy and decision making. A third key finding was that teacher leaders are driven to improve student learning. Everything that teacher leaders do is ultimately for the benefit of students.

In 2015, about the time that Wenner and Campbell were conducting their review of the literature, Routledge and Kappa Delta Pi published the first edition of The Power of Teacher Leaders: Their Roles, Influence, and Impact. One goal of the book was to capture and explain the numerous ways that classroom teachers were leading. In fact, 10 of the 19 chapters specifically examined and explained the various roles that teacher leaders could pursue, such as mentor (Davis et al., 2015), cooperating teacher (Murray & Gorowara, 2015), professional developer (Bond, 2015), instructional leader (Cawein & Phelps, 2015), and team player (Gallavan, 2015). The book mirrored what was happening in the field. Teachers were serving in countless roles in schools.

This leads us to the second question: Where is teacher leadership today? Based on my study of the field and the reading of numerous articles about teacher leadership, I would posit that we are now in the fourth wave of teacher leadership. This is not my original idea. When I talk to other researchers in the field, they have also suggested that we are in the fourth wave. What is happening in this fourth wave? There appear to be three prongs in this fourth wave. The second edition of The Power of Teacher Leaders: Their Roles, Influence, and Impact strives to accurately capture the fourth wave.

First, scholars are still exploring the various roles of teacher leaders. However, rather than focusing on the more common roles such as department chair, mentor, instructional coach, and professional developer, scholars are beginning to drill down and investigate some of the less-common roles. In this second edition of the book, authors have written chapters that describe teacher leaders in some of these less common and unresearched roles. The chapters examine
teacher leaders as members of professional organizations (Bond), faculty sponsors of student professional organizations in universities (Santos and Hoeh), faculty sponsors of student organizations in informal learning contexts (Sterin et al.), partners with parents in parent organizations (Thomas), facilitators of district-wide digital conversions (Miller et al.), teachers in residence in professional development schools (Brown et al.), and teachers conducting action research (Barnes and Shudak). Two chapters in the book discuss the preparation of teacher leaders for these roles: one chapter explains how universities are using clinical residencies to prepare teacher leaders (Baker et al.), and another chapter showcases a district asking instructional coaches to mentor colleagues to become teacher leaders (Williams).

A second characteristic in this fourth wave is informal teacher leadership. Teachers are realizing that they can remain in the classroom; forego an official positional title; lead in various ways; and positively influence schools, colleagues, and students. Teachers can foster positive change informally by relying on their stellar reputations as effective teachers in the school and on their strong professional relationships with teachers, administrators, and staff members. Scholars are beginning to explore how these teachers become leaders in the eyes of their peers and to what extent these informal teacher leaders can bring about change. In this second edition, authors have written chapters that dive into informal teacher leadership (Mangin and Ross) and teacher leaders who remain in the classroom and exert their influence (Wilkins and Quinzio-Zafran).

Perhaps the last line of research in this fourth wave of teacher leadership is the most timely and important. During the last few years, teacher leaders across the nation have witnessed and become more aware of the social injustices that have been and continue to be inflicted on various groups of people in our country. Teacher leaders are responding to the call to act and work to effect institutional changes in our schools toward more equity and fairness. Teacher leaders realize that by leading the charge to create greater social justice in our schools, they will affect students and communities, and future generations of society will reap the benefits. Teachers are especially positioned, through their influence on students who will become adults and the leaders running our country, to change society and bring about a better future. Teacher leaders now recognize and acknowledge that they can play a powerful role in shaping society.

In this second edition, authors have written chapters about teacher leaders as social justice advocates for LGBTQ+ students (Cicomascalo and Brand), students with special needs (Smith), rural students (Follette and Washburn), and women (Taylor et al.). One chapter explains how teacher leaders can conduct equity audits to determine if inequities exist in the school and how to address the inequities (Hunzicker), and another chapter describes steps that teacher leaders can take to become community activists (Foxhall et al.). One chapter offers advice to principals on how to become more ecologically just through sustainability (Sterrett), and another chapter recommends ways that university professors
can help teacher candidates embrace their role as socially just teacher leaders (Miller et al.).

The book is organized so that the reader has maximum flexibility in approaching the information. It is possible to start with any chapter. Some readers will want to move through the book sequentially while others will want to start with a chapter that piques their curiosity. Practicing teachers or graduate students studying the book formally in book clubs or graduate courses may want to read several chapters in one of the sections to grasp the breadth and depth of that particular area of teacher leadership. To enrich the reader's understanding and experience, each author has written study questions that can be used to prompt deeper thinking and in-depth conversations about the information in the chapter. For readers who want to know more about a particular topic, the authors have also included additional readings.

Throughout most of my professional career, I have either served as a teacher leader, taught courses on teacher leadership, or researched classroom teachers who are serving as teacher leaders. I find teacher leadership to be a fascinating and important topic. I truly believe that if we are going to improve our schools and increase student learning, then we must do more to empower teachers to become teacher leaders. My hope is that this book will deepen and broaden current teacher leaders' understanding of how they can serve and inspire colleagues who are new to the field to find ways that they can serve as teacher leaders.

References


PART 1

Roles of Teacher Leaders
While formal teacher leadership roles have captured the attention of government agencies, professional groups, universities, and private organizations, the work of informal teacher leaders has been under-examined. Education scholars acknowledge that “informal activities might be among the most common and most influential forms of teacher leadership” (Berg et al., 2019, p. 19). Indeed, teachers themselves recognize that informal teacher leadership has a greater impact on teaching and learning than formal leadership (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2014). Teacher leadership that foregrounds classroom teachers as decision makers, designers, developers, mentors, and problem solvers is distinct from other conceptions of teacher leadership that take teachers out of the classroom and position them as separate from their colleagues, through title or role (Silva et al., 2000). The nature of informal teacher leadership and its impact can be difficult to identify, as informal teacher leadership develops spontaneously, outside the confines of specific programs, as teachers respond to needs within their school community and bring their particular interests, skills, and knowledge to bear. In this study we ask: How do informal teacher leaders contribute to reculturing their school communities and the teaching profession?

For this qualitative study, we define the informal teacher leader as a full-time K–12 teacher who engages in leadership activities outside their classroom without having a formal leadership title or role. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of 10 self-identified and peer-nominated informal teacher leaders. The findings from this study provide new information about informal teacher leaders’ practices, beliefs, and the impact of their work. First, they engaged in three key practices: learning and sharing, collaborating with colleagues, and advocating for positive change. Second, these practices grew out of two beliefs: that all teachers can be leaders and teacher leadership is concerned primarily with