

A Framework for Teacher Leadership in High Schools

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How to cite this paper: Bond, N. (2025). A Framework for Teacher Leadership in High Schools. *Open Journal of Leadership*, 14, 604-619.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/ojl.2025.144027>

Received: September 10, 2025

Accepted: November 1, 2025

Published: November 4, 2025

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Abstract

Schools have become complex organizations that face challenges related to accountability, demands from parents, and higher enrollments of students with unique learning needs. To address these challenges, schools are creating opportunities for teachers to assume leadership positions. In the early stages of the development of the field of teacher leadership, Danielson (2007) identified three areas where teachers can lead: within a department or team, across the school, and beyond the school. Using Danielson's framework as a starting point, the multiple case study described in this article examines the research question of how high school teachers lead. The findings come from in-depth interviews with 12 teachers in a large, diverse high school. The study affirms the relevance of Danielson's framework and finds that teacher leaders interact with different groups of people: students, colleagues, and people beyond the school, including parents and community members. These findings, when combined with Danielson's framework, yield an expanded version of the framework that captures the breadth of teacher leadership at the high school level. The findings show that teachers utilize their unique talents and interests to fulfill numerous roles and take various actions when leading.

Keywords

Teacher Leadership, High School, Leadership Framework

1. Introduction

Teacher leadership has emerged as a solution to a growing number of challenges faced by schools, principals, and teachers. Schools are grappling with more stringent accountability measures imposed by political and business entities, rising demands from parents, and higher enrollments of students with unique learning needs (Berry, 2015; Squires & LeTendre, 2020). Principals are struggling to provide the

leadership required for the complex organizations that modern schools have become (Berry, 2019). Teachers are growing weary of working in one-size-fits-all jobs in a flat profession with limited opportunities for career advancement (Allen, 2018).

During these turbulent times, teachers have embraced teacher leadership in order to take on a larger role in decisions regarding their work (Ingersoll et al., 2018) and to empower themselves to become agents of change (Sussman, 2025). Teacher leadership taps into each teacher's "unique combination of knowledge, skills, experiences, passions, and talents" (Berg, 2019: p. 26). Furthermore, it offers meaningful professional growth to teachers throughout their careers (Cosenza, 2015; Gul et al., 2025).

In one of the first and most widely distributed publications on teacher leadership, Danielson (2007) proposed a framework that identified three areas where teachers can lead: "within the department or team, across the school, or beyond the school" (p. 17). She explained the framework by offering these examples: Teachers can lead *within the department or team* by working with grade-level colleagues to analyze student assessment data. They can lead *across the school* by collaborating with colleagues to create a more efficient master teaching schedule or develop policies that positively impact the entire school. Finally, they can contribute *beyond the school* by serving on district-level committees or presenting at conferences hosted by professional organizations.

Nearly two decades have passed since Danielson's framework was published. Is her framework still relevant? What changes have occurred regarding the areas where teachers can lead? The study described herein aims to answer the research question, "How do high school teacher leaders lead?" The study is significant because it revisits Danielson's framework and strives to capture the breadth of teacher leadership in a high school.

2. Theoretical Framework

Distributed leadership theory serves as the study's conceptual framework (Diamond & Spillane, 2016). This theory counters the belief that leadership consists of an individual person working at the highest levels of an organization, instead purporting that leadership is shared among people who simultaneously perform leadership functions at different levels of the organization (Posner, 2009).

Distributed leadership theory applies to education. Teachers possess individual knowledge and skills that are useful to the larger organization of a school (Nappi, 2014). At any time, a teacher can step forward, assume responsibility for a school initiative, and lead, thus becoming a teacher leader. Scholars define teacher leaders as "teachers who maintain K-12 classroom-based teaching responsibilities while also taking on leadership responsibilities outside of the classroom" (Wenner & Campbell, 2017: p. 140).

3. Review of Literature

A review of the published literature about teacher leadership unearthed two re-

search lines related to this study: roles and actions. When teacher leadership began as a field (Silva et al., 2000), scholars focused on identifying and cataloging the numerous roles in which teacher leaders served (Gabriel, 2005; York-Barr & Duke, 2004), and, over time, began researching each role in depth.

Rather than focusing on roles, some scholars directed their attention to the actions of teacher leaders. They argued that a role, or title, does not accurately portray what a teacher leader does because schools vary in the duties or actions assigned to a particular role. Wenner and Campbell (2017) state, “Teacher leaders can potentially fit into a variety of positions and meet the needs of any situation” (p. 135). Eckert and Daughtrey (2019) affirmed this point, saying, “Leadership is an action that may be undertaken by any effective educator, not predetermined by assigned roles within a school or school system” (p. 3). In summary, teacher leadership roles and teacher leadership actions are closely related. While some scholars prefer focusing on roles, others focus on actions. The following sections review both research lines.

Teacher Leader Roles (The Roles Approach)

Teacher leaders improve schools and foster increased student learning by serving in various roles. In the first literature review published in the field of teacher leadership, York-Barr and Duke (2004) divided roles into two categories: formal and informal. Teachers serving in formal roles interview for the position and, once selected, receive training on how to fulfill the role. They are given official titles, such as “union representatives, department heads, curriculum specialists, mentors, or members of a site-based management team” (p. 263). By contrast, informal teacher leaders emerge organically from their work with peers, solve school-related problems, model reflective practice, articulate a vision for school improvement, and offer advice to colleagues who seek them out (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

In an early book about teacher leadership, Gabriel (2005) described 20 roles: grade level/subject area leader, curriculum leader across grades, backup leader, mentor, peer coach, notetaker/recorder, parliamentarian/timekeeper, presenter, conference attendee, speaker/writer, school plan chair, faculty representative, host/cooperating teacher, instructional audit leader, search committee panelist, community leader, student activities coordinator, technology leader, webpage curator, and supplies coordinator. In their work as professional development providers, Harrison and Killion (2017) described 10 roles: resource provider, instructional specialist, curriculum specialist, classroom supporter, learning facilitator, mentor, school leader, data coach, catalyst for change, and learner.

Current scholarship organizes the roles into at least four categories. The first category examines teacher leaders who work with groups of people. Cameli (2018) studied the leadership roles of curriculum coach, team leader, department head, grade level chair, role model, and teacher-in-charge. These teacher leaders “possess a multitude of talents and skills and will rise to a calling to best serve the school” (p. 13).

The second category showcases the teaching of colleagues. These leaders men-

tor new teachers and coordinate induction programs (Gul et al., 2019; Shillingstad et al., 2015). They also provide professional development to experienced teachers through instructional coaching opportunities (Buchanan et al., 2020) and professional learning communities (PLCs) (Grimm, 2024; Nguyen et al., 2019).

The third category centers on curriculum, instruction, and assessment. These leaders serve as curriculum creators, developers, and publishers (Harris et al., 2020). They develop new strategies for teaching students (Cheung et al., 2018) and serve as data analysts who examine test scores and identify students for remediation (Berry, 2015).

The fourth category pertains to teacher leaders working beyond the school. They serve as faculty representatives in parent-teacher organizations (Thomas, 2022), community organizers advocating locally on the school's behalf (Foxhall et al., 2022), and cooperating teachers mentoring teacher candidates from universities (Shillingstad et al., 2015). This category also includes political roles, such as union representatives and advocates to local, state, and national policymakers (Bond, 2019). Finally, these leaders participate in professional organizations as board members and conference presenters (Bond, 2022).

Teachers' Leader Actions (The Actions Approach)

Another way to conceptualize teacher leadership is to focus on actions. Fairman and Mackenzie (2012) propose a model with nine spheres, a term they use to differentiate various leadership actions. The model shows "where and how teachers, individually or collectively, informally or formally, act and influence other teachers to improve student learning" (p. 232). The researchers avoid using the term *role*, preferring to focus on "what teachers were doing and where they were doing it" (p. 232). Teacher leaders: 1) engage in learning about their practice; 2) experiment and reflect; 3) share ideas and learning, mentor beginning teachers, and coach colleagues; 4) collaborate and reflect together on collective work; 5) interact in groups to enhance the school's culture; 6) question, advocate, and build support and organizational capacity; 7) engage in collective school-wide improvement, focus resources, and distribute leadership; 8) collaborate with the broader community and parents; and 9) share work outside the school in professional organizations.

Scholars have continued adding actions and dividing them into at least two categories: making decisions and building professional relationships. Studies indicate that teacher leaders are excellent at making work-related decisions (Cheung et al., 2018; Ingersoll et al., 2018). According to these scholars, teacher leaders make decisions about curriculum (selecting instructional materials), instruction (developing new ways to teach), assessment (setting student assessment practices, analyzing data from student performances, and determining grading systems), professional development (determining content of in-service programs), student discipline (establishing discipline policies and procedures), school budgets (offering input on expenditures), and hiring and admissions (recruiting and selecting new teachers and students to specialized programs). Furthermore, Pineda-Baez et al. (2019) claim that teachers are best suited to decide how to overcome students'

educational barriers and promote a school culture of success.

A second category of actions involves building rapport with people associated with the school. Teacher leaders build communities with colleagues and students and mobilize them to bring about change (Squires & LeTendre, 2020; Yurtseven et al., 2025). Teacher leaders know how to manage groups, facilitate dialogue, think systematically, advocate for change, and take care of themselves and others (Berg, 2019). They can assess teachers' and students' needs, express hope, and stand up for marginalized groups (Crowther, 2015; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

4. Method

This multiple case study (Yin, 2018) examined 12 high school teachers who served as teacher leaders. The unit of analysis for the case was defined as the individual teacher leader. The research question was, "How do high school teacher leaders lead?"

Setting

The study occurred at San Marcos High School, a large, diverse school in San Marcos, Texas. The researcher's university's institutional review board and the school district approved the study. The district granted permission to use its real name in the study. Official public records from the school district indicate that 2,447 students in grades 9 through 12 attended the school during the 2024-2025 academic year. The student demographics were 73% Hispanic, 20% White, 4% African American, and 3% Other. The data show that 78% of the students were classified as economically disadvantaged. The school employed 161 teachers. Their demographics were 28% Hispanic, 61% White, 8% African American, and 3% Other.

San Marcos High School is the only high school in the district, and the community supports the school. A decade ago, the district built a state-of-the-art campus with expanded athletic and fine arts facilities. The district currently offers students a robust curriculum to prepare graduates for college, careers, or military service.

Researcher's Positionality

San Marcos High School has partnered with Texas State University, my home institution, for 25 years to prepare teachers. As a requirement of the university's educator preparation program, teacher candidates complete two undergraduate courses and the state-mandated field experience in a cooperating teacher's class at the high school.

For the last six years, I have served as the university's site coordinator at the high school. My duties include teaching the education courses, meeting with administrators and staff to coordinate program logistics, and mentoring teacher candidates as they work with their cooperating teacher.

Because of my sustained presence at the school, I have forged strong professional relationships with the cooperating teachers. On multiple occasions, I have visited with them in the hallways or at events related to the school-university partnership, exchanged emails with them about their teacher candidates, and attended

their lessons.

Through these interactions, I have noticed teachers acting as teacher leaders. As I have observed them, I have noticed their effectiveness as instructors, the first requirement of teacher leadership (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). I wondered how these teachers were leading when not mentoring teacher candidates. My curiosity led to my research question, “How do high school teacher leaders lead?”

Participants

I purposely selected the 12 participants (Glaser & Strauss, 2017) for two reasons. First, they met Wenner and Campbell’s (2017) definition 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). All participants served as cooperating teachers in the school-university partnership at least once during the last six years, and all gave informed consent to participating in the study. Mentoring new teachers is a role mentioned in the teacher leadership standards (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2012). Second, they were a convenient sample. Working with cooperating teachers is one of my site coordinator duties. Table 1 provides an overview of the participants. Each of the 12 teacher leaders is designated as TL-1, TL-2, etc.

Table 1. Participants.

Participant	Department	Teacher leadership roles and actions
TL-1	Social studies	Teaches a dual-credit history course Coaches the golf team Interacts with the golf team booster club
TL-2	Social studies	Serves as an instructional coach
TL-3	Social studies	Serves as a department chair Advises the student council Coordinates a student summer travel abroad program
TL-4	Social studies	Served as a department chair and instructional coach Coaches the mountain bike team Interacts with the mountain bike team booster club
TL-5	Social studies	Shares teaching resources with colleagues
TL-6	English	Serves as an instructional coach
TL-7	English	Serves as a PLC team leader Sponsors Junior State of America (civics student organization) Participates in the community
TL-8	English	Sponsors the key club Assists with the literary criticism competition Serves as a grant coordinator
TL-9	Special education	Serves as a lead teacher in her department Coaches the special olympics team Sponsors the best buddies program

Continued

TL-10	Special education	Assists with the coffee cart Coaches the powerlifting team Interacts with the powerlifting team booster club
TL-11	Special education	Attends students' extracurricular events Posts on social media
TL-12	Science	Focuses on curriculum development Serves on the courtesy committee Participates in externships in the community

Data Sources

I followed the same procedures for all 12 cases when collecting and analyzing data. With each participant, I first conducted an in-person, semi-structured interview at the school that lasted 60 to 75 minutes. I asked open-ended questions in three areas: participant's journey to becoming a teacher at the school, current job duties, and leadership contributions to the school. I asked follow-up questions during the interview to clarify comments and encourage elaboration.

After I transcribed the first set of interviews and began a preliminary data analysis, I conducted a second set of in-person interviews at the school that each lasted 30 to 45 minutes. Because of the participants' busy schedules, I conducted two of those interviews via Zoom. For that second set of interviews, I asked clarification questions. If information from the first interview was unclear or vague, I asked the participant to explain more fully.

Analysis and Trustworthiness

Following the constant-comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), data analysis occurred in two phases. I first conducted open coding by for each case. I read, recorded notes on the transcripts, and identified codes. During the second axial coding phase, I conducted an analysis by examining the codes from all cases. I organized the codes into matrices, looking for major themes. As the themes emerged during the analysis, I noticed that they corresponded to Danielson's (2007) three areas—within the department or team, across the school, and beyond the school. This was the selective coding phase.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, I audiotaped all interviews, transcribed them verbatim myself, and member checked the information with participants to ensure that our interpretations of the data were the same (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). I also created an audit trail by noting the steps for collecting and analyzing data. I wrote analytic memos to capture my analysis and the ideas I pondered while implementing the study (Saldaña, 2021).

5. Findings

Nine themes emerged from the data reflecting participants' roles and actions as teacher leaders. The themes are organized in Table 2 below in a 3x3 matrix. The horizontal axis shows the people with whom the teacher leaders interacted: 1) students; 2) teachers; and 3) parents, community members, and people beyond the

city. The vertical axis corresponds to the three areas of Danielson's framework: 1) within the classroom or department, 2) across the school, and 3) beyond the school. The framework has been modified to reflect distances from the classroom: near, or within the classroom/department; mid-distance, or across the school; and far, or beyond the school. The numerical count indicates how many of the 12 participants commented on the roles and actions of the quadrant.

Table 2. Teacher leaders' roles and actions.

Teacher leadership proximity	Students	Teachers	Parents, community members, and people beyond the city
Near (Within the classroom/department)	Quadrant 1 (N = 12) Teach well	Quadrant 4 (N = 10) Facilitate PLCs Serve as an instructional coach Serve as department chair	Quadrant 7 (N = 5) Interact with students' parents
Mid-distance (Across the school)	Quadrant 2 (N = 10) Sponsor student clubs and organizations Coach sports teams	Quadrant 5 (N = 7) Serve on school-wide committees Coordinate grants Coordinate special projects for teachers Act as informal leaders	Quadrant 8 (N = 3) Interact with sports teams booster club
Far (Beyond the school)	Quadrant 3 (N = 4) Coordinate summer travel abroad programs Sponsor regional sports teams Teach dual-credit courses	Quadrant 6 (N = 12) Serve as cooperating teachers Share instructional materials with colleagues Participate in professional organizations	Quadrant 9 (N = 4) Volunteer for state nonprofit organizations Post on social media Participate in externships Represent the school at community events

Students within the Classroom/Department (Quadrant 1)

All teachers (12 of 12) talked about students, their primary focus as educators. A closer analysis of the data yielded three subthemes. First, all teachers talked about their efforts to help students develop cognitively. They wanted students to acquire academic knowledge (TL-1), develop critical thinking skills (TL-2), and become adept readers and writers (TL-6). They hoped that students, upon graduation, would become empowered young adults (TL-9) and responsible citizens (TL-1).

A second subtheme focused on the teachers helping students develop socially and emotionally. They expressed genuine care for students' well-being (TL-7) and wanted to create physically and emotionally safe places in their rooms for students (TL-6). They listened to students (TL-12) and cultivated meaningful professional relationships with them (TL-11).

All teachers acknowledged the importance of teaching well, the third subtheme. To accomplish the goal of excellence in teaching, they enhanced materials used during lessons (TL-12) and developed creative activities to engage students in learning (TL-5 and TL-8).

Students across the School (Quadrant 2)

Many teachers (10 of 12) interacted with students not enrolled in their courses.

The teachers sponsored school-wide academic, leadership, and social organizations, such as Student Council (TL-3), Junior State of America (TL-7), Key Club (TL-8), Creative Writing Club (TL-6), and Best Buddies Program (TL-9). They sponsored athletic teams, such as the Golf Team (TL-1), Mountain Bike Team (TL-4), and Powerlifting Team (TL-10).

Teachers interacted informally with students in the school. They routinely stood at their doors between classes and greeted students walking down the halls (TL-1). If they noticed students in states of distress, they engaged them in conversation (TL-11).

Students beyond the School (Quadrant 3)

A few teachers (4 of 12) worked with students beyond the school. They traveled abroad during summers with students, visiting countries like Italy, Greece, and Japan (TL-3); chaperoned students during the school year on visits to prospective colleges (TL-8); coached a Special Olympics Team composed of students from across the district who competed regionally in bowling, basketball, and track (TL-9); and taught dual-credit courses to students concurrently enrolled in high school and community college (TL-1).

Teachers within the Classroom/Department (Quadrant 4)

Many teachers (10 of 12) led colleagues in the department. Two teachers served in formal roles as team leads of their course-based PLCs (TL-7 and TL-9). The team leads facilitated weekly meetings to plan lessons aligned to the school curriculum. Two teachers assumed informal leadership roles during the PLCs. One shared content expertise (TL-1), and another enhanced PowerPoint presentations used by teachers during lessons (TL-12).

Two teachers served in formal teacher leadership roles as department instructional coaches (TL-2 and TL-6). They observed colleagues teaching and afterwards engaged them in conversations about ways to improve. They mentored new teachers, collected assessment data, assisted with the data analysis, and developed academic interventions for teachers to use with struggling students. They also supported the team leads during the PLCs, met regularly with department chairs to solve problems, and attended weekly meetings with administrators.

Two teachers either were currently serving as department chairs or had recently stepped down from the position (TL-3 and TL-4). The chairs handled departmental administrative responsibilities such as disseminating pertinent information from the principal, ordering supplies, and assisting teachers with district-required paperwork. In addition, they monitored teachers' emotional states and offered advice for coping with the stresses of teaching.

Teachers across the School (Quadrant 5)

A few teachers (4 of 12) led colleagues across the school. One teacher served on the Courtesy Committee, a group that showed appreciation for teachers in the school by providing refreshments and treats to teachers on special occasions (TL-12). A second teacher, a grant coordinator, obtained permission from her funding agency to use funds to support teachers (TL-8). She purchased books

for teachers' classroom libraries and paid for substitutes so teachers could plan lessons during the PLCs. A third teacher assisted with the Coffee Cart, a project run by students with special needs (TL-10). She taught students how to fulfill coffee orders, prepare the coffee, deliver it to teachers in their rooms, and collect payment. A fourth teacher, who had been at the school for several years, served as an informal teacher leader, offering advice when colleagues inquired about school-related issues (TL-7). The colleagues valued her in-depth institutional knowledge.

Teachers beyond the School (Quadrant 6)

All teachers (12 of 12) led by collaborating with teachers beyond the school. All participated in the ongoing school-university partnership as cooperating teachers to teacher candidates, mentoring them and welcoming them to their classrooms. Additionally, one teacher collaborated with former colleagues in other districts and exchanged lesson plans via email (TL-5), while another disseminated information about her professional organization to colleagues and encouraged them to join (TL-3).

People within the Classroom/Department (Quadrant 7)

Some teachers (5 of 12) led by interacting with students' parents. The teachers contacted parents and informed them of their child's progress. Three teachers worked closely with the parents of students with special needs to prepare for ARD (Admission Review and Dismissal) meetings and create the IEPs (Individualized Education Plans) (TL-9, TL-10, and TL-11). One teacher forged such a strong relationship with the parents of a special needs child that the parents asked her to accompany them to the funeral of a close family member. The teacher was able to comfort the student during the funeral (TL-9).

People across the School (Quadrant 8)

A few teachers (3 of 12) interacted with parents and community members who were members of the booster clubs for the golf, mountain bike, and powerlifting teams (TL-1, TL-4, and TL-10). Each teacher kept their respective booster club members informed about upcoming events and financial needs related to equipment and travel.

People beyond the School (Quadrant 9)

A few teachers (4 of 12) worked with people in the community. One teacher regularly contributed to a state agency in the capital city by writing research reports (TL-1). Another teacher maintained a presence on social media (TL-11). After attending school events to support students, she updated her social media accounts by posting information and photos. A third teacher completed an externship, a special community-based summer program that placed teachers in the city government so that they could gain firsthand knowledge of city services (TL-12). She was placed in a fire department where she traveled with firefighters to extinguish fires and respond to emergency calls. A fourth teacher acted as a school representative while attending her church (TL-7). She fostered goodwill toward the school in the congregation of her church.

6. Discussion

This study examined 12 teacher leaders in a large high school and attempted to answer the research question of how high school teacher leaders lead. The findings offer new insights into the field of teacher leadership, confirm findings from previous studies, and suggest implications for teachers and administrators.

New to the Research

The study described in this paper was based on the framework that Danielson (2007) proposed in the early stages of the development of the field of teacher leadership. She claimed that teachers can lead “within a department or team, across the school, and beyond the school” (p. 17). Her three labels indicate the locations where teachers lead. What emerged from the study in this paper is that Danielson’s three locations are still applicable and that they could be relabeled to indicate the distance from the classroom, the primary location of a teacher leader’s work. The revised terms would be *near*, *mid-distance*, and *far*.

The findings described in this paper also found that teacher leaders interact with different groups of people: students, colleagues, and people beyond the school, including parents and community members. These findings are not new. Previous researchers have mentioned these different groups (Eckert et al., 2015; Nguyen et al., 2019; Thomas, 2022). However, a new contribution to the field of teacher leadership is merging these three categories with Danielson’s original framework, thereby expanding it to show the numerous roles teacher leaders can fill. Adding the people to Danielson’s original framework expands the way that educators can think about teacher leadership. A teacher leader can serve in roles near, mid-distance, and far that involve students in the classroom, teachers in the school, and people in the community.

A third new finding is that the revised framework captures the breadth of teacher leadership in a high school. The findings appear to add roles and actions that have received either no or little attention in previous research. These roles and actions lie on the periphery of the revised framework. It seems logical that the quadrants in the top left-hand corner of the framework, the ones closest to students, have the largest numerical counts. The large numbers suggest that teacher leaders regularly hold these roles. The “newer” teacher leader roles located in the peripheral quadrants toward the right and the bottom include coordinators of summer travel-abroad programs and dual-credit teachers (Quadrant 3), liaisons to sports booster clubs (Quadrant 8), representatives or ambassadors from the school to religious and civic community groups (Quadrant 9), and social media mavens (Quadrant 9). These roles either did not exist two decades ago when scholars were first identifying teacher leadership roles, or the roles existed but were not considered teacher leadership. There is scant research in these areas. Berry (2019) mentions teachers using technology in their work. Lotter et al. (2019) discuss briefly how teacher leaders were beginning “to reach out more to their local community to enhance their instruction” (p. 39). In one sentence in an old study, Collinson (2004) stated that teachers led by teaching “at their places of worship

(mostly Sunday school, summer Bible school, choir, youth club, counseling, or religious education)” (p. 374). Future scholars might research these unexamined roles that lie along the periphery of the framework.

Confirmed in the research

The findings confirm previous research in at least six ways. First, teacher leaders focus on teaching students well (Quadrant 1). A prerequisite of teacher leadership is effective teaching. According to Eckert et al. (2015), “There was broad agreement that a teacher leader had to be an excellent teacher first before he or she could be considered a teacher leader” (p. 10). Teachers hold effective colleagues in high esteem and are more willing to follow them.

Second, teacher leaders sponsor student organizations (Quadrant 2). According to research, these teacher leaders develop students’ cognitive, social, and leadership skills (Sterin et al., 2022) and meet students’ personal and academic needs (Lotter et al., 2019).

Third, teacher leaders collaborate with colleagues to improve teaching and student learning (Quadrant 4). Scholarship in this area is plentiful. Numerous scholars have investigated teacher leaders facilitating PLCs (Bond, 2015; Wilson, 2016), serving as instructional coaches (Buchanan et al., 2020), providing professional development to colleagues (Gul et al., 2025), mentoring new faculty (Shillingstad et al., 2015), and serving as department chairs (Gabriel, 2005).

Fourth, teacher leaders assist colleagues across the school (Quadrant 5). They informally offer advice about instructional and school-related matters, or they formally serve on school-wide committees (Mangin & Ross, 2022; Schaap et al., 2025). In his study, Cosenza (2015) discovered that “formal roles give teachers the opportunities to effect change or serve as a representative of their peers in a larger group” (p. 92).

Fifth, teachers lead colleagues beyond the school (Quadrant 6). They serve as cooperating teachers in school-university educator preparation programs (Shillingstad et al., 2015) and as disseminators of instructional materials (Cosenza, 2015). Sixth, teachers lead groups near to the school (Quadrant 7). They collaborate with parents through parent-teacher organizations (Thomas, 2022). As Ocasio (2018) wrote, “It is the responsibility of all stakeholders—teachers and parents—to assist with the development of students” (p. 275).

Implications for Teachers and Administrators

This study proposes an updated framework for thinking about teacher leadership. Danielson (2007) originally offered a framework with three areas of teacher leadership. The updated framework in this study expands the original framework to nine areas. The revised framework invites teachers and administrators to think more broadly about teacher leadership and possible roles and actions teacher leaders can take. In their article on teacher leadership, Hanuscin et al. (2012) advised teachers “to begin with broadening their vision of various activities which fall within the scope of leadership” (p. 17). The expanded framework is a useful planning tool when administrators and teachers identify ways that teachers can lead. Which leadership roles and actions interest the teacher? In which areas does the

school need more teacher leaders? The framework can be used to match teachers and roles (Berg, 2019). As York-Barr and Duke (2004) advised, “Recognizing unique strengths and matching them to needed functions results in greatly expanding the leadership potential and capacity in schools” (p. 291).

Second, the study encourages teachers and administrators to continue brainstorming possible roles and actions that teachers can take to lead. Over the years, scholars have identified and researched an increasing number of teacher leadership roles and actions. The results of this study imply that more roles will be developed in the future. As Smylie and Eckert (2018) noted, “Teacher leadership could come in many guises and be enacted anywhere and everywhere in an ever-changing manner” (p. 564).

Areas for Future Research

New questions emerged that merit consideration for future research. First, many teachers in the study led in ways noted in the quadrants in the upper left-hand corner of the revised framework. Does this suggest that these roles are ideal for teachers who are starting their leadership journey? Similarly, are some leadership roles better suited for experienced teachers? Future research might explore these two questions.

Next, little research has been published about the leadership roles on the outer edges of the revised framework. Few teachers in this study led in these areas, and scant research exists in these areas. Scholars might investigate teacher leadership with students beyond the school, teacher leadership with parents, teacher leadership with community members, and teacher leadership beyond the community.

Third, the participants in this study came primarily from four departments in a high school: social studies, English, special education, and science. Future studies might examine teacher leadership in other departments, such as math, world languages, fine arts, and athletics. How are teachers leading in these departments?

7. Conclusion

Nearly two decades have passed since the publication of Danielson’s (2007) framework that identified three areas where teachers can lead in schools: within a department or team, across the school, and beyond the school. The case study described above examined that framework and affirmed its relevance today. The findings showed that teachers utilize their unique talents and interests to become teacher leaders. For example, they facilitate PLCs, serve on school-wide committees, and post on social media. The study’s findings also generated an expanded version of the framework that includes the people whom teachers lead: students, colleagues, parents, and community members. The updated framework captures the breadth of teacher leadership at the high school level and adds new roles and actions previously not considered that merit future investigation.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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