

Role of the Instructional Teacher Leader

The instructional teacher leader as a *liaison* between teachers, support administrators, building administrators, and the community will:

1. work with teachers, support administrators, and building administrators to establish and implement district and school goals.
2. provide information to teachers in regard to Board of Education, building administration, and instructional cabinet policy, programs, and school goals.
3. communicate department policy, goals, curriculum offerings, etc. to the community, when appropriate.
4. communicate staff concerns to building administrators.
5. participate on the Instructional Cabinet and the Discipline Committee of the school.
6. facilitate responsiveness to parent / community involvement.
7. attend PSCC meetings on a rotational basis.

The instructional teacher leader as collegial *monitor of instruction* will work in collaboration to assist curriculum coaches, teachers, and administration to:

1. observe and utilize principles of conferring and coaching.
2. demonstrate effective teaching strategies.
3. lead the team in continual analysis and evaluation of student progress to plan and improve instruction in collaboration with curriculum coach.
4. offer support / assistance to permanent staff, substitute teachers, students and parents.
5. provide leadership in professional development by informing the instructional team / department of educational research, professional publications and by participating in conferences, workshops, and professional organizations.
6. analyze data to plan and improve instruction.
7. monitor student progress and coordinate issuing Poor Work / Progress Reports to parents.
8. review lesson plans and assist in the revision where necessary.
9. initiate and / or participate in student intervention strategies.
10. attend district mandated professional development training if a curriculum coaching vacancy exists.

The instructional teacher leader as school, grade, team, or program *coordinator* will:

1. identify the needs of the school, department, team, program or grade, and have input into ordering instructional materials to meet these needs.
2. plan and conduct departmental, team, program or grade level meetings and in-service sessions using an agenda-building approach (The makeup of such groups will be determined by size and nature of school, department, program, or grade).

3. manage and coordinate activities within the department, team, program or grade, e.g. field trips, speakers; content fairs, assemblies; etc. in cooperation with school staff.
4. support and assist new teachers.
5. assist the principal in developing schedules of students and teachers.
6. contribute to the development and administration of the school budget.
7. facilitate interdisciplinary planning in collaboration with curriculum coaches.
8. provide orientation to new staff members.
9. assist the principal in student recruitment and orientation.
10. assist in assigning coverage.
11. assist in the IST process in regards to special education.
12. supervise the school in the administrator's absence when requested.
13. assist the administration in scheduling and implementing Parent / Teacher conferences.
14. assist and participate in site-based interview process.
15. assist in ordering supplies and textbooks.

The instructional teacher leader will, in sequence:

1. utilize the principles of observing and conferring with teachers at the principal's request.
2. provide support when a teacher is having classroom / teaching difficulties.
3. indicate to the principal when an intervention plan has not been successful.
4. confirm, if requested, that the ITL has neither rebuttal to, nor disagreement with, the conclusion concerning unsatisfactory teaching performance.

NOTE: The role of the ITL has been defined above; therefore, the ITL should not be assigned additional duties such as hall duty, bus duty, lunch duty, or classroom coverage during ITL periods.

Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers

Instructional Teacher Leaders (ITLs) in Pittsburgh – Classroom Teachers with Added Roles and Responsibilities:

- **Assistance in Assuring Overall Instructional Quality**
- **Intervention with a Teacher Experiencing Classroom Difficulties**

Written and Updated by Albert Fondy, President, Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers
July 31, 1989; May 22, 1990; May 15, 16, 17, 1997; September 25, 28, 1998

Who ITLs Are and What They Do

ITL stands for “instructional teacher leader”. ITLs are themselves teachers. They teach classes in addition to performing their ITL duties. As teachers and Union members, they are represented in the Union contract. ITLs are in place every school at all three school levels --- high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools. They are chosen via an election process, which occurs every three years at each school. The election process centers around teachers primarily, but it also enables meaningful involvement by the principal. ITLs receive extra compensation for their ITL work. In addition to specifying that a teacher must meet certain initial qualifications for consideration to become an ITL, Pittsburgh annually conducts an internal ITL training program and requires successful completion of an internal ITL certification once an ITL has been elected.

An ITL has two principal roles. One is to work with those teachers from whom he / she serves as an ITL to maintain and to augment instructional quality --- both in content areas and in teaching technique matters. The second is to intervene in any situation where an individual teacher is experiencing serious teaching troubles and / or classroom management problems.

Intervention by an ITL

The PFT / Pittsburgh School District ITL-centered approach for intervening with a teacher who is having substantial difficulty in the classroom and / or whose teaching performance is unsatisfactory or bordering on unsatisfactory is a sensible and workable form of peer intervention / peer assistance. It is a way to implement accountability for substandard teaching performance but it does it in a professional manner --- by employing the ITL in structure and through working with the principal, who identifies where intervention is necessary and who retains the actual rating responsibility.

In the Pittsburgh intervention approach, the ITL assists the teacher who is having classroom / teaching problems and, hopefully, can help the teacher to overcome whatever difficulties he / she may be experiencing in the classroom. In those cases where the teacher is not able to overcome his / her difficulties despite the ITL’s assistance, the ITL will indicate to the principal that the intervention process has not been successful. If the principal issues an unsatisfactory rating, then the ITL

will confirm, if requested, that the ITL has neither rebuttal to, nor disagreement with, the conclusion concerning unsatisfactory teaching performance. If the entire rating procedure is followed properly, then there normally will be neither Union challenge to, nor grievance of, the unsatisfactory rating that has been issued.

Handling an Unsatisfactory Rating for Teaching Competence

In Pennsylvania, two successive unsatisfactory annual ratings for competence as a teacher are grounds for dismissal or a tenured teacher. This same provision is followed in Pittsburgh, but the second consecutive unsatisfactory rating can sometimes be issued at an earlier time during the second school year and not necessarily only at the close of the second school year. [See PFT / School District 1995 – through – 1998 Pittsburgh Teachers / Professionals Collective Bargaining Agreement: Article 30, Section 12c.]

The traditional approach to determining ratings for competence can sometimes have a significant degree of subjectivity attached to it. The ITL intervention process, which must be utilized before there is an unsatisfactory rating issued for teaching performance, makes the rating process about as fair and objective as can reasonably be achieved.

Except for intervention situations, the ITL has no responsibility for the determination of teacher ratings that are issued annually by principals to tenured teachers.

Summary of Pittsburgh's ITL Structure and Program

The whole Pittsburgh ITL structure is much more than an intervention model. It is primarily a means to have peer observation and conferencing by the ITL with all teachers with whom the ITL works, with the dual aims of (1) monitoring and enhancing instruction and (2) assuring the content area integrity and curriculum delivery --- all through a positive and collegial process. ITLs also work with new teachers and help in the mentoring of new teachers.

In Pittsburgh, PFT-assisted staff development, peer observation and assistance, and the ITL approach to instructional maintenance and improvement are designed to have a meaningful impact on advancing overall teaching quality. Cooperation, working together, positive peer pressure, and professional peer relationships are what ultimately will significantly affect and substantially strengthen all teaching over a period of time.

What Pittsburgh is doing with regard to ITL intervention --- and with regard to ITL – assisted instructional improvement in general – not only has substance but also is reasonable and logical. Moreover, it does not demean or impugn teachers as a group. It is a positive, constructive, and professional model. It is the soundest way to assure basic accountability and simultaneously to address forthrightly the situation where an individual teacher may be dysfunctional in the classroom.