
Foreword

Barbara Miller, Education Development Center

Teacher leaders—educators who take on leadership responsibilities meant to improve practice in their schools and beyond—are an important force in reforming K–12 education. The impact of their work is beginning to be understood, yet the resources to help them develop and refine their leadership practices are still few and far between.

This book is one of those needed resources. It offers rich and thoughtful cases of teacher leaders’ practices and the dilemmas they must address as well as a clear process for teacher leaders to write cases to make meaning of their experience so that others can benefit. This volume can be used productively by teacher leaders themselves and by those who design and facilitate professional development for teacher leaders.

These cases—and the process for developing cases such as these—reveal the introspection that teacher leaders often bring to their work. Reading these cases and, more important, discussing and reflecting on the cases with others, is like peering over the shoulder of a teacher leader to see the practice, hear the questions, witness the successes, and acknowledge the challenges. Having that up-close-and-personal vantage point invites those working with these cases to be similarly reflective and committed to figuring out the answers to the hard, yet important, questions posed in each case.

These cases speak to the following fundamental issues that teacher leaders encounter in their work, whether that work is in the classroom; at the district level; or on a state, regional, or national stage:

- Building support among administrators
- Dealing with resistance
- Establishing and maintaining credibility
- Developing new expertise
- Defining roles and responsibilities

By situating these issues in real-life contexts, the cases offer insight and vivid detail to develop an understanding of what makes an issue problematic and how it might be addressed to enhance teacher leader practice.

There is a real and pressing need for this book, because the wisdom of experience of teacher leaders is an important knowledge source that should be available to other teacher leaders. The teacher leaders who authored the 16 cases in this book don't claim to have all the answers or to be experts; rather, they frame the dilemmas they faced in ways that open opportunities to learn from their actions, they reflect on their decisions and questions, and they identify lessons that cross from a teacher leader's case into one's own context.

Beyond the cases themselves, this book offers a facilitation guide for each case with questions, activities, and suggestions for constructing a meaningful professional learning experience. There are guidelines for engaging in case analysis, many tips teacher leaders can employ as they work with these cases, and a clear process for how cases like these might be written by teacher leaders. This book, then, is both a user's guide for teacher leaders to learn from and develop cases of practice as well as a volume of cases reflecting the wisdom of these 16 teacher leaders. It is one of the very resources that are needed to help teacher leaders develop and refine their leadership practice in support of improving K–12 education.