TEACHER VOICE TOOLKIT

HOW AUTHENTICALLY ENGAGING TEACHERS CAN STRENGTHEN YOUR SCHOOL

NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR
PUBLIC
CHARTER
SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION: WHY TEACHER VOICE MATTERS

Teachers are the lifeblood of any successful school. Yet in many schools, they have few meaningful opportunities to shape key decisions. This lack of a voice leads to a lack of buy-in for the school's strategy—which hurts morale, culture, and ultimately students' experiences in classrooms each day.

The reverse is also true. Schools that prioritize authentic teacher engagement tend to be stronger across the board:

▶ **The Power of Proximity:** Students spend more time with their teachers than anyone else besides their families—more than 1,000 hours each school year.[1] This proximity gives teachers a unique perspective on how school systems and policies can best support learning.

▶ **Teacher Retention:** Disengaged employees are 12 times more likely than highly engaged employees to leave their jobs in a given year.[2] Building a culture that values teacher voice is a surefire way to boost teacher engagement, and therefore teacher retention: when teachers are comfortable sharing their authentic opinions and concerns, they are four times as likely to be happy about their career and four times as likely to think they can make a difference.[3]

▶ **Improved Practice:** There's even evidence that authentically engaging teachers can directly improve their instruction. For example, teachers who have a voice in decision-making are three times more likely to value goal-setting and work hard to achieve those goals. They're also three times more likely to encourage students to make decisions for themselves.[4] Interactions between administrators and teachers shape not only a school's overall culture, but the way teachers interact with their students.

ENGAGED EMPLOYEES ARE

12X

MORE LIKELY TO STAY IN THEIR JOBS IN A GIVEN YEAR.

In other words, authentic teacher engagement is an essential part of any school leader's job, and a pillar of a strong school culture. Teacher engagement means more than checking the typical boxes, like surveying teachers after a decision has been made, or waiting for them to take advantage of an "open door" policy. School leaders need to give teachers a consistent, meaningful voice in the decisions that shape their classrooms.

We created this toolkit to help school leaders do just that. Based on conversations with teachers and leaders across 10 charter networks and schools, we've gathered strategies that can help unlock the power of teacher voice in any school. While this collection of resources is by no means exhaustive or definitive, it provides a starting point for any school leader who wants to engage their teachers more authentically. It's not easy work, but it leads to better decisions—and the buy-in that's necessary for any decision to get results for students.

---

[1] OECD. (2007). *Education at a Glance 2007: OECD Indicators.* https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/eag-2007-28-en.pdf?expires=1573443940&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=A147E9FA0C8250E21CC9078520937C1B

[2] Glint Inc. *Glint Study Reveals New Hires with Poor Onboarding Experiences are Eight Times More Likely to be Disengaged at Work.* https://www.glintinc.com/press/glint-study-reveals-new-hires-poor-onboarding-experiences-eight-times-likely-disengaged-work/

[3] Glint Inc. *Glint Study Reveals New Hires with Poor Onboarding Experiences are Eight Times More Likely to be Disengaged at Work.* https://www.glintinc.com/press/glint-study-reveals-new-hires-poor-onboarding-experiences-eight-times-likely-disengaged-work/

[4] Quaglia Institute for Student Aspirations & Teacher Voice and Aspirations International Center. (2015). *Teacher Voice Report 2010-2014.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. http://quagliainstitute.org/dmsView/TeacherVoiceReport

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

Our hope is that school leaders use this toolkit as a guiding resource as they plan for and execute on teacher engagement strategies throughout the year.

The toolkit begins with stories from four schools. In each story, we highlight a specific event in which school leaders helped teachers feel heard and valued in making a key decision. We then looked across the four schools, external research, and other conversations with teachers and school leaders to identify foundational strategies that seem to be at the core of schools with strong teacher engagement. Lastly, we outline a set of tools and resources aligned to our core strategies.

GRATITUDE

This toolkit was created in collaboration with teachers and school leaders from across the country. A special thank you to the following individuals and organizations for their time, energy, and thoughtful conversations around this topic:

Anakarita Allen — Thomas Edison Charter Academy (San Francisco, CA)

Brendan Bedell — Noble Schools (Chicago, IL)

Jackie DeLuca — Brooklyn Prospect Charter Schools (Brooklyn, NY)

Breanne Diaz — KIPP Austin (Austin, TX)

Jessie Gismondi — Mastery Charter School, Cramer Hill Upper (Camden, NJ)

Ben Gunty — Noble Schools (Chicago, IL)

Meredith Howell-Turner — Mastery Charter School, Cramer Hill Lower (Camden, NJ)

Jordan Huller — Brooklyn Prospect Charter Schools (Brooklyn, NY)

Amy Junge — Education Evolving (St. Paul, MN)

Erin Mack Trapanese — TNTP, former Denver Public Schools principal (Denver, CO)

Carolyn Michael — Brooklyn Prospect Charter Schools (Brooklyn, NY)

Dr. Ken Montgomery — Design Tech High School (Redwood City, CA)

Jessica Simmons — TNTP, former Uncommon Schools principal (New York, NY)

Kit Tollerson — TNTP, former Rocketship and Firstline Schools principal (New Orleans, LA)

PART 1: A TALE OF FOUR SCHOOLS

KIPP Austin Vista Middle School – Austin, Texas

MEASURING ENGAGEMENT

Breanne Diaz's first year as principal at KIPP Austin Vista Middle School in 2016 went relatively smoothly. She stayed calm in the face of crises, and people generally liked her. When it came to solving problems, though—from helping a struggling teacher to addressing surprise logistical challenges—she often put the entire burden on herself.

But this approach became untenable in her second year. Over the summer, Breanne had worked with her assistant principals to write a "culture playbook" detailing every minute of a school day at Vista—but the result turned out to be nothing like their vision. Despite excitement over a fresh start for the school at a brand-new campus, teachers had big concerns about the playbook. That discontent, combined with staff turnover early in the year, left Vista gasping for air.

Breanne knew she had to try a different approach, so she decided to invite her staff to help address the school's challenges. She called a staff meeting where she asked teachers to share their concerns, and then work in groups to brainstorm potential solutions. Breanne and her staff then formed committees to put the solutions into action. Over the next year, the committees created an application for teacher leadership roles, implemented a school-based rewards program to celebrate teachers, and created more engagement opportunities for students—all designed to address the most urgent concerns staff members had raised.

Since that staff meeting two years ago, the staff at Vista has spent a lot of time practicing vulnerability by openly discussing challenges and deciding on solutions together. This approach has cultivated more trust between teachers and leaders. Gradually, they've begun to see their positive connections with each other spill over to their academic practices. Staff are better able to engage in content teams because they feel heard and valued. Students are learning more because their teachers are happy and engaged in their own development.

Breanne's experience is a reminder that adults value a sense of belonging as much as kids. When school leaders create spaces for their staff to speak truthfully and seek solutions together, they're building that sense of belonging into their school culture.

Samuels Elementary – Denver, Colorado

EMPOWERING TEACHER LEADERS

When Erin Mack Trapanese was principal at Samuels Elementary in Denver Public Schools, teacher leaders played a key role in improving teacher practice, student learning, and staff culture. The district's Teacher Leadership and Collaboration program gave teachers the opportunity to spend half their time observing and coaching fellow teachers, and the other half of their time teaching.

Erin worked hard to help her teacher leaders make the most of the opportunity—for their own development, and for the entire school community. For example, she asked for their input on operational challenges in addition to their instructional coaching work, and found that they often came up with creative solutions that the administrative team never would have surfaced.

Looking back on her experience, Erin identified three key benefits of robust teacher leadership programs:

▶ **Distributed leadership:** Because teacher leaders could help observe and evaluate teachers, Erin and her assistant principals were able to observe and provide feedback to every teacher at the school biweekly—something that was never possible before.

▶ **Stronger instruction:** Teacher leaders piloted new strategies in their own classrooms, like focusing on student-centered learning and relying more on student-to-student collaboration, and then shared the most successful strategies throughout the building. This opportunity to innovate, combined with smaller observation caseloads for the leadership team, helped 100 percent of teachers at Samuels grow by at least one proficiency band on the school's evaluation tool.

▶ **Retention of top teachers, and a pipeline of future leaders:** Providing a "transitional" role between the classroom and formal school leadership allowed top teachers at Samuels to grow as leaders while still doing what they love: teaching students directly. Along the way, they sharpened instructional leadership skills that would help them succeed in a formal leadership role.

Erin's experience shows that giving teachers opportunities to grow and apply their leadership skills in teacher leader roles can lead to lasting change.

Design Tech High School – Redwood City, California

DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING

Design Tech High School (DTHS) was built on the principles of design thinking, a problem-solving method developed at the Stanford Design School. When applied to real-world challenges, the method develops self-efficacy, collaborative confidence and emotional intelligence. Students learn to adopt feedback as useful and actionable information, as well as embrace the idea that they'll need to work hard to overcome inevitable setbacks during a project.

This approach has also influenced how leadership engages staff members in problem-solving and change management. The school uses a tried and true democratic approach to decision-making: for any school-wide initiative or decision, big or small, the idea is shared as a proposal at a full-staff meeting and culminates with a public vote.

DTHS Executive Director Dr. Ken Montgomery recently used this process to help transition the school from a traditional grading model to competency-based grading—something that was part of his long-term vision for the school when it first opened in 2014.

By 2017, Dr. Montgomery was ready to take on the transition from a traditional grading model but knew that this transition, like all other decisions at his school (big or small), would need to happen in concert with his staff. He spent the 2017-2018 school year educating his team about what competency-based grading was, sharing research and data to support his thinking and bring teachers along with him. He held numerous conversations with teachers and leaders across campus, listening for questions, concerns, and sentiments that would influence his overall proposal to staff.

During the vote on the change, each staff member raised a hand and gave the proposal a "fist-to-five" vote to share their level of enthusiasm and buy-in on the proposed initiative. Zeroes or "fists" would have veto power, although anyone voting a zero or one must stand up and share their reasoning for their vote.

This initiative was approved by the staff and the democratic approach sent clear messages to teachers that their opinions have weight as part of a true team process. It also provided leadership with a barometer to gauge enthusiasm for the

initiative. For example, had the initiative "passed" the vote with all 1's and 2's, it would have indicated a need for additional fine-tuning.

The team at DTHS then spent the 2018-2019 school year planning for the shift, collaboratively developing the strategies, systems and structures that would enable a strong launch of the new grading system. They brought in family and student voice to ensure all stakeholders were involved in the process and provided ample time for fine-tuning and addressing any questions or concerns from their full school community.

They launched the new structure in the 2019-2020 school year, and though there are still the hiccups and challenges that come with the launch of any major initiative, the team at DTHS have a clear and compelling reason for the shift and are in the work together, supporting and learning from each other as they undertake a new way of operating.

Mastery Charter School, Cramer Hill — Camden, New Jersey

TRANSPARENT DECISIONS

When school leader Jessie Gismondi has a difficult decision in front of her, she gives her staff the opportunity to help make the final call. This was especially evident in 2017, her second year as a school leader, when the staff was frustrated by the frequent need to cover for absent teachers. With a low-quality external substitute teacher pool, Principal Gismondi turned to her staff to help cover classes when other teachers were out. Often these decisions left teachers reeling with upended schedules at the last minute. Frustrations mounted and Jessie was hearing it from teachers across her campus. She had to find a better way.

In the interim, she and her leadership team covered as many absences as possible but knew this wouldn't be a sustainable (or effective) long-term solution to the issue. But she had an idea that she knew would work. By increasing the number of students per class from 26 to 28 across her campus, her school could afford to pay for two in-house substitute teachers the following year. Reliable, in-house trained staff members that would know her students, school systems, and routines would be able to effectively cover for absent teachers. Rather than make this decision in isolation, Principal Gismondi turned to her team. She effectively modeled "closing the loop" on teacher feedback by laying out the facts and framing her idea as a solution to her teachers' frustrations. She used a team meeting toward the end of the school year to preview this solution to teachers, soliciting their feedback and surfacing any potential concerns with the idea.

Most importantly, by laying out the budgetary implications, she gave her teachers and staff a window into the decisions that school leaders often face. With a better understanding of the reason for the trade-off, teachers were not only more bought-in, they also took ownership of the solution, reducing the potential blowback from increased class sizes. Now, planned and unplanned teacher absences have a strong and stable solution rooted in both teacher and student best interests.

PART 2: FOUNDATIONAL STRATEGIES

Our conversations with school leaders and teachers across a diverse set of schools show that while there's no one "right" way to support stronger teacher voice and engagement, there are several clear foundational strategies that, when combined with the right leader mindsets, can shift any school's culture in the right direction.

SHARED VISION

Having a clear, collaboratively defined academic and cultural vision can be a powerful tool for staff engagement and student achievement. Combined with strong and inclusive communication practices, fostering a shared vision is one of the top three elements of instructional leadership most closely associated with student achievement.[5]

The benefits of a strong professional community—one in which there is a shared vision and culture of teacher collaboration—persist even when job satisfaction dips. One study found that third and fifth-grade students in schools with strong professional communities scored significantly higher on math assessments despite having teachers that were dissatisfied with their jobs.[6]

To be sustainable, though, any vision needs to reflect the voice of all stakeholders. That means teachers, but also students and families. Strategies for creating a shared vision include:

▶ Bringing together critical stakeholders to create an inclusive strategic plan for your school or network and ensuring multiple opportunities for the voices of all staff members, students, teachers, and other community organizations to influence the conversation.

▶ Creating subcommittees to allow stakeholders to more deeply influence the aspects of the vision they care most about. Some teachers may care deeply about academic routines, while others may care more about parent engagement.

▶ Frequently sharing out what you're hearing with all stakeholders and see what resonates before setting the final vision.

▶ Having clearly defined decision-making protocols to ensure clarity and transparency in how decisions and priorities will be set when there are differences of opinion.

BOTTOM-UP INITIATIVES

When presented with the statement, "my opinion seems to matter at work," teachers in one study were the least likely of 12 professions surveyed to agree.[7] This lack of input and control is what causes some teachers to leave the classroom. Often, school leaders conflate giving teachers input with asking for feedback on a pre-baked plan or after the implementation of

---

[5] Ingersoll, Richard M.; Sirinides, Philip; and Dougherty, Patrick. (2017). School Leadership, Teachers' Roles in School Decisionmaking, and Student Achievement. CPRE Working Papers.

[6] Neena Banerjee, Elizabeth Stearns, Stephanie Moller, and Roslyn Arlin Mickelson, "Teacher Job Satisfaction and Student Achievement: The Roles of Teacher Professional Community and Teacher Collaboration in Schools," American Journal of Education 123, no. 2 (February 2017): 000.

[7] Langhorn, Emily (2018, July 11) The Teacher-Powered Schools Movement: Transforming Teachers From Industrial Workers To Professionals. Retrieved from http://forbes.com

an idea has already begun. This kind of input, while important, is no substitute for actually helping to make the decision in the first place. Staff members are much less likely to resist change when they've had a hand in shaping it.

To take things a step further, we must also consider the directionality of initiatives and strategies. In our conversations at schools with strong staff cultures, there seemed to be opportunities for teachers to bring new ideas and strategies to the table for school-wide implementation. The one-two punch of change driven from the top down and the bottom up creates a dynamic organization where hierarchy matters less, and quality ideas can come from any level.

In a school context, this could look like leading data-driven conversations (without a preconceived outcome in mind) and allowing the staff to generate solutions to issues you're seeing in your student data. Leaders can also create regular opportunities for bottom-up idea generation by simply asking different questions in existing meetings. Imagine a typical department chair meeting with a principal where the school leader comes with an agenda of items to discuss and disseminate through their respective departments. Now, imagine a department chair meeting where the school leader is asking for updates from team leads on new ideas or strategies coming from conversations with their teams. Making explicit time and space for ideas and strategies to flow in multiple directions, along with strong communication practices to recognize and celebrate the impact of teacher voice and decision-making, can have a real impact on creating a positive staff culture.

CLOSE THE LOOP

Organizations are built by people, and relationships among people are built on dialogue and strong communication. But in schools, conversations between leaders and teachers too often flow in just one direction, with school leaders sending out information while teachers have few opportunities to provide feedback—and even fewer instances in which their feedback gets a response.

By having more two-way conversations, and by closing the communication loop through sharing and responding to feedback, school leaders can send a message that staff voices are heard and valued. This approach also models the growth mindset many school leaders want to see infused into interactions between teachers and students.

Consider staff surveys. Many schools implement a biannual school survey model, taking a pulse on a variety of school quality indicators, the results of which are shared with school administrators. In some cases, hitting the "submit" button on the survey is the last that teachers hear of it until the next survey administration, creating the feeling that feedback is not actually reviewed and not knowing what, if anything at all, has been done in response. This may be why only 60 percent of teachers believe their principal is willing to learn from them.[8] That's unfortunate, since research shows that simply responding to feedback and closing the loop is a larger driver of employee engagement than whatever action resulted from the feedback.

Schools that struggle with closing the loop with their teachers may need to look closely at the structure of their feedback processes. If feedback rolls up to a centralized administrator, that individual or team frequently becomes a bottleneck. This approach may also diminish ownership among leaders who have responsibility for taking action. By building a culture of transparency around feedback, you will allow and enable leaders throughout your school to act more swiftly and feel ownership over the information that's shared back with teachers.

---

[8] QISA & TVAIC, 2015

LEADERSHIP BELIEFS

Critical to successfully implementing any foundational strategy is a core belief in the value of teacher voice, viewing it as an essential component to the success of a school community. Through our conversations with school leaders that have demonstrated success at engaging and including teacher voice, we've identified a set of common beliefs that have supported and enabled leaders to successfully engage staff.

Leader of Leaders. School leaders must see themselves, first and foremost, as the developers of their staff's leadership capacity.[9] The success of any organization is largely dependent on how its top leader inspires and leads other leaders.

Traditionally, school principals have viewed themselves as the sole authority in the school, either making decisions in isolation or only consulting a small leadership team. Too often, the mindset is "we know best," assuming teachers want clear direction from the leader.

However, a leader of leaders takes a different approach. They listen, learn, and guide instead of just telling. They allow for mistakes, within reason, and help everyone on their team develop the ability to make the right calls on their own. A leader of leaders sets up systems and structures differently, systems that inherently demonstrate trust and value in the voices of others. They also clearly understand that as principal, you don't have all the answers.

School leaders can demonstrate this belief through the following actions and mindsets:

Trust and empower people to make smart decisions in the best interest of students. As we all know, there are often multiple paths to the same outcome. School leaders with strong staff cultures, where teachers feel heard and valued, often give increasing levels of autonomy to proven teachers. They enter conversations with their teams with a listening and learning orientation, open to differing strategies and comfortable allowing teachers and teams to try different things. Leaders with strong cultures aren't afraid to go beyond best practices to try something new. They accompany a bias toward action with strong progress-monitoring structures to ensure they know when things are working and when they aren't. They know it's not possible to do it everything well themselves, so they develop and trust those around them to take ownership of strategy and outcomes.

Value people as individuals with unique emotions, strengths, and needs. Creating space for teacher voice is about more than getting buy-in. Leaders who truly value teacher voice believe deeply in the value of including all stakeholders in decision-making. They believe in their people and their potential. They're transparent about who and what they're looking for in great teachers, but they take the time to understand teachers as individuals and find ways to maximize their unique strengths.

Quiet the Ego. Many school leaders need to make a shift from a "heroic management" perspective—one based on self—to an "engaging management" perspective based on collaboration and the idea that their main job is to help teachers serve their students as effectively as possible. They're humble—because ego can have a debilitating effect on leadership—and they avoid treating teachers and other staff like a means to an end (results). Instead, they ask their staff how they can help them do their jobs better—and then they really listen.

> **"Our leaders are very humble — they don't have arrogance. If something's not working, they switch it. They'll keep trying it until we figure out what works." - Mastery Cramer Hill Teacher**

Foster growth, development, and a leadership mindset. Creating a culture of growth and development is no easy feat, especially when considering the myriad tasks on a school leader's plate. But there are clear benefits to doing so, including easing the burden of school leadership in the long run. Stanford University Professor Carol Dweck has spent decades studying the distinct ways individuals view intelligence and learning, and her research had profound implications for how leaders foster a growth mindset among their teams that drives learning, growth, and innovation. School leaders who believe in their staff's leadership potential create strong, consistent feedback loops, engaging teachers in improving their craft and equipping them with the skills to make smart instructional decisions on their own.

---

[9] Stronge, J. H., Catano, N., & Richard, H. B. (2008). *Qualities of Effective Principals.* Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

TRANSPARENT DECISIONS

Too often, school leaders share major decisions in a way that breaks trust and leaves teachers feeling confused about why and how the decision was made. Teachers want to be respected as professionals, and that means leaders can't take a "we know best" approach to management.

A metacognitive approach, highlighting the constraints at hand and thought process in coming to a decision, can help teachers better understand and ultimately get on board with decisions that might be controversial but were made in a thoughtful and intentional manner. In short, it's not enough to just share the "what" of your decisions. Teachers want and deserve to know the "why" and the "how."

By increasing transparency, you'll also help important decisions turn into the right actions more efficiently. When you share more of the context for a decision, you're signaling to staff that they are leaders and should be aware of how and why decisions are made so that they too can make aligned decisions.

Further, research suggests that employees' trust in their organization grow as their perceptions of transparency increase.[10] The most important components of this transparency-trust relationship: the information shared should be useful and hold the organization accountable.

School leaders can use the following strategies to bring greater transparency to their decisions:

▶ Share the "why" and "how" behind decisions.

▶ Make sure it's clear who is making the final decision.[11] Teachers should know from the beginning what their roles are in the decision-making process, whether it's providing feedback or input, or making the decisions themselves. If school leaders have final say, that should be made clear.

▶ Work toward the fullest consensus possible, while maintaining the right to sway from consensus if that is best for students.

▶ Take ownership for sharing the right information and ensuring that everyone is operating from a common understanding before making critical decisions.

    ✓ Build a culture of support by championing all team decisions, even ones where you didn't "get your way." By modeling consensus teamwork, you'll help your staff work in concert with your leadership team and each other more effectively.

KNOW YOUR PEOPLE

To build successful school teams, leaders should have an in-depth understanding of each teacher, both professionally and personally.[12] In our conversations with teachers at schools with strong staff culture, academic results, and staff retention, teachers frequently brought up the positive and deep relationships that existed between teachers and leaders. In

[10] Rawlins. (2008). *Measuring the relationship between organizational transparency and employee trust.* https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1884&context=facpub

[11] Forbes. (2017). *7 Rules Naturally Clear Leaders Follow When Making Decisions.* https://www.forbes.com/

[12] Rieg & Marcoline. (2008). *Relationship Building: The First "R" for Principals.*

conversation after conversation, we heard teachers share stories of the personal relationships school leaders had built with them, and how they felt personally and professionally understood by school leadership.

In many of the schools we spoke with, school leaders used instructional coaching with frequent in-person, one-on-one meetings to better get to know teachers. Often, this looked like intentionally using time at the beginning of each meeting to get to know teachers better, ask about their personal lives, and better understand them as people. When leaders create supportive environments for teachers, they strengthen school culture.

One teacher at Mastery Cramer Hill Upper Charter School put it this way:

> "The administration here cares about us as people. It opens the door to being honest to how we feel — we don't have reservations about sharing what bothers us, they don't take it personal."
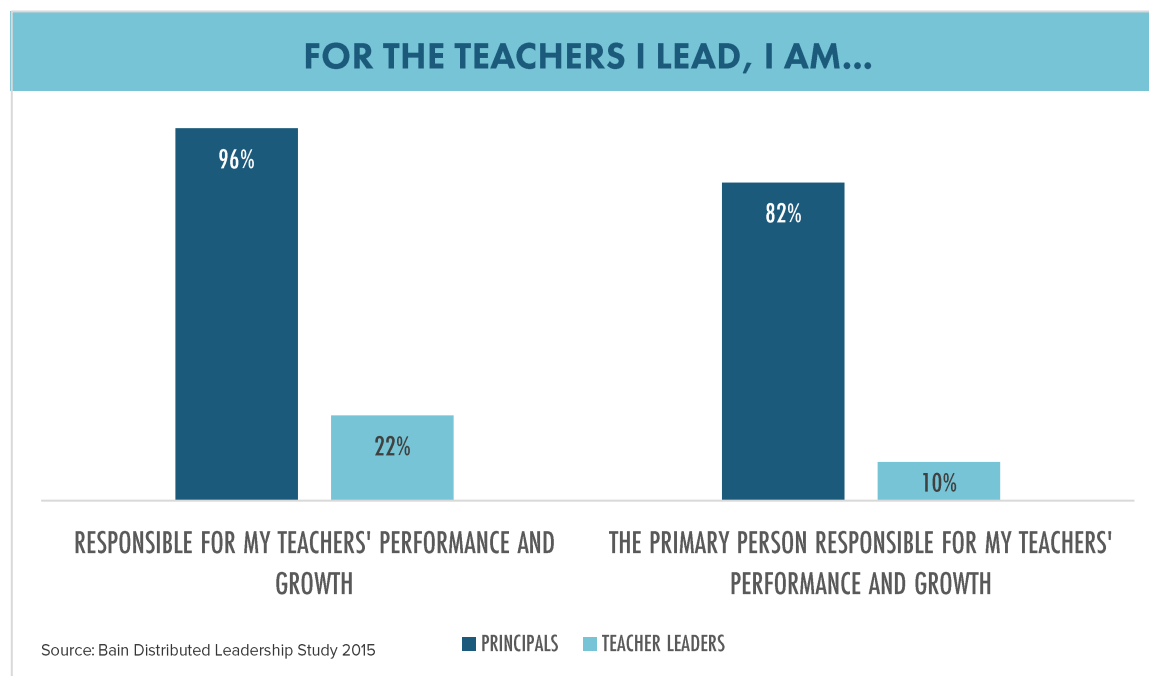
School leaders can build relationships with teachers in the following ways:

▶ Develop opportunities to get to know your staff during new teacher onboarding each year.

▶ Talk to teachers about more than just school issues. Spend some time learning about what is going on in their lives and share what is going on in your life.

▶ Recognize the good work that teachers are doing daily, whether during faculty meetings, in personal notes, or through daily announcements.

▶ Look for opportunities to accommodate staff needs. Making adjustments for teachers to leave early to attend family events shows that leaders care.

▶ Don't be afraid to have difficult conversations with teachers. Instead of letting frustrations build, invite teachers to have conversations with you about school changes or policies they disagree with. In addition to allowing teachers to feel heard, it opens the door for potential solutions.

EMPOWER TEACHER LEADERS

According to school leaders, teacher empowerment is one of the most effective strategies for retaining teachers.[13]

Bain recently surveyed more than 4,200 teachers, assistant principals, and principals at school systems of varying sizes throughout the United States and found that few school systems distribute leadership in ways that are common among most successful organizations. While many districts are investing heavily in new leadership roles—upwards of 25 percent of teachers have taken on a teacher-leader title, for example—their research shows that very few of these additional leaders feel responsible for the performance and growth of the teachers they lead. [14]

FOR THE TEACHERS I LEAD, I AM...

96%	82%
22%	10%
RESPONSIBLE FOR MY TEACHERS' PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH	THE PRIMARY PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR MY TEACHERS' PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH

Source: Bain Distributed Leadership Study 2015   ■ PRINCIPALS ■ TEACHER LEADERS

High levels of teacher leadership within schools is linked to greater student achievement. In particular, having a voice in student discipline policies and school improvement planning has the highest impact on student outcomes.[15]

School leaders can help empower teacher leaders using the following shared leadership strategies:

▶   Clearly define teacher-leadership opportunities and ensure the application and selection process is transparent and fair.

▶   Provide teacher-leaders with the release time from the classroom necessary to lead and effect change.

▶   Create an environment of shared responsibility and accountability and ensure teacher-leaders are receiving the coaching and feedback needed to reach their goals.

---

[13] Mallory, B.J., & Melton, T. D. (2009, October). Leadership dispositions, behaviors, and strategies to support teachers.
[14] Bierly, Doyle, Smith, Bain & Company (2016), Transforming Schools

[15] Bain Distributed Leadership Study, 2015

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Shared Vision

Empathy Interview Protocol: An interviewing and meeting methodology that can assist in ensuring alignment and true understanding of another person's perspective.

Establishing Your Vision for Students: A guide to establishing a shared vision that can be used to guide your school through a transformation process.

San Francisco Community School Commitments: An example of how one school outlines the responsibilities individual teachers must take on in order to demonstrate a commitment to the whole team's values.

Discussion Starters for Creating Teacher-Powered Schools: Ideas and language for schools beginning on the path to creating a shared vision.

Bottom-Up Initiatives

PELP Problem Solving: A problem-solving approach to designing and implementing a strategy to improve performance.

Brainstorm Rules: A step-by-step guide to productive and efficient brainstorming.

Close the Loop

Discussing Employee Survey Data Protocol: A simple cycle of inquiry protocol that can be utilized with a variety of data sources.

Standing Morning Meeting: A sample daily meeting agenda based off Design Tech High School's approach.

Principal Weekly Memo Template: An example of communication highlighting school priorities and celebrating strong teacher practice.

Transparent Decisions

Consensus Based Decision-Making Process: A process for making group decisions.

Budget Transparency Report and Meeting Agenda: A meeting template for school leaders to share key budget updates and obtain staff input on budget priorities and tradeoffs.

Know Your People

Taking the Staff Temperature Protocol: A protocol designed to encourage teacher voice and productive discourse regarding frustrations and concerns.

Story of Self: An example of pre-work outlining how to write and share stories of self, asking staff members to turn inward and reflect on their own journey in life and education.

Working Styles Template: A set of guiding questions for both parties in a management relationship to better get to know each other and their approaches to work.

Empower Teacher Leaders

Collaborative School Committee: An example of school leadership team roles, responsibilities, and structures from a traditional school district.

MOCHA Decision-Making Protocol: A process for assigning clear roles and responsibilities when projects involve multiple people.

Teacher Career Pathways: An example from one school district of teacher career pathway principles and types of leadership opportunities for teachers.

Leadership Initiative for Teachers: An example of leadership and teacher career pathways.