

Knowles Teacher Initiative: Teacher Leadership Principles and Habits of Mind

At Knowles:

- Teacher Leadership means having a positive impact on education beyond your own classroom.
- Teacher Leadership can and does emerge organically.
- Teacher Leadership is collective, not individual.
- Teacher Leadership means teachers are change agents.
- Teacher Leadership means teachers are the primary agents of educational improvement.

The Practices of Teacher Leadership

Inviting others into your teaching practice	<i>Teacher leaders invite others into their teaching practices, creating a site for learning. In doing so, they support collective learning with other teachers and across the broader educational community, including administrators, parents, and community members. By inviting others into their teaching practice, teacher leaders have the power to arrive at new and deeper understandings, positively influence or disrupt the status quo, and encourage others to do the same with their own practice.</i>
Collaborating with others	<i>The positive change that teacher leaders strive for is best achieved through collaboration. Teacher leaders recognize that relationships are foundational for change work, and value the time and energy dedicated to building and sustaining these meaningful relationships. Through collaborations, teacher leaders are able to enjoy a diversity of ideas, experiences, and perspectives that improve the quality of their vision and their work. Relationships are also sustaining and sources of joy in teacher leadership work.</i>
Understanding the system	<i>Teacher leaders take a systems-level view of their work. They consider social systems of power and privilege influencing their practice and communities. They understand that by design, most educational systems are designed to reproduce inequity and reinforce white dominant culture, and they apply this lens in considering their leadership work. Within their smaller system, they consider interconnected elements of a system such as resources, roles, members, norms, and goals when evaluating leverage points for positive change, and understanding outcomes.</i>
Taking action	<i>Teacher leaders apply their knowledge, relationships, and understandings of their systems to take meaningful action toward positive change. These meaningful actions vary in type,</i>

	<i>size, and scope. Teacher leadership action can look like disrupting harmful instances of exclusion, spearheading curricular changes that better serve students, supporting colleagues in classroom inquiry, elevating student voices, engaging parents as partners, initiating new professional learning opportunities, and much, much more. Teacher leaders learn, reflect, but also act in service of educational improvement.</i>
Advocating for self and others	<i>Teacher leaders understand that by design, most educational systems are designed to reproduce inequity, and keep a keen eye for when their voice is needed, and when they can elevate the voices of others. Teacher leaders are actively working toward more equitable and just systems, and speak up against instances of oppression. They advocate for fair, inclusive, humanizing schools for teachers and students, and work to keep teacher and student voices centered in educational change.</i>
Cultivating other teacher leaders	<i>Teacher leaders look for ways to widen the community of teacher leaders. Their leadership action is inclusive and creates space for colleagues to engage in leadership action as well. Teacher leaders empower other teachers by helping them to recognize the value in their knowledge and perspectives, encouraging them to engage in leadership work, and by making space for them to do so, when they have the opportunity to influence available roles and participation.</i>

The Habits of Mind of Teacher Leadership

Collective responsibility	<i>Fellows recognize the importance and power of the collective in creating and sustaining change.</i>
Valuing perspectives within the community	<i>Fellows work collaboratively with other teachers to initiate, own and critically evaluate improvement efforts that benefit their own students and have the potential to ultimately benefit all students.</i>
Situating work in equitable practices	<i>Fellows recognize that local, national and global societal factors have an impact on the education system and address these factors in improvement efforts.</i>
Stance toward Knowledge Sharing	<i>Fellows generate and share knowledge of, from and in teaching in ways that support educational improvement in classrooms, districts and beyond.</i>