

TLC System Implementation FAQs

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A1: What should a district do if it is unable to fill all of the teacher leadership roles described in its approved TLC plan? The law requires a “good faith effort” to attain participation by 25% of teachers in a leadership role. Accordingly, districts should have developed a plan that includes teacher leadership roles that enabled them to reach this target and should have engaged in recruitment efforts to encourage teachers to apply for these roles.

If a school district has taken the steps above and is unable to attract enough teachers that meet their selection requirements to fill their proposed teacher leadership roles, the district should consider possible adjustments to their plan that would enable it to maximize the number of teachers in leadership roles while also holding a high selection bar. Districts might consider adjusting their plan to either create a new leadership role or to add an additional leadership role to an existing category such as a mentor or model position that might draw a stronger applicant pool. In some cases, the solution may be to create more roles that are not full-release positions, but instead are a hybrid of teaching and partial release for leadership activities.

If you have questions on how to address this challenge, please contact Lora Rasey or Becky Slater. In addition, if a district decides to change the type or number of teacher leadership roles in its plan (or does not attain participation by 25% of teachers and chooses to leave positions unfilled), the district must request approval from the Director of the Iowa Department of Education (see question 16 for information on the process to request a change).

A2: If a district selects the Instructional Coach model and has existing instructional coaches, do these coaches need to have taught in the district for one year to be eligible to remain in their position? No. The legislation requires that “a teacher assigned to a leadership role must have at least three years of teaching experience, and at least one year of experience in the school district.” Accordingly, instructional coaches who have three years of teaching experience and who have at least one year of experience in the district would be eligible for an instructional coach role.

A3: Is an annual review required for teacher leaders and, if so, does the review require peer feedback? Yes. The legislation requires an annual review of a teacher’s assignment to a leadership role by the school’s or school district’s administration. The review must include peer feedback on the effectiveness of the teacher’s performance of duty specific to the teacher’s leadership role. Peer feedback should come from the teachers served by the teacher leader. Feedback from the other district teacher leaders could also be included.

A4: The legislation states that “a teacher assigned to a leadership role must have at least three years of teaching experience, and at least one year of experience in the school district.” Given this, how is “experience in a school district” defined? For the purposes of the Teacher Leadership and Compensation System, “experience in a school district” consists of a full year or more of employment by the school district (not necessarily in a teaching position) in which the teacher leader would be employed. The full year of employment does not need to be contiguous to the current year. In the case of a district forming a consortium to implement their teacher leadership and compensation plan, a full year of employment in at least one of the participating districts would meet this definition. In addition, a teacher leadership candidate must have at least three years of teaching experience (though that teaching experience does not need to be in the district in which they are currently employed).

A5: Are school counselors and interventionists eligible to participate in a school district’s teacher leadership and compensation plan? The focus of the Teacher Leadership and Compensation System is on strengthening the content instruction and pedagogical skills of classroom teachers. If a counselor or interventionist meets the requirement to be eligible for a teacher leader role (i.e. holds a valid teaching license, has three years of teaching experience and one year of experience in the district), then they could apply for a teacher leader role.

A6: If our school district already has teacher leader positions (e.g. mentors, instructional coaches), will they have to go through a selection process if we are approved to enter the system? Yes. The legislation requires a rigorous selection process for placement into and retention in teacher leadership roles. Because the legislation is very detailed in the requirements of the process, existing teacher leaders will need to complete the selection process. The process must include: the use of measures of effectiveness and professional growth to determine suitability for the role; a selection committee that includes teachers and administrators who shall accept and review applications for assignment or reassignment to a teacher leadership role and shall make recommendations regarding the applications to the superintendent of the school district; an annual review of the assignment to the leadership role by the school’s or school district’s administration.

A7: Do teachers who are selected for a leadership role need to reapply for that role each year? Yes. School districts, however, have some discretion in the format of the reapplication/renewal process. Teacher leadership roles are designed to be annual assignments. According to the legislation, teachers in leadership roles are required to complete “an annual review of the assignment to a teacher leadership role by the school’s or school district’s administration. The review shall include peer feedback on the effectiveness of the teacher’s performance of duty-specific to the teacher’s leadership role. A teacher who completes the time period of assignment to a leadership role may apply to the school’s or the school district’s administration for assignment in a new leadership role, if appropriate, or for reassignment.” Districts could design a streamlined renewal process for teachers in leadership roles as long as the process meets the requirements of the legislation stated above.

A8: Will there be training for teacher leaders and for administrators who will be working with teacher leaders? The Department of Education is working with the TLC Statewide Support System to provide knowledge and skill building opportunities for teacher leaders as they take on these new roles and for administrators in school districts with approved teacher leadership plans. An AGORA site has been created with helpful resources for school districts implementing their TLC plan. These resources include: On-Demand Learning, Community Forums, Toolbox, Schools, and Events. The events calendar includes all statewide TLC training opportunities.

A9: How should districts develop contracts for positions funded through the Teacher Leadership Supplement (TLS)? School districts would create **separate, one-year, non-recurring contracts** for these positions. These contracts would take two forms: *“Teacher Leader Contracts”* for teachers taking on leadership roles and *“Teacher Resident Contracts”* for teachers new to the profession. *“Teacher Resident Contracts”* would be used only by school districts that add additional contract days, duties, or responsibilities for first-year teachers new to the profession.

“Teacher Leader Contracts” and *“Teacher Resident Contracts”* should include the following components:

- Description of the duties and responsibilities for the specific role.
- The number of additional contract days required for the specific role.
- The compensation amount for the specific role.
- *“Teacher Leader Contracts”* should also include a timeline for the role, including the expiration date for the role and the date by which the teacher leaders must reapply if they choose to remain in that role.

A10: How will TLS funding be allocated in regards to whole grade sharing? TLS funding moving from one district to another may be negotiated between whole-grade sharing districts. Districts that are whole-grade sharing need to consider the TLS funding in their whole-grade sharing negotiations occurring now for next school year and beyond. TLS funding is provided under chapter 284 of Iowa Code. Chapter 284 funding is required to be considered in new or existing agreements for whole-grade sharing (Iowa Code 282.10(4)).

A11: How will TLS funding be allocated in regards to Open Enrollment? The board of directors of the district of residence shall pay to the receiving district any moneys received for a pupil under Sec. 26. Section 284.13, subsection 1, paragraph e, subparagraph (1) if the pupil is participating in open enrollment under section 282.18 and **both** the district of residence and the receiving district are receiving an allocation under subparagraph (1).

A12: Will school districts continue to receive the current teacher mentor money? If your district is approved to receive TLC funds in 2014-15 (or 2015-16 or 2016-17), it **may** be possible that you will not continue to receive the teacher mentor funds in future years. The Department will inform school districts as soon as additional information is available. For FY16 mentor money will continue to be available to all school districts.

A13: What are the allowable uses of TLS funds? The legislation allows TLS funds to be used only for the following purposes: to raise the minimum salary in a district to \$33,500, fund the salary supplements for teachers in a leadership role, cover the costs for the time teachers in leadership roles are not providing direct instruction in a classroom, cover the costs when teachers are out of their classroom to observe or co-teach with another teacher, provide professional development related to the leadership pathways and to cover other costs (which must be approved by the Department of Education) associated with the approved Teacher Leadership and Compensation plan.

A14: Can TLS funds be used to hire permanent substitutes? No. While TLS funds can be used to cover the costs for the time teachers in leadership roles are not providing direct instruction in a classroom, BOEE rules prohibit the hiring of permanent substitutes to fill a position and districts are not allowed to start the year with a substitute in a classroom unless certain situations exist (such as the long-term absence for medical purposes of a teacher assigned to a classroom).

A15: If the school district's TLC application is approved and it has not used all of the allocated planning grant dollars, can the unspent money be used as additional funding for specific parts of the plan? No. The school district can, however, continue to spend these funds on planning for implementation. While the district would not be able to, for example, add remaining planning funds to the supplemental pay for teacher-leader roles, it could use these funds for costs related to the transition from planning to implementation (e.g. things such as any costs associated with the selection committees for choosing the teacher-leaders or monitoring the implementation of the plan).

A16: Can a school district make changes to its TLC plan after the Commission approves the district's TLC plan? Yes. School districts that wish to make changes to their plans should use the TLC Plan Change Request Form. Districts will be asked to describe the change, the rationale for the change, and the level of support for the change. Please submit a separate form for each change you request. If you need to upload supporting documents that don't fit within the form (e.g., budget spreadsheets) please email them to Becky Slater. All changes will be approved by Director Wise.

A17: Can pre-kindergarten teachers be included in teacher leadership roles? Yes. Pre-Kindergarten teachers may serve in a teacher leader role if they meet the requirements for all teacher leaders (i.e. a valid teacher license, 3 years of teaching experience, and one year of employment with the district). In addition, they can be served by teacher leaders (e.g. included in an induction program, work with an instructional coach). Regarding funding, the TLC budget is calculated using Certified Enrollment. Accordingly, transitional kindergarten programs are included, but 4 year old preschool is not included in the calculation of per pupil funding for TLC.

A18: Will the Department conduct a program evaluation of the TLC system? Yes. The program evaluation will focus on the primary goals of the TLC system: attracting able and promising new teachers, retaining effective teachers, promoting collaboration, rewarding professional growth and effective teaching, and improving student achievement by strengthening instruction. In addition, school districts were required to identify local goals and to describe how they would measure the effectiveness of its TLC plan. School districts will eventually complete TLC reporting requirements in the annual Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP). The Department has a year-end reporting process based on Part 8 of district plans. The Department is currently working with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to develop a formal evaluation process for all TLC districts.

A19: What is the intersection between the TLC system and the peer review legislation from 2012? Under Iowa Code section 284.8(1), school districts are required to conduct annual, rather than every third year, reviews of non-probationary teacher performance. The first and second years of such reviews will be “conducted by a peer group of teachers.” The Iowa General Assembly specifically prohibited peer reviews from being used as the basis for recommending that a teacher be placed in an intensive assistance program. As such, the peer review is intended for the purposes of coaching and improvement. For school districts implementing a teacher leadership and compensation plan, there is an opportunity to include peer review into the roles and responsibilities of their teacher leaders. Model teachers, mentor teachers, and instructional coaches are all examples of teacher leader roles that could be involved in the peer review process.

A20: What options are available if a school district is unable to find a replacement for a teacher selected for a leadership role? The Board of Educational Examiners is able to provide assistance in increasing the potential applicant pool, as well as exploring licensing options (e.g. Class B license) for potential candidates for hard-to-fill positions. Please contact Joanne Tubbs for additional information. In addition, Iowa Learning Online (ILO) currently provides 9 courses in an “offer and teach capacity” and has expanded its “offer and teach” courses for each semester. Please contact Gwen Nagel for more information.

A21: Will school districts need to include teacher leadership roles in BEDS reporting? Yes. Districts will provide information in the BEDS staff collection about the TLS roles and compensation.

A22: Will there be a growth factor attached to the Teacher Leadership Supplement? Yes. If the Legislature continues to take that action. TQ PD, Early Intervention/Class Size, TSS, and TLS are eligible for State supplemental aid if the Legislature decides to approve such an increase.

A23: If a school district enters the TLC system and continues to receive State funding for mentoring, does that district need to revise and resubmit its mentoring plan? Yes, if the district has changed its mentoring plan as part of its TLC application, then the district would need to update its mentoring plan accordingly. Please contact Marietta Rives, Program Consultant, Bureau of Educator Quality at the Department of Education.

A24: How will the expenditure of both planning grant funds and TLC funds be monitored and audited by the Department? Both will be required for inclusion on the district's Certified Annual Report. That report looks broadly at purposes of spending. These funds are also subject to the annual local audit.

A25: Can a school district use TLC funds to cover the TSS portion of the contract for teachers hired to cover the time when teacher leaders are not in the classroom and/or the TSS portion of the contract for teacher leaders? The legislation states that TLC funds may be used to cover the costs for the time teachers in leadership roles are not in the classroom. In districts that need to hire teachers to replace teachers taking on leadership roles, part of the cost involved in hiring a replacement teacher is the TSS portion of the teacher's compensation. Therefore, TLC funding may be used toward the full cost, including the TSS portion of the contract, of teachers hired to cover the time when teacher leaders are not in the classroom (school districts, however, are not required to use TLC funds in this manner). Because teacher leaders will come from within the district, TSS funds should continue to be used to fund the TSS portion of a teacher leader's contract.

A26: Can a National Board Certified teacher continue to receive the annual award if he or she accepts a teacher leadership position? Yes, provided that the teacher meets the requirements specified in Iowa Code section 256.44. Specifically, to continue to receive the award, a teacher leader's duties must include providing instruction to students (which may include co-teaching, providing demonstration lessons, or modeling effective teaching strategies and practices) for a portion of their time. Please contact Tana Mullen if you have any questions regarding eligibility requirements.

A27: Are there guidelines for the purchase of technology and other possible miscellaneous expenditures that fit into the "other costs" category of the school district's TLC budget? The Department will use the following criteria to consistently make a determination on these requests:

- 1) Has the district met each of the "must-have" requirements of the plan and, in particular, does the district have at least 25% of its teaching force in leadership roles, or a plan in place to reach 25% participation?
- 2) Has the district described, in detail, how the purchase is essential for the effective implementation of the plan?
- 3) Will the purchased equipment/software/item be used solely for the purpose of implementing the district's TLC plan?

This process allows the Department to ensure:

- a) Districts have first fulfilled the most critical components of their plans before addressing supporting components;
- b) Districts have made a clear case for these purchases that would withstand public scrutiny; and
- c) The purchase is aligned to TLC and not just an effort to buy something for broader use.

A28: Are the results of the peer review of the teacher leader for the purpose of TLC shared with the site-based council/selection committee in considering whether to recommend them for reassignment to the position? Teacher leader positions are one-year assignments and their performance is to be reviewed annually by the school's or school district's administration. The annual review is to include peer feedback on the effectiveness of the teacher leader's performance in the role. The site-based council (Models 1 and 2) or selection committee (Model 3) – made up of teachers and administrators - is to consider measures of teacher effectiveness and professional growth, the needs of the school district, the performance and professional development and the competency on the Iowa Teaching Standards in making their recommendation to the superintendent for assignment or reassignment of the teacher leader applicant. The application process (e.g. the materials presented to the site-based council/selection committee) for the initial assignment and for the subsequent reassignment is a local decision to be determined by the school district.

A29: What is the project code for TLC funding? In the first year a school district implements its approved Teacher Leadership and Compensation plan, payments flow from a separate \$50 million allocation. This funding is a categorical grant. In subsequent years, the Teacher Leadership Supplement (TLS) becomes a categorical funding stream included on the aid and levy worksheet. For districts participating in a consortium, year one funding is allocated directly to the fiscal agent. Funding for subsequent years is calculated on each participating district's aid and levy worksheet based upon their certified enrollment.

Districts should account for the first year's grant in Source/Project 3387. A district that acts as a fiscal agent should account for its own TLC funds in the general fund using Source/Project 3387 and should account for the other district's funds in the agency fund. The district not receiving its own funds directly will receive the appropriate accounting entries from the fiscal agent and account for its own revenue, expenditures and fund balance in its own general fund.

In subsequent years, funding will come through the Aid and Levy for each district separately. Each district will account for its TLC funds in the general fund using Source/Project 3116.

A30: Is the requirement for a good faith effort to have 25% of teachers in leadership roles based on the number of teachers before or after implementation of TLC? For example, we released and replaced five teacher as a result of TLC implementation. Do we base our 25% on the number of teachers before or after releasing and replacing those teachers? The good faith effort to ensure 25% of teachers are in leadership roles should be based on the total number of teachers in a school district the year prior to TLC implementation. Exceptions include significant changes in staff levels that occur after implementation.