

Teachers are some of the most creative people on the planet! By nature, teachers are drawn to learning, experimenting, and creating. Sadly, we have seen too many education “innovations” come and go without ever tapping into the voice and perspectives of teachers. We believe that teacher voice should be an essential component for any education innovation, from beginning conversations to decision-making, and certainly during the implementation process.

In innovative schools, we consistently observe teachers who are engaged at all levels of improvement efforts. Teachers are collaboratively designing, implementing, sharing insights, critiquing, discussing student work, redesigning—and constantly analyzing effectiveness with the clear purpose of continually improving their practices and the school community as a whole.

### **Teacherpreneurs**

We frequently hear teachers express an interest in exploring an innovative practice, but they struggle to find the time or appropriate space in which to act upon their innovative idea. A recent MetLife study found that 84% of teachers are not interested in becoming a principal, but 23% are interested in some type of teacher-leader role. What if you could be a teacher and lead as an innovative entrepreneur? Some are exploring the role of teacherpreneur—“a teacher who leads without leaving the classroom. Teacherpreneurs are leaders in their communities and schools and fulfill complex roles as education experts, counselors, policy advocates, and more. These are teachers who take on leadership roles but do not leave the classroom for administrative positions (principal, etc.)” (Urban Dictionary, 2023). Now that is an innovative idea in its own right—creating a pathway for passionate teachers to remain in the classroom, but also act upon innovative ideas in a leadership role. Imagine the potential impact if we embraced this concept of “teacherpreneurs” and unleashed the innovative, creative side of teachers, allowing them the time and space to lead beyond the walls of their classroom.

It is important to provide opportunities for teachers to innovate and lead from their current position. “A brilliant and talented heart surgeon would not be told, “Wow! You are such a skillful heart surgeon! Why don’t you become a hospital administrator? Or why don’t you take charge of the hospital pharmacy? You are such a talented surgeon; therefore, we think that you should do something else.” This surgeon would instead be encouraged to continue his or her practice, continue refining surgical practices, share techniques and strategies with colleagues, and perhaps teach and practice at a medical research hospital where others could learn from such an expert” (Quaglia & Lande, 2016). Structures and pathways should be created within school systems for teachers to put their innovative practices on display and to lead improvement efforts.

If given the opportunity, teachers can become innovative trailblazers and lead from the very role they are in. Valuing and listening to teacher voice is at the heart of successful innovation in schools.

### References:

- Berry, B., Byrd, A., & Wieder, A. (2013). *Teacherpreneurs: Innovative teachers who lead but don't leave*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Quaglia, R. J., & Lande, L. L. (2016). *Teacher voice: Amplifying success*. Thousand Oaks, CA:



If today you were formally given the title of “Teacherpreneur”, what innovative idea would you want to explore and put into practice? Boxes and lines defining spaces are intentionally omitted from this page. Go crazy! Write upside down or sideways on the paper, or don’t use words at all! Draw a picture representing your innovative idea, or share your idea in a creative way we haven’t even thought of yet.

Do not wait for an official title—be a “Teacherpreneur” today!