

DELAWARE TEACHER LEADERSHIP TOOLKIT JULY 2025



In partnership with the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE), Rodel launched the Statewide Teacher Leadership Innovation Committee to bring together a diverse group of educators from across the state to design a bold, equity-centered vision for teacher leadership in Delaware.

From October 2023 through June 2025, 18 teachers representing 11 Local Education Agencies (LEAs) across all three counties participated in the committee. Their charge was to co-create an innovative, culturally responsive model for teacher leadership that centered both teachers and students. This work built on earlier efforts that highlighted the need for more inclusive definitions of school leadership and positioned cultural proficiency as essential to advancing equity in schools. Committee members developed a statewide toolkit for teacher leadership that includes:

- A shared definition of teacher leadership grounded in cultural proficiency and equity
- A detailed teacher leader profile that outlines key mindsets, skills, and competencies
- A glossary of common terms to promote shared understanding and language
- A self-assessment rubric to help identify and develop culturally proficient teacher leaders
- A readiness assessment to help school systems create the conditions needed to foster and sustain effective teacher leadership

The committee's work is grounded in data from Delaware-based teacher leadership pilots, national and local frameworks, and educator perspectives collected through interviews and focus groups. Together, the committee reimagined the role of teacher leadership in strengthening retention, improving student outcomes, and cultivating more inclusive school environments.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1

Why is joy foundational to the Profile of a Teacher Leader?

In an effort to lead for equitable outcomes, to cultivate new policies and practices rooted in cultural responsiveness, joy is the foundation of the Profile of a Teacher Leader. The definition, as you'll see in our glossary, is more than being happy or having fun. As Dr. Gholdy Muhammad explains in her text *Unearthing Joy: A Guide to Culturally and Historically Responsive Teaching and Learning*, joy requires the teaching of truth about our histories, before and after oppressions, enslavement, or colonization, as well as the celebration of our individual genius and beauty. Understanding truth inspires not only awareness, but also self-exploration and growth. Muhammad explains that joy is the “key to interrupting all that has not served children or educators well. Schools are reflections of society, so as long as there is hurt, pain and harm in society, we will see them come into our schools, which makes joy even more important. Students can only benefit from what we are offering when learning is connected to their worlds and their joy” (p. 86). When joy is centered, teacher leaders and children will grow the skills to navigate hardship and adversity, to become resilient beings who recognize that joy is not temporary.” It is sustaining a long-lasting form of happiness, self-liberation, and self-beauty of the mind and the heart” (p. 85).

2

What is the purpose of the Teacher Leader toolkit?

The Teacher Leadership Toolkit provides a comprehensive set of resources to help K–12 schools and districts in Delaware cultivate and sustain inclusive, joyful, and equity-centered teacher leadership. It includes tools for self-assessment, readiness evaluation, and shared language through a glossary, all anchored in a bold, reimagined profile of teacher leadership.

3

How do District Leaders use the toolkit?

District leaders play a pivotal role in shaping the conditions that enable teacher leadership to thrive. They should use the toolkit to:

- **Anchor Vision and Strategy:**
 - Use the *definition and profile* of a teacher leader to guide the district's teacher leadership strategy, job descriptions, recruitment, and evaluation practices.
 - Reference the *glossary* to ensure a shared understanding of key equity-centered and culturally responsive terms across district offices and schools.

- **Evaluate Readiness and Improve Conditions:**
 - Complete the *Readiness Assessment*, with a team of district/school staff, to evaluate existing district-level systems and structures supporting teacher leadership. This includes policies, funding, time allocation, and professional learning
 - Use results to identify gaps and prioritize actions—such as co-developing a teacher leadership mentor program or allocating structured time for teacher leader collaboration.
- **Foster Systemic Support:**
 - Ensure district leaders and principals are trained to provide effective support and feedback to teacher leaders in alignment with the *Teacher Leader Self-Assessment Tool*.

4

How do Building Leaders use the toolkit? (Principals and School Leadership Teams)

School leaders are essential to cultivating site-based teacher leadership that is meaningful and sustained. They should use the toolkit to:

- **Establish a Shared Vision:**
 - Use the *teacher leader definition and profile* to communicate a clear vision for teacher leadership grounded in equity, joy, collaboration, and innovation.

5

How do Educators and Teacher Leaders use the toolkit?

Current and aspiring teacher leaders can use the toolkit for personal and professional growth and to advocate for systemic change.

- **Reflect on Practice and Growth:**
 - Use the *Self-Assessment Tool* to reflect on personal strengths and areas for growth across four core domains: Cultivator of Joy, Innovator of Change, Collaborator of Change, and Facilitator of Change.
 - Set personal goals based on reflection and use the tool to guide coaching or peer feedback conversations.
- **Lead with Equity and Joy:**
 - Draw on the toolkit's emphasis on joy, equity, and critical consciousness to design and lead initiatives that reflect and respond to the needs of students, families, and staff.
- **Advocate for Change:**
 - Use the *Glossary* and *Teacher Leader Profile* to communicate the value and purpose of teacher leadership to peers and leaders.

Collaborate with colleagues to use the *Readiness Assessment* as a conversation starter for shifting culture and structures at the school or district level.

HOW CAN DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS SEQUENCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TOOLKIT?

1



District and school leaders introduce the Definition, Profile, and Glossary to Build and share language.

2



School teams and teacher leaders complete the Readiness Assessment to evaluate current conditions.

3



Teacher leaders complete the Self-Assessment Tool individually and in teams to guide growth and planning.

4



District and school teams analyze results and co-create action steps to improve supports, roles, and impact of teacher leaders.

GLOSSARY

1

Cultural Responsiveness:

DDOE defines culturally responsive education as intentionally acknowledging and valuing the diversity, contributions, and experiences of every educator and learner by providing opportunities for individuals to see themselves and others in their learning.

2

Critical Consciousness:

The ability to “perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” Freire, P. (1974). *Education for critical consciousness*. Seabury Press.

3

Cultural Proficiency/Competence:

Understood as educators’ capacity to teach students from racial and ethnic backgrounds other than their own. Cormier, D.R. (2021). The cultural proficiency continuum dialogic protocol: An emergent tool for assessing and codifying preservice teachers' cultural competence. *School-University Partnerships* 14(1), 8-23.

4

Joy:

Joy is a transformative force in education and teacher leadership, grounded in truth-telling, cultural celebration, and self-affirmation. It involves teaching honest histories—before, during, and after oppression—and honoring the brilliance and beauty of every learner. As Dr. Gholdy Muhammad describes, joy is not fleeting; it sustains growth, resilience, and healing. When teacher leaders center joy, they create learning spaces that connect to students’ lived experiences and foster long-lasting happiness, self-liberation, and inner strength—for both educators and students alike.

4

Equity:

Ensuring that every student has the resources, support, and opportunities they need to thrive—recognizing that true equity means meeting students where they are, not where we assume they should be. It’s not about offering the same to all, but about intentionally addressing the diverse strengths, talents, challenges, and contexts each student brings to ensure meaningful and just outcomes for all.

DEFINITION AND PROFILE OF A TEACHER LEADER

Delaware's Teacher Leader Profile defines a **critically conscious educator** who champions equity and drives transformational change. Grounded in the belief that every learner deserves a high-quality, student-centered education, a Delaware Teacher Leader is a **Collaborator, Facilitator, Innovator, and Cultivator of Joy**—working in partnership with students, families, colleagues, and communities.

PROFILE OF A DELAWARE TEACHER LEADER



Teacher Leaders:

- **Collaborate for change** by co-creating equitable practices and uplifting student identities.
- **Facilitate for change** by leading inclusive, culturally responsive classrooms and advocating for those historically excluded.
- **Innovate for change** through reflection, empathy, and a commitment to continuous growth.
- **Cultivate joy**, recognizing its essential role in creating thriving, liberated learning communities.

A TEACHER LEADER IS A CRITICALLY CONSCIOUS CHANGE-MAKER WHO:



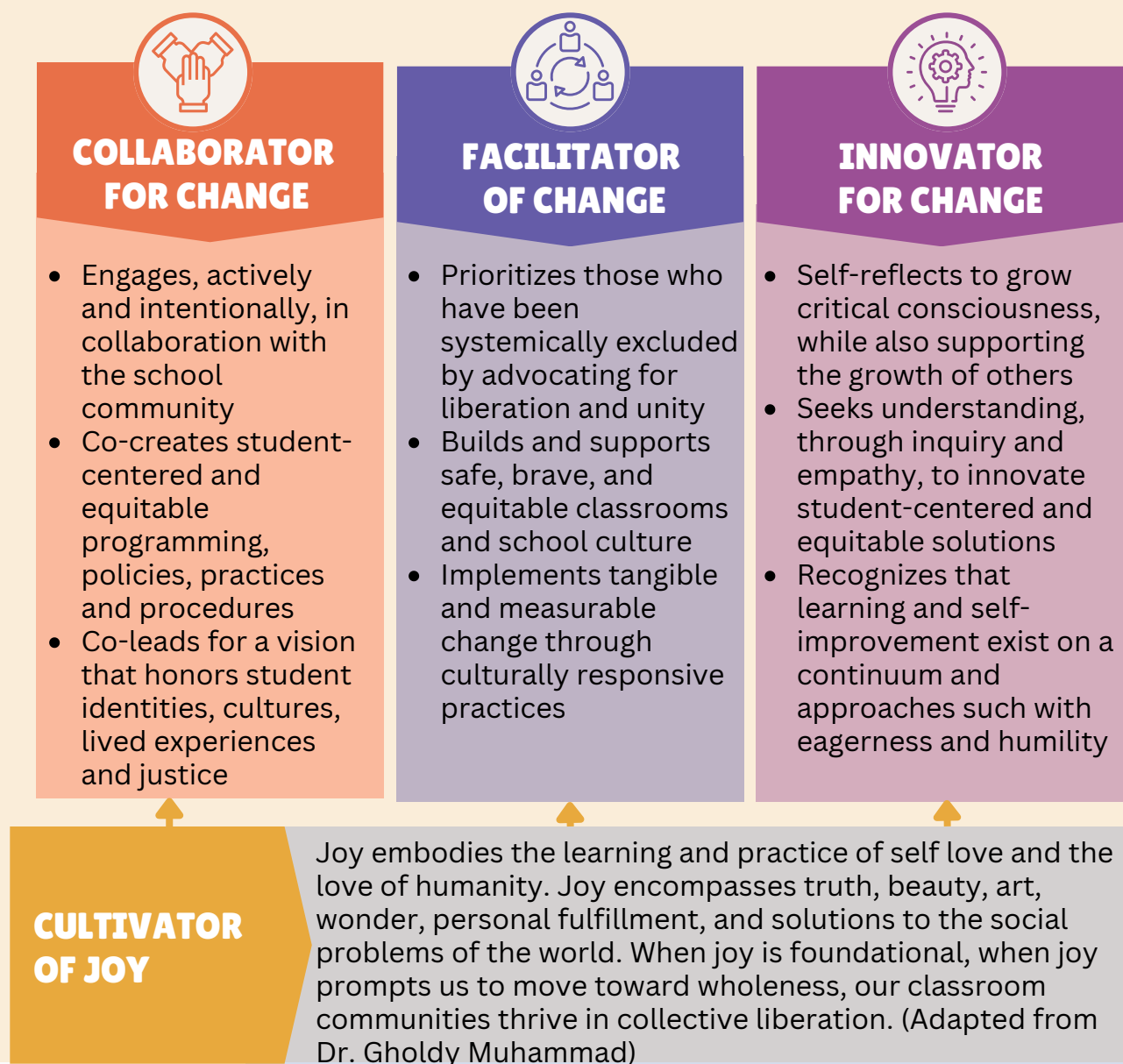
- 1 Intentionally and consistently self-reflects
- 2 Prioritizes joy
- 3 Seeks and embraces opportunities to support individual and collective growth
- 4 Centers student, teacher, community, and family voices
- 5 Advocates for shared power and empowers others
- 6 Passionately works to restructure norms through an equity lens

This profile aligns with the Delaware Department of Education’s vision and mission by:

- Promoting shared leadership and innovative practices that empower every learner.
- Advancing equitable access to excellent educators, particularly through teacher-led initiatives.
- Supporting rigorous instruction and safe, identity-affirming environments that nurture college, career, and life readiness.
- Engaging families, schools, and communities in shaping inclusive and just educational systems.

Through this vision of teacher leadership, Delaware builds the conditions for every student and educator to thrive.

PROFILE OF A DELAWARE TEACHER LEADER



SCHOOL READINESS ASSESSMENT

Directions for Completing the Readiness Assessment

Thank you for participating in this Readiness Assessment. Your insights are critical to understanding how well your school or district supports teacher leadership and equitable, student-centered practices. This assessment is organized into three focus areas:

- **Culture & Climate**
- **Roles & Responsibilities**
- **Systems & Structures**

Each section includes a series of statements that describe ideal conditions for effective and equitable teacher leadership. Please rate each item based on your experience or observation using the Likert scale provided.

How to Respond

For each item, select the number that best reflects how true the statement is in your current context:

Rating	Meaning
1	Strongly Disagree – Not at all true in our setting
2	Disagree – Rarely or inconsistently true
3	Neutral – Sometimes true; varies depending on context
4	Agree – Often true and regularly practiced
5	Strongly Agree – Consistently true and well-embedded in practice

Tips for Completion

- Please respond to all items, even if your knowledge is limited—your perspective is valuable.
- Base your ratings on actual practices, not aspirations or intentions.
- If you're unsure about an item, think about what's typical or most recent in your setting.
- You may be asked to complete this as an individual or as part of a team discussion—your facilitator will clarify the format.

CULTURE & CLIMATE

Needs Assessment Items	Rating
There is a joyous and inclusive school culture that seeks to understand student, family, and educator needs.	
Our school culture is culturally responsive and centers the individual needs and interests of our school community members to create a space of belonging.	
School leaders encourage and support a school culture of growth, reflection, and continuous improvement wherein all staff are empowered to provide feedback.	
School leaders prioritize addressing the role bias plays in our school culture and support our individual growth and development of critical consciousness.	
Teachers, staff and community members advocate for student needs, as well as equitable practices and resources that support effective teaching and leading.	
Teachers are supported in engaging in a collaborative work process through shared responsibility and leadership opportunities.	
At this school, teacher leaders are actively involved in decision making and provide input on important matters that affect them and those they lead.	
School leaders regularly convene with teacher leaders and students to collaborate, review, co-plan strategic approaches and decisions.	
School leaders value the expertise and experience teacher leaders bring to their roles, the school, and the profession.	
Teacher leaders are encouraged to engage with colleagues in individual and collective reflective dialogue, using evidence (both quantitative and qualitative) to make connections to our practice.	
Culture & Climate Average Rating	

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

There is a clear vision, rationale, and moral purpose for teacher leadership in our school community, grounded in equity, inclusivity, and the belief that joyful, collaborative leadership benefits all students.	
Role clarity exists through accessible and inclusive job descriptions, organizational charts, contracts, and shared norms that reflect community values and support diverse pathways to leadership.	
School leaders elevate teacher leaders by providing credibility, public recognition, and shared authority in ways that affirm their identities and contributions, and foster a joyful, purpose-driven school culture.	
District leaders promote equity by recognizing, supporting, and empowering teacher leaders as co-creators in decision-making and champions of joyful, student-centered learning environments.	
Time is intentionally protected for inclusive planning and collaboration, ensuring space for shared reflection, innovation, and connection.	
Teacher leaders have access to high-quality, equity-centered protocols and tools that support inclusive adult learning and cultivate professional joy and growth.	
School leaders co-construct expectations with teacher leaders, aligning them with school and district priorities through transparent, inclusive processes that honor community voice and lived experience.	
Roles & Responsibilities Average Rating	

DISTRICT SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES	
District leaders support a culture of teacher leadership.	
District leaders provide a clear vision, rationale, and moral purpose for teacher leadership.	
District allocates funds to support teacher leadership at the building and district level.	
District allocates time to support teacher leadership at the building and district level.	
District offers or promotes professional development to support teacher leadership.	
District leaders provide time and space for teacher leaders to connect with other teacher leaders.	
District leaders have co-created a teacher leadership team or council.	
District leaders have co-designed a teacher leadership mentor program that supports the development of critically conscious future teacher leaders.	
District leaders reflect and commit to continuous improvement and evolution of teacher leadership.	
District Systems and Structures Average Rating	

SCHOOL SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES

Teacher leaders are provided with adequate time to engage in leadership activities without compromising their teaching responsibilities.	
School leaders align teacher leadership with school improvement efforts that innovate for change.	
School leaders and teacher leaders co-create a schedule that supports teacher leadership.	
Teacher leaders collect and have access to data (both quantitative and qualitative) to support their leadership role.	
Teacher leaders have training in supporting other teachers and/or facilitating innovative and collaborative team sessions.	
School leaders provide a variety of teacher leadership opportunities and are open to student-centered and equitable solutions.	
School leaders provide space for teacher leaders to connect with other teacher leaders.	
School leaders are trained to provide feedback on teacher leaders' performance in alignment with the Teacher Leader Self-Assessment Tool.	
School Systems & Structures Average Rating	

INTERPRETING YOUR READINESS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

This readiness assessment helps illuminate how well your school or district is positioned to support **critically conscious teacher leadership**—leadership that centers equity, cultivates joy, and shares power to transform schools.

Below is an interpretation of your domain-level results, including tiered recommendations and how they align with this profile:

CULTURE & CLIMATE		
If Rating is Low (1–2):	If Rating is Moderate (3):	Rating is High (4–5):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin by building trust and community through listening sessions with staff, students, and families. • Launch equity-focused professional learning to support critical consciousness and inclusive practices. • Create opportunities for Collaborators for Change by empowering teacher leaders to co-design school values and climate goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepen collaboration by instituting shared inquiry cycles, where teacher leaders and school leaders address challenges together. • Train teacher leaders to lead data-informed, reflective dialogues. • Activate Facilitators for Change by equipping teacher leaders to model growth mindsets and continuous improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustain momentum by spotlighting Innovators for Change—teacher leaders who center joy, equity, and community voice. • Document and share promising practices with other schools or districts. • Expand opportunities for teacher leaders to shape schoolwide strategy through formal structures.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

If Rating is Low (1–2):	If Rating is Moderate (3):	If Rating is High (4–5):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-create a shared vision of teacher leadership using the Delaware Teacher Leader Profile. • Clarify roles and responsibilities via transparent descriptions and pathways. • Begin training for teacher leaders as Facilitators and Collaborators, focused on liberation and community co-leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align leadership roles with school improvement goals and student-centered priorities. • Provide planning time and protocols to support collective growth and equity-focused collaboration. • Affirm teacher leader identities through public recognition and authentic inclusion in decision-making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use role clarity to scale impact—develop teacher leader mentor programs and differentiated leadership tiers. • Center joy and sustainability by embedding time for reflective leadership practice and shared authority.

DISTRICT SYSTEMS & STUCTURES

If Rating is Low (1–2):	If Rating is Moderate (3):	If Rating is High (4–5):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene district leaders, school leaders, and teacher leaders to create a shared purpose and structure for leadership. • Invest in systems to elevate teacher voice—such as councils, advisory groups, and affinity spaces. • Resource professional development aligned to cultivating Facilitators and Innovators for Change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize funding and scheduling structures that normalize leadership beyond the classroom. • Provide cross-district spaces for teacher leaders to collaborate and lead together. • Launch pilot initiatives that showcase teacher leadership’s impact on culture and outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codify and scale what works—develop public frameworks, sustainability plans, and onboarding tools. • Encourage districts to serve as learning labs or case studies for joyful, equity-driven teacher leadership.

SCHOOL SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES

If Rating is Low (1–2):	If Rating is Moderate (3):	If Rating is High (4–5):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit schedules and teaching loads to ensure leadership time is protected. • Provide foundational training in peer facilitation, equity, and data use. • Elevate teacher leaders as Innovators who address pressing challenges with empathy and curiosity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-design schedules and feedback systems that align to the Teacher Leader Self-Assessment Tool. • Embed leadership in team structures, PLCs, and data teams to ensure visibility and relevance. • Support leaders in cultivating joy through reflection and student-centered innovation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand and diversify leadership opportunities across grade levels and disciplines. • Build infrastructure for feedback, goal-setting, and professional advancement aligned to the teacher leader profile. • Spotlight systems that foster sustained joy and shared ownership of school improvement.

Across every domain, the Delaware Teacher Leader Profile provides a powerful blueprint for transforming culture, roles, and systems. Your next steps should be driven not only by scores, but by a commitment to nurturing teacher leaders who:

- **Reflect deeply,**
- **Act with joy,**
- **Center the collective,** and
- **Restructure systems with equity at the core.**

SELF ASSESSMENT

In alignment with both the Definition of a Teacher Leader and the Profile of a Teacher Leader, this self-assessment rubric offers teachers an ongoing reflective practice tool that will help guide professional learning, increase equitable outcomes for our learners, and empower educator agency. In addition, it shifts teacher leader priorities from compliance and performance to student-centered action and collective liberation.

- To begin using this tool, rate yourself honestly based on the **Novice -> Developing -> Proficient** scale. Consider recent experiences with your learners, your colleagues, the community you serve, and your relationship with innovation, facilitation, collaboration and joy.

Novice	Developing	Proficient
I do not do this in my practice.	I try to do this in my practice, and sometimes notice equitable and positive effects on my school community.	This is a strength of mine: I can adapt it to fit my school community's needs and consistently notice equitable and positive outcomes.

- In the “Evidence” section, describe real examples from your work. This might include:
 - A time you co-revised curriculum with your learners
 - Moments when you coached peers or led reflective dialogue
 - Data you gathered and used to guide a culturally responsive lesson that honored learners’ lived experiences
 - Partnerships you’ve cultivated with families, caregivers and/or community members
- **Example Entry (Collaborator For Change):** I recognize and celebrate my intersectional identities, and I intentionally encourage colleagues and students to do the same.
 - **Self-Rating:** Developing
 - **Evidence:** I co-designed a digital story project where students honor their social and cultural identities through art, technology and narration. I also shared my own experiences growing up in an immigrant household and how it shapes my perspectives in and out of the classroom. This creates a stronger sense of connection and authenticity in our learning community.

INNOVATOR OF CHANGE

- Self-reflects to grow critical consciousness, while also supporting the growth of others
- Seeks understanding, through inquiry and empathy, to innovate student-centered and equitable solutions
- Recognizes that learning and self-improvement exist on a continuum and approaches such with eagerness and humility

ACTIONS	Novice	Developing	Proficient	EVIDENCE
As a teacher leader...				
I engage in collaborative, inquiry-based research in my school to drive student-centered, equitable solutions.				
I identify and reflect on the root causes of inequity and leverage my strengths to seek continuous growth.				
I prioritize empathy and engage my colleagues in reflective dialogue, using evidence to make connections to practice.				
I challenge existing conditions and support others' growth to build collective responsibility and efficacy for change.				

FACILITATOR FOR CHANGE

- Prioritizes those who have been systemically excluded by advocating for liberation and unity
- Builds and supports safe, brave, and equitable classrooms and school culture
- Implements tangible and measurable change through culturally responsive practices

ACTIONS	Novice	Developing	Proficient	EVIDENCE
As a teacher leader...				
I create an inclusive learning environment and school culture by centering students' lived experiences and intersectional identities in the learning environment and activities I create, cultivate and lead.				
I advocate for student needs, as well as equitable and culturally responsive resources that support effective, student-centered teaching, learning, and school culture.				
I build, support and advocate for equitable classrooms that prioritize physical and physiological safety, and empower students and educators to lead for change.				
I elevate and empower the voices of members of the school community who have been and continue to be systematically excluded.				

COLLABORATOR FOR CHANGE

- Engages, actively and intentionally, in collaboration with the school community
- Co-creates student-centered and equitable programming, policies, practices and procedures
- Co-leads for a vision that honors student identities, cultures, lived experiences and justice

ACTIONS	Novice	Developing	Proficient	EVIDENCE
As a teacher leader...				
I create opportunities to engage with colleagues, families, students and community partners to co-design equitable programming, student-centered experiential opportunities, and a culturally responsive school environment.				
I partner with students to challenge oppressive school wide policies, practices, and programming and to inspire equitable outcomes.				
I work with colleagues, families, students and community partners to ensure that learner choice, lived experiences, and intersectional identities are honored.				

CULTIVATOR OF JOY

Joy embodies the learning and practice of self love and the love of humanity. Joy encompasses truth, beauty, art, wonder, personal fulfillment, and solutions to the social problems of the world. When joy is foundational, when joy prompts us to move toward wholeness, our classroom communities thrive in collective liberation. (Adapted from Dr. Gholdy Muhammad)

ACTIONS	Novice	Developing	Proficient	EVIDENCE
As a teacher leader...				
I prioritize joy as a learning goal to strengthen community and support a safe school environment.				
I recognize and celebrate who I am, and I intentionally encourage colleagues and students to do the same.				
I actively seek to understand power, inequity and justice in education.				
I work with colleagues, families, and students to address social challenges and break down barriers in our school communities.				
I foster a school/classroom community where students lead with joy and liberation, both individually and collectively.				

RESOURCES BY DOMAIN

Innovator for Change:

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