Who is the instructional leader in your school? Your answer to this question will largely depend on your training, experience, and philosophy. Some administrators choose to empower selected teachers with responsibilities of instructional leadership. This type of leadership can flourish in schools that have abandoned the traditional, hierarchical teacher-supervisor relationship for a collegial approach that encourages teachers to actively improve instructional efforts through collaboration (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2006). Such practice places teachers in the foreground of instructional improvement and supervisors in a resource role.

Classroom teachers can serve as instructional leaders to plan, execute, and assess staff development.

Such responsibility can lead to successful outcomes as evidenced by one school’s teacher-led technology training.

Sharing instructional leadership responsibilities helps develop collegiality among faculty members.
Teacher training and staff development are opportunities to empower teachers and develop a collegial atmosphere. By giving teachers an active role in the content development, planning, execution, or assessment of staff development, administrators empower them and make them feel valued. Such empowerment encourages teachers to place importance on achieving outcomes and quality performance (see Glasser, 1999, 1995).

Further, research has identified several benefits of a collegial approach: Teachers develop a sense of efficacy, become more effective, and develop a belief in "a cause beyond oneself" (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2006, p. 50). The school becomes more pleasant for students and faculty and staff members. And collegial school communities are more likely to achieve their goals (Glickman et al).

Teacher Leadership
Harrisonburg City (VA) Public Schools has been vigilant about purchasing and maintaining new technology. The school system has also spent a great deal of energy training teachers to use it. Such training may have equipped teachers with the skills they need to effectively use the technology, but it did not guarantee that they would incorporate it into their classroom lessons. As an incentive, the school division offered monetary rewards to teachers who wrote lessons that integrated technology and content. Some teachers still would not or could not integrate technology into their lessons, citing a lack of time. In an attempt to address this complaint and increase integration efforts, Thomas Harrison Middle School successfully implemented teacher-led staff development training for instructional technology.

The school set aside a staff development day for technology-related curricular integration, and the administrators offered three teachers the opportunity to plan, conduct, and assess the event. Those teachers/instructional leaders (TILs) began by developing a clear objective: teachers should come away from the training able to develop lessons that integrate technology into their existing curricula. The TILs felt that a great deal of time and energy had already been spent training teachers to use the available technology, so little time should be set aside for direct training. They also looked for examples of teacher-created products that teachers were using with students in their classrooms.

In preparation for the training, the TILs presented the objective to the entire teaching staff at a faculty meeting and modeled several examples of effectively integrated technology products that fellow teachers had developed and used in their classrooms. They encouraged teachers to assemble into collaborative teams by department or academic teaching team. Most teachers chose to work in groups, but a few teachers chose to work independently on unique projects.

Next, the teachers selected a project and identified any additional training they needed and included that information on a short form that they gave to the TILs. On the basis of that information, the TILs mapped out a schedule for a training day that was modeled after a professional conference. The TILs identified several teachers in the school who had particular expertise in certain areas to lead training sessions and provide teachers with instructional handouts and rubrics of effective technology integration.

The day began with short sessions for teachers who had requested specific instruction in various hardware and software applications. Next, the teams had a large block of time to work on lessons and products that they could use in the classroom. During that time, the session leaders were available for assistance. Later, teachers...
were grouped by curricular area and met for a small-group sharing session, which was led by a facilitator. During this session, teachers were encouraged to share their ideas and give and receive feedback. At the end of the day, the entire faculty met and the teams had the opportunity to present their products to the group. Although few products were fully completed, all the teams had a respectable start and plans for completing their work.

After the event concluded, the TILs asked teachers to fill out a short assessment of the training. Most responses were positive and included requests that the event be repeated. Many teachers commented that they enjoyed the opportunity to work with their colleagues to create a product to improve learning in their classrooms. A common criticism was that the event should have been held earlier in the year. A few teachers mentioned that they did not enjoy being required to participate, but they were glad that they did. Such comments are not unexpected among a diverse group of teachers.

**Courage and Trust**

Harrison’s administrators placed the role of instructional leadership in the hands of capable teachers, which led to an effective and meaningful staff development experience. But delegating leadership roles to faculty members requires some degree of courage and trust because, ultimately, staff training and performance is the responsibility of the administrative team. Therefore, it is especially important that administrators recognize and choose individuals who are capable of being successful instructional leaders.

Effective supervision requires “knowledge, interpersonal skills, and technical skills” (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2006, p. 123), any of which, certain teachers may not possess. Before allowing a group of teachers to administer a large staff development event, school administrators should know their teachers’ leadership and organizational skills. It may be wise to first delegate small tasks and responsibilities that gradually lead to opportunities on a schoolwide scale. Teachers earn trust through a consistent history of performance and professionalism. Administrators can also identify which of their teachers have achieved National Board Certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. The rigorous nature of this certification process recognizes skilled teachers through an unbiased and authentic evaluation of their teaching performance. Teachers who complete this certification often have leadership potential.

Teachers are professionals. Allowing them to play an active role in instructional improvement, such as staff development, capitalizes on their expertise. Regardless of the type of staff development, administrators and supervisors can trust most teachers to act as instructional leaders, which ultimately creates an atmosphere of collegiality that helps a school community achieve its goals. **PL**

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