

2016-17
End of Year
Report Summary



Fall 2017

State of Iowa
Department of Education
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Introduction

Iowa's Teacher Leadership and Compensation (TLC) System rewards effective teachers with leadership opportunities and higher pay, attracts promising new teachers with competitive starting salaries and more support, and fosters greater collaboration for all teachers to learn from each other.

The overriding philosophy of the system is multi-pronged, but boils down to this: Improving student learning requires improving the instruction they receive each day. There is no better way to do this than to empower our best teachers to lead the effort.

Through the system, teacher leaders take on extra responsibilities, including helping colleagues analyze data, assisting in fine-tuning instructional strategies, coaching, and co-teaching.

Bipartisan legislation, proposed and signed by Governor Terry Branstad, in 2013, created a four-year process to fully develop the statewide TLC system.

The goals of the TLC system are:

- Attract able and promising new teachers by offering competitive starting salaries and offering short-term and long-term professional development and leadership opportunities.
- Retain effective teachers by providing enhanced career opportunities.
- Promote collaboration by developing and supporting opportunities for teachers in schools and school districts statewide to learn from each other.
- Reward professional growth and effective teaching by providing pathways for career opportunities that come with increased leadership responsibilities and involve increased compensation.
- Improve student achievement by strengthening instruction.

Following the distribution of \$3.5 million in planning grants to all Iowa school districts in Fiscal Year 2014, the Iowa General Assembly approved \$50 million in Fiscal Year 2015. Nearly 150 school districts submitted a local TLC plan and 39 districts were selected by the Commission on Educator Leadership and Compensation. Each of these districts received more than \$308 per pupil to implement their plans.

An additional \$50 million was appropriated for the second year of implementation in Fiscal Year 2016 and 76 more school districts received funding. In Fiscal Year 2017, another \$50 million was added to the system for a total of more than \$150 million per year, enabling all Iowa school districts to voluntarily participate.

As part of the application, each school district was required to provide a description of how the district will determine the impact and effectiveness of the TLC plan, including short-term and long-term measures. This report provides a summary of the data provided in the end-of-year reports submitted by each of the 333 school districts that implemented a local TLC plan during the 2016 – 2017 school year. Each school district's complete end-of-year report is available on the Iowa Department of Education website. In addition, the Iowa Department of Education contracted with the American Institutes of Research to provide a statewide report on TLC implementation, released in 2017, that showed that nearly all (98%) of teacher leaders participating in statewide focus groups agreed or strongly agreed that TLC provides teachers opportunities to engage in high-quality collaboration with peers.

Overall Findings

The 2016-17 school year marked the first year when every district in the state fully implemented Teacher Leadership and Compensation. In all, thousands of teachers took on entirely new roles that fundamentally changed their work, allowing them to more effectively support colleagues and students while earning monetary and professional rewards for sharing their expertise.

As a result of success achieved in districts across Iowa, the program has been recognized as a model for other states and for the nation: Oklahoma has passed similar legislation, creating the conditions for teacher leadership in that state, and Senators Joni Ernst and Chuck Grassley joined forces with Senators Chris Coons (Delaware) and Jack Reed (Rhode Island) to introduce the Teachers Are Leaders Act, which would develop and support innovative teacher leader roles around the nation.

In Iowa, Teacher Leadership and Compensation has five main goals:

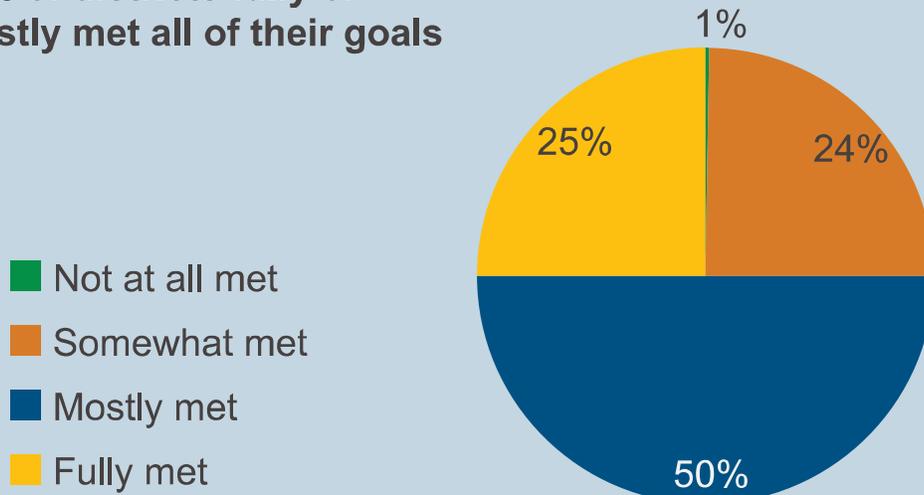
- Attract new teachers
- Retain effective teachers
- Promote collaboration
- Reward professional growth and effective teaching
- Improve student achievement by strengthening instruction

Each year, every district submits an end-of-year report to the Iowa Department of Education, reflecting on progress made toward district-selected goals. A review of these reports shows that some districts report having fully met goals, while most others are making steady progress toward meeting their goals:

- Every district in the state is implementing teacher leadership representing more 9,500 teachers in teacher leadership roles, which is more than 25% of all teachers.
- New teachers are receiving more support -- and in many cases, higher salaries.
- Most districts report stable or improved teacher-retention rates.
- Teacher-leaders are driving the implementation of the Iowa Professional Development Model, making collaboration and teacher-led trainings common practice in schools.
- Focus on instructional practices is impacting student achievement.

A review of the district end-of year reports shows that progress is being made toward each of the TLC goals.

75% of districts fully or mostly met all of their goals



This year's end-of-year reports provide a fascinating window into TLC implementation around the state. In districts with three years of experience from which to learn and others that have just completed their first year of implementation, TLC is having impact across the state:

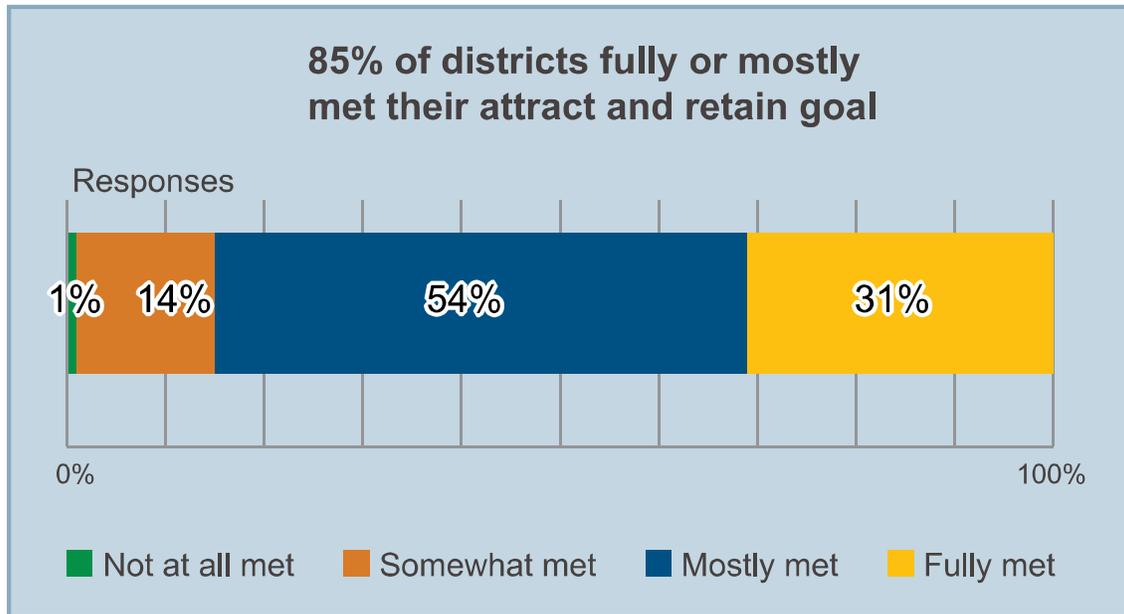
- **The majority of teachers are taking advantage of high-quality collaboration opportunities.** The end-of-year reports are consistent with focus group findings that found that nearly all (98%) teacher leaders agree or strongly agree that TLC provides teachers opportunities to engage in high-quality collaboration with peers. Individual district reports tell the stories of teachers opening their classroom doors and collaborating in ways that they never before had. Instead of finding outside consultants to run professional development, districts are harnessing the expertise of the leaders within their schools.
- **New and veteran teachers alike are experiencing the benefits of TLC.** One teacher in North Scott was quoted in the district end-of-year report as saying, "In 33 years in education, the addition of the instructional coach has been the single best thing to happen." Meanwhile, rookie teachers report that being assigned a mentor teacher has given them a trusted ally as they experience the challenges of teaching for the first time. Many districts report that over 85% of teachers in the district are experiencing the benefits of teacher leadership.
- **Collecting and using teacher feedback is becoming a habit, not an afterthought.** Many districts report that shared decision-making is now consistent practice, rather than administrators unilaterally guiding the process. According to the curriculum coordinator in Mediapolis, "The best thing about this year is that our district is getting direct feedback from teachers. They are driving their PLCs and instruction with support and assistance from our TLC Leaders. Our Teacher Leaders give us ideas that we wouldn't have thought about without them."
- **Overall, end-of-year reports show that the more time districts have been implementing TLC, the more comfortable teachers and other staff are with the new roles.** This is true of both teacher leaders and also other teachers and administrators. In Moravia and Seymour, some teachers were skeptical at first of the new roles, but as the year went on, more people they found that others were very positive about their experience with an Instructional Coach. We found that teachers were collaborating frequently, looking at data and perfecting effective instructional strategies. Then in turn, other teachers started to participate in the program." In Woodward-Granger

and many other first-year TLC implementers, this year was used for teacher-leaders to “develop relationships and trust amongst the TLC core group” whereas next year, leaders will seek “to engage teachers early and often with a more robust coaching medium.”

- **Most districts reported (a)TLC is one of several factors contributing to student achievement gains (b) confidence that as teacher leaders and others get more comfortable in their roles supporting instructional strategies, even more student success will be achieved.** Particularly districts in their first year of implementation report that they are learning a lot from the TLC system and are making adjustments to strengthen their teacher-leadership system and to better align it to student achievement gaps.

Attract and Retain

Increased base salaries in many districts and new opportunities for teachers to demonstrate leadership are helping districts to attract and retain teachers.



Strengths and Successes

- **Several districts reported retaining *all* of their teachers from 2016-17 to 2017-18.** Many of these districts made reference to how TLC contributed to this success by raising teacher salaries or by engaging teachers in new ways.
- **Smaller districts for whom retention can sometimes be challenging reported particular satisfaction with new opportunities for retention.** For example, in Woodward-Granger's end-of-year report, they noted that: "TLC has afforded us an opportunity to compete with larger schools by offering compensation within a realm of best practices. TLC has taken some of the best teachers in the district and instead of keeping them isolated in a single classroom, has afforded the District the opportunity to spread them out to share their knowledge of teaching and learning across an abundance of content areas."
- **Mentors and coaches have helped increase new-teacher retention rates.** In Council Bluffs, retention of first-year teachers has increased by 10 percent over four years to 93 percent and retention of second-year teachers has increased by 16 percent to 89 percent. The implementation of full-release mentor teachers across the district, along with mentoring and coaching, supports the increase in retention numbers. According to a second-year teacher in Pleasant Valley, "working with a coach has benefited me because I am able to discuss the challenges I am having with them. They are able to give me different ways to look at things and different things to try in the classroom. This has allowed me to improve as a teacher."
- **Salary increases were, in some cases, considerable.** In Twin Cedars, 41 percent of staff received a salary increase in 2016-2017 due to the TLC grant, helping the district retain all its new staff for the first time in four years: "We believe that the TLC grant has impacted our teacher

retention, particularly with our first and second year teachers. Before the TLC grant, these teachers' starting salary was below \$30,000." In Moulton-Udell, 74 percent of staff received a salary increase in 2016-2017 due to TLC.

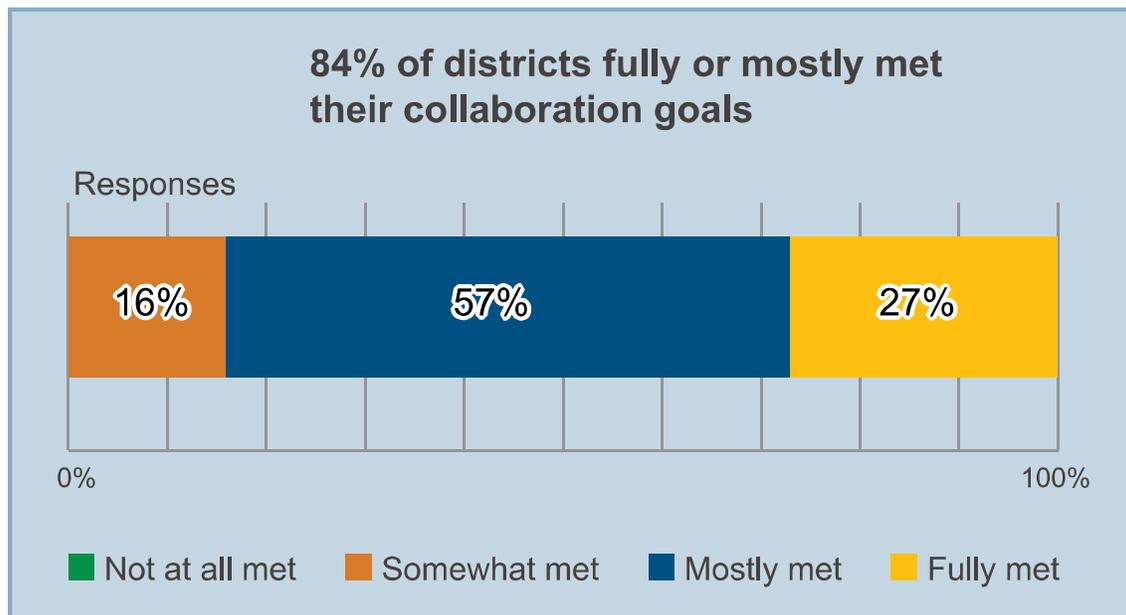
- **Some districts used TLC funding to create other ways to ease teachers into the profession.** Columbus, for example, created a novice teacher role, where new teachers teach 75 percent of the school day and spend the rest of their time in collaborative meetings, classroom observations, or planning. This way new teachers are more supported as they start their teaching careers.
- **Leadership opportunities are keeping teachers in the classroom -- and in their districts.** A survey of new teachers in Waukee showed that 95% saw themselves still in the classroom in five years. Missouri Valley reports that, "We had a 3rd year teacher who was planning on looking for a job closer to home, but decided to stay after she earned a TLC position as a mentor this year. She also reported that: 1.) She values the collaboration time that is granted through TLC and 2.) She has created meaningful partnerships with the Instructional Strategist and PLT/Lead Teachers."

Needs and Next Steps

- **A challenge may arise in which all TLC roles may be filled after several years of implementation, limiting opportunities for newer teachers to a district.** In Marshalltown, which completed its third year of TLC implementation, "Many teacher leaders are staying in their positions. This can be seen in a positive manner, as it connotes that there is satisfaction in fulfilling the role. On the other hand, it does not lend itself to as many opportunities for other teachers to take on TLC positions. Continuing to build the capacity for teacher leadership among our District staff continues to be a focus."
- **Some concern was also raised about teacher leaders who give up their roles in the classroom.** Waverly-Shell Rock wrote that although they are experiencing "widespread positive feelings" from teacher leaders and other teachers, they worried that instructional coaches would experience "a pipeline that accelerates the exit of high quality teachers and leaders from the district. Bringing new instructional coaches on board is a costly effort in terms of both professional development and loss of quality teachers from classrooms."

Collaboration

As a result of TLC, districts have made collaboration common practice, through initiatives such as peer observations, learning labs, coaching cycles, co-planning and co-teaching, and Professional Learning Communities, as identified in the Iowa Professional Development Model.



Strengths and Successes

- **More teachers are collaborating with colleagues than ever before.** For example, in West Delaware, where teacher-led professional development regularly results in 100 percent teacher satisfaction on surveys, district officials report that “collaboration is the new normal” and in North Scott, PLCs “are now becoming a daily way of doing business.” Marshalltown reported more than 12,000 collaborative planning sessions in the 2016-2017 school year, whereas Johnston reported more than 500 professional learning sessions facilitated and Linn-Mar recorded more than 700 coaching cycles.
- **Surveys and anecdotal evidence in many districts shows that collaboration is leading to improved practice.** One TLC teacher-leader in Union wrote that, “As I reflect on my earlier years of teaching, I often worked independently and certainly collaborated with only the teachers in my building. ... By working together and sharing ideas, being reflective about lessons and observing classrooms to learn from each other, coaching roles like mine are setting the stage for improved instructional practices and creating a culture where teachers feel supported to try new things.”
- **Impact of TLC is seen by both the teacher leaders and other teachers with whom they work.** In Norwalk, all K-12 TLC leaders receive formative 360 feedback at three separate times over the course of the school year. More than 93 percent of teachers agreed that TLC leaders are contributing to “the development and maintenance of a collaborative culture, building a team/school culture that is characterized by trust.”
- **New forms of collaboration are also happening within and between school districts.** South O’Brien, Cherokee, and Hartley-Melvin-Sanborn held a joint professional development day for

teachers and administrators at all three schools led entirely by TLC leaders. Exit surveys showed that 98% thought the day was a success. By working together on their TLC planning and implementation, East Buchanan, Central, Starmont, and West Central report that they are learning from one another as they look at consortium data and plan common professional development days.

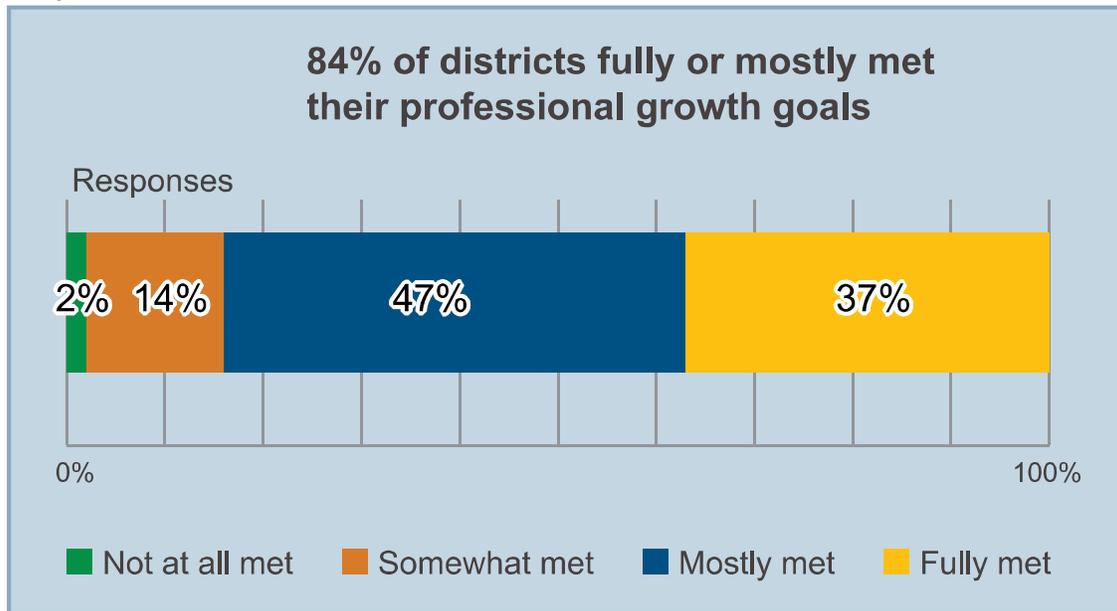
- **Smaller districts have been able to overcome historical barriers to collaboration.** In North Iowa, “where secondary teachers have many preps and may be part of a department of one or two and substitute teachers are difficult to come by for professional development and collaborative opportunities, TLC has facilitated collaboration in ways that would have otherwise seemed impossible. As instructional coaches have entered classrooms K-12, teachers have had the opportunity to meaningfully reflect on their practice and engage in co-teaching and co-planning.”
- **Teachers report that school climates have changed for the better.** In Montezuma, a teacher reported that she appreciated how she “can talk to Teacher Leaders about anything at any time and NOT feel evaluated. I enjoyed the conversation and thought-provoking questions the TLC provided in PLCs. I feel like our teaching staff is better because of it.” In Winterset, a teacher wrote that “our curriculum coach has been extremely helpful in moving my classroom forward. When she has attended PLC meetings, she has been helpful in making decisions. I appreciate having her and the knowledge she brings. It’s nice to know when I’m stuck that I have her to turn to.” In Midland, “The culture in both our buildings has changed dramatically for the better. Teachers are much more willing to open the doors of their classrooms, admit challenges they are facing, and have many more professional conversations in the building.”
- **Some districts are using the Web to share best practices.** One such district, Jesup, created a [Teacher Leadership website](#) where teachers can submit requests for assistance, view a video library of district teachers in action, and read about teacher-leader accomplishments on a Gallery of the Good.

Needs and Next Steps

- **Districts and teacher leaders are learning that changing culture takes time.** In Tipton, for example, “model teachers did express concern about the effectiveness of the position after only one year of implementation. Getting into other teachers’ classroom and encouraging teachers to visit their classroom for observations were their greatest concerns. Common statements collected during the teacher leader interviews were, “How do we get teachers to observe others?” and “How do we get teachers comfortable being instructional partners?””
- **Districts are working to personalize support for teachers and to develop consistent norms and monitoring procedures.** In Underwood, TLC leaders are working to personalize coaching cycles for each teacher receiving support instead of using a formulaic approach to coaching. Meanwhile, East Mills Essex reports that they hope to “encourage more transparency for teachers while teaching and be more consistent with walk-throughs.”
- **School schedules can inhibit collaboration.** In order to observe a model teacher, for example, another teacher must plan for a substitute, which can require significant preparation and discourage their interest. In Clarion-Goldfield-Dows, teacher leaders are planning to create a video repository of model teachers in action so that teachers can watch expert teaching on their own time.

Reward Professional Growth

TLC offers new pathways for exceptional teachers to share their best practices with colleagues, without necessarily having to leave their own classrooms. A review of end-of-year reports shows that teachers at all levels -- both the teacher-leaders and those who benefit from the teacher-leaders' shared expertise -- are benefiting from the new roles.



Strengths and Successes

- **Teachers report increased job satisfaction and likeliness to stay in the profession as a result of these roles.** In Oelwein, 80% of teachers surveyed stated that the TLC program played a factor in their remaining in the district and 80% reported being very satisfied with the career opportunities to advance as Model/Mentor Teachers, Curriculum Leaders, Success Coaches, and Instructional Coaches.
- **As more teachers learn about and experience TLC programs in districts, interest in obtaining the roles is increasing.** In Pleasant Valley, for example, district officials report that 40 percent of teacher leaders want to hold teacher leadership roles, “an increase of 53 teachers from last year’s survey. By continuing to offer leadership opportunities for teachers to engage in these types of roles we look to continue to increase that percentage of our teachers each year.” Similarly, Johnston reports that whereas a year ago, they needed to recruit for new teacher leaders, this year they had approximately four strong applicants for every open teacher leadership position. In Lenox, demand for teacher leadership roles outstrips supply: more teachers want to hold roles than are available.
- **Teacher leadership is impacting individual professional development plans.** In Davis, “a review of IPDPs shows that the majority of teachers were aligning their individual goals to those of their professional learning team. The greatest number were aligned to Iowa Teaching Standard 4: Uses strategies to deliver instruction that meet the multiple learning needs of students, and Iowa Teaching Standard 5: Uses a variety of methods to monitor student learning.”
- **Professional development in many districts has been completely transformed from top-down to collaborative.** In North Union: “Our PD was more teacher driven than in past years as our

teachers were the engine behind our professional development. ... Our teacher leaders used different strategies to provide meaningful professional development beyond the typically “sit and get” method they were accustomed to from outside personnel.” In Marion, “Prior to TLC, the primary PD model was facilitation by principals or AEA staff or sending staff to a workshop or conference. The TLC has expanded best practice in professional learning with a focus on job-embedded, collaborative learning.”

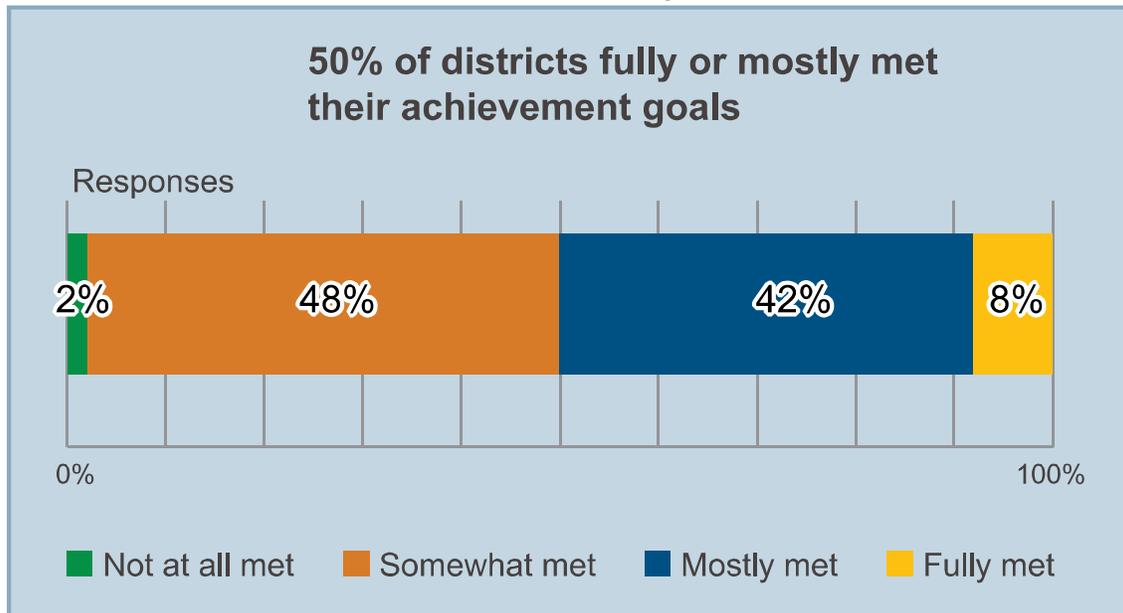
- **In addition to being more collaborative, professional development offerings are also more personalized and, according to teachers, more beneficial.** Says one second grade teacher, “For the first time in eight years at North Mahaska, I feel as though my professional learning has been individualized and specifically related to my teaching and learning in my classroom. The action research, collaboration, and building leadership team meetings have strengthened my teaching, impacted student learning, and fostered a sense of community among teachers where we are able to be vulnerable and learn from one another.” In North Fayette-Valley: “94% responded that teacher leadership has provided them with support in professional learning that has had a positive impact on student achievement in their classroom. 96% responded that they believe teacher leadership is beneficial to our district.”
- **In addition to common roles such as mentor teachers and instructional coaches, some districts have designed creative roles aligned with district goals.** Many districts have created technology integrationist roles to help colleagues incorporate technology into their classrooms. Some districts are creating a role for an MTSS specialist; in Maquoketa Valley, for example, the number of students receiving intervention has tripled as a result of the creation of this role. Marion created a communication specialist role, dramatically increasing engagement with the district website and social media accounts to ensure parents and students are aware of schoolwide initiatives. West Des Moines created equity leader roles at each school to lead district-wide analysis of the state of equity in student outcomes and services and to plan for improvement.

Needs and Next Steps

- **Several districts found that the model teacher role was harder to fill in many districts than some other roles, such as instructional coach or mentor teacher.** This may be due to some teachers’ discomfort about being labeled exemplary when the profession tends to be pretty egalitarian.
- **Continued experimentation with how best to use collaborative time and what roles make most sense is occurring.** Meeting protocols and other tools are helping schools and districts to structure collaborative time, but finding the best procedures for districts as they undertake shifts away from single-person decision-making requires some structure. District TLC advisory committees are reviewing evidence of progress made and submitting plan changes to the Department of Education based on lessons learned.
- **Some teachers who added teacher leader roles on top of full-time teaching loads had difficulty fulfilling both jobs.** Some districts expressed a desire to look at how to reduce teaching loads to allow teachers the time and capacity to be effective in both their teaching and their teacher-leader roles.

Student Achievement

In their end-of-year reports, districts were pleased to share increases in student achievement, graduation rates, college entrance rates, and other indicators. Most districts reported TLC as one of several factors contributing to student achievement gains, and they were confident there would be a future tie between the program and student achievement as TLC continues to grow in districts.



Strengths and Successes

- **Districts are drawing a connection between teacher leadership and student achievement.** The majority of districts used Iowa Assessments data to measure their goals; others used FAST, MAP, walkthrough data, surveys, graduation rates, ACT, and/or AIMSWeb to assess the effectiveness of the program. In North Tama County, for example, the district was pleased to share on its end-of-year TLC report that it achieved its highest Iowa Assessment results in 13 years during its first year of TLC implementation. In Nevada, “The changes that were implemented and supported by our TLC program led to significant increases in student achievement on the Winter FAST benchmarking assessment.”
- **Teacher leaders are using student achievement data to align instructional practices and Iowa Core.** Council Bluffs stated that bright spots exist. On the 2017 Iowa Assessments, they noticed a wide variance between scores at the teacher level, which they wrote “indicates a need to look more closely at instructional practices in those classrooms where teachers are aligned to the Core and also seeing results with Iowa Assessments.”
- **Several districts gave surveys of teachers to assess their perception of the impact of TLC on their instructional practices.** These surveys found that instructional practices are being positively impacted and confidence that improved instruction will lead to better student outcomes. In Cedar Rapids, fully two-thirds of teachers responding to a district-wide survey agreed or strongly agreed that TLC is positively affecting student learning.
- **Districts with instructional coaches reported that teachers who participated in coaching cycles recorded higher student achievement than those who didn't.** In Postville, which

completed its first year of TLC implementation, the district reports that they “have consistently seen the most growth in student achievement in grade levels where formal coaching cycles took place. All formal coaching cycles saw an increase in student achievement for all cycle goals and as well as some correlations to district/state assessments. For example, 3rd grade, FAST aReading scores increased from 49% proficient in the fall to 71% proficient in the spring.” Similarly, in Webster City: “We had 49% of teachers participate in a coaching cycle during the 2016-17 School Year. Teachers who participated in coaching cycles had 4% more students proficient on IA Assessments as compared with teachers not participating in coaching cycles. Teachers who participated in coaching had 6% more students proficient on IA Assessments as compared with teachers not participating in coaching cycles.”

Needs and Next Steps

- **The state should continue to evaluate the connection between TLC and student achievement.** Districts were excited about gains in student achievement in their initial years of TLC, and recognize that TLC is not the only factor impacting student achievement growth. It is challenging to isolate teacher leadership as *the* variable accounting for growth, although most districts who reported success toward their goals believe it to be at least one variable.