DISCOVER

DEVELOP

DEPLOY

CREATING A TEACHER LEADER CORPS PROGRAM

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Leaders from around the country reach out expressing interest in creating a Teacher Leader Corps program in their districts. I tend to respond with the following questions: "Are you jumping on the bandwagon or are you building your own wagon?" "Why do you want to establish a program?" "What problem of practice will the creation of this program solve?" This chapter will help leaders articulate their "why" through the identification of a problem of practice, create vision and mission statements, and realize their role in carrying out the creation and implementation of a Teacher Leader Corps program.

So, you have identified your "why." The next leg of this journey is to create action steps that will support a sustainable program. Programming involves identifying strategies and projects to achieve your vision and goals. The magnitude of proficiencies requires a multiyear approach. Do we partner with stakeholders to micro-credential teachers in adult learning theory? Yes! Do we help teachers learn to create and facilitate professional development sessions? Yes! Do we use book discussions to develop content expertise? Yes! The list is endless. All of these steps are important because they will form the foundation of your Teacher Leader Corps program.

How are educational partnerships reimagined? At what point does a vendor become a thought partner? How can the expertise of college and university experts be leveraged? What's the secret to joining and building networks that will lead to partnerships? In short, where does funding and support for a Teacher Leader Corps program come from? Using examples and illustrations of such things as grant applications, sponsorship letters, and sample budgets, this chapter uncovers unique ways to help leaders fund and support Teacher Leader Corps programs.

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The final and most important chapter details the deployment of the inaugural cohort. Their narratives will provide insight about the extent to which our program addressed our why. This is the most powerful evidence of a Teacher Leader Corps program's success: teachers continue in the education field with an unwavering commitment to excellence as they serve students, campuses, districts, and ultimately themselves.

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read. In order to dig deeper, we also referred to Gabriel and Farmer's (2009) suggested list of questions. Don't skip this; it will prove beneficial during the next steps.

- What patterns do you see in the statements?
- Are the statements specific enough?
- Do the statements address the questions "What are we building?" and "Why do we exist?"
- Do the statements simply state a belief, or do they express a purpose for existence?
- Do the statements clarify what action steps individuals and staff will be expected to take to achieve the vision and engage in improvement efforts?

Critique the vision and mission statements and create "must-haves." We began our assessment of the vision and mission statements during our discussion. This discourse set the stage for our task of developing a criterion that would guide the writing of vision and mission statements. Gabriel and Farmer's (2009) question "What pattern do you see in the statement?" helped us to determine what the statements had in common. We noticed that most of the statements were short, two sentences maximum. We observed that the statements used clear and concise language. We also found that, as Gabriel and Farmer (2009) suggested, there was, indeed, a target audience for each statement. In many instances, the target audience included customers, employees, or youth. The statements' authors used compelling language and words. Statements also reflected goals for improving, supporting, or being a model. Most importantly, they all addressed the following question: "What are we building and why is it important?" We continued to find common characteristics in each of the statements. Using these characteristics, we created a list of must-haves from the multiple vision and mission statements. "Must-haves" are the non-negotiables writers must include in their finished products, i.e., vision and mission statements (Ray 2006). The following is the list of our must-haves.

Vision and Mission Statement "Must-Haves"
▪ Addresses the question "What are we building and why do we exist?"
▪ Short, two sentences maximum
▪ Speaks to a target audience
▪ Avoids loaded language
▪ Language is simple and succinct
▪ Language and tone are clear, concise, and compelling
▪ Aligns to our district's core value, i.e., building human capital

Produce a vision and mission statement. We created vision and mission statements that mirrored the structure of those we consumed earlier in the process. We paid attention to our must-haves and engaged with multiple drafts. We sought the opinions of other stakeholders in the social studies community as well.

Vision Statement

The Social Studies Teacher Leader Corps program will create public intellectuals who are the gold standard for leadership and professionalism.

Mission Statement

The Secondary Social Studies Teacher Leader Corps will serve as a model for sustainable instructional programming in local, state, and national arenas.

NOTE

You may grow impatient with the work of creating vision and mission statements. You may even feel that you do not need to invest so much time in these first steps. I'll say it again: this lays the foundation for all other aspects of a Teacher Leader Corps program.

3 DISCOVER YOUR CORE BELIEFS

So far, we have identified a problem of practice and we have created a vision and mission statement; we are moving toward discovering our why. Identifying core beliefs defines each person's role in accomplishing your vision and mission. This will inform many other decisions, such as who will help you carry out this work or who is committed to working with you. Colleagues and team members may readily agree with you and still not be motivated to act because it is not who they are; they do not believe in the work. You would be surprised to learn that some central office personnel do not believe that it is their responsibility to grow and develop teachers, even if they profess to believe such. For example, I am reminded of a time when a committee of social studies leaders from around the state, including myself, was responsible for reviewing grant proposals. A teacher from a certain district applied for a grant from the state social studies organization. Unfortunately, the teacher's proposal was not accepted. Sadly, it did not even come close to meeting the requirements set forth by the grant rubric. I inquired, "Where does this applicant teach?" One of the social studies leaders replied, "He is one of mine; I just did not have time to help him with this. I have a lot on my plate." You may find

Allow Your Why to Guide Your Partnerships

That was then, this is now. Establishing a purpose for both commercial and noncommercial partnerships ensures sustainability beyond the duration of a project, program, or even instructional materials adoption. In the past, we did not have a clear purpose for purchased resources, beyond the instructional materials adoption process. For example, we purchased subscriptions to the ABC-CLIO resources. ABC-CLIO is a publishing company that curates academic reference works and periodicals on topics such as history and social science for educational and public library settings. We incorporated these resources into our then-curriculum documents and encouraged teachers to use the database. However, we lacked intentionality about how we professionally developed and supported teachers around instructional materials. As a result of low usage and the inability to connect this resource to student achievement, the district did not renew its contract with ABC-CLIO.

Our district has a long-standing relationship with The DBQ Project, a commercial publisher of professional development materials. For a long time, our district has offered yearly professional development opportunities; however, we were unable to secure resources at the district level. This meant campuses that had the financial resources or thought this resource would add value to their social studies program purchased DBQ Project materials. Campuses without the financial means or that chose to only fund resources for English language arts and math did not purchase this product. Welcome to decentralization.

Until recently, we were unable to purchase resources district-wide. Our big break came when we initiated a district-wide literacy initiative. As mentioned in Chapter 2, we were able to secure DBQ Project resources since they perfectly aligned with one of the components of our literacy program, writing across the content area. As content leaders, we were charged with developing a writing program in each content area. Secondary social studies focused on curriculum development to include explicit writing instruction, professional development opportunities, rubrics, feedback, and instructional coaching. We created writing toolkits to outline our programmatic approach.

We were committed to teaching social studies through writing. Aligning The DBQ Project's resources with our why—to our role in implementing our why—cemented a relationship beyond that of vendor-client.

Take Action

In the first part of this chapter, we challenged you to reimagine partnerships. This section will afford you the opportunity to discover both the human and financial capital needed to support a Teacher Leader Corps program. I am reminded of a former colleague who was adamant that vendors (i.e., partners)

had nothing to offer her; she saw them as merely salespeople. When presented with a resource, she immediately found issue or fault. One day, I challenged her by asking what she would like to see in the resources being presented. I asked her to convey her goals, her purpose, her why. She could not articulate what she wanted from the resource, and it was apparent that she lacked goals or, even more so, a strategic plan for her program. Later, our supervisor asked her to consider establishing a Teacher Leader Corps program for her content area; she pushed back. She indicated that she did not have the manpower or help to fulfill that request. I thought about our previous conversations, and I mentioned that she missed opportunities to form relationships with outside stakeholders, thereby eliminating the human capital needed to carry out a program.

Human capital is knowledge as well as social and personality attributes that embody the ability to achieve goals and carry out tasks. Two examples come to mind. First, our partnership with the Boniuk Institute for Religious Tolerance, which affords us valuable human resources in the form of Dr. Gayle Pagnoni and her colleagues from Rice University. As described in Chapter 2, this partnership provided our teacher leaders with customized trainings from experts in the field, resources, and texts, plus other perks, such as dinners, invitations to speaker series, and book signings. Second, another of our initial partners, Social Studies School Service, was instrumental in helping us realize the Secondary Social Studies Teacher Leader Corps program. They, too, have provided us with access to more than we could have ever imagined. It was through this partnership that our annual For Teachers By Teachers Secondary Social Studies Conference was born. (The conference will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.)

There are a number of in-district funding sources to consider. Most leaders have some degree of budgetary authority, be it over general federal/title or grant funds. It is up to you to determine how to allocate the funds that are available. I will challenge you to reimagine your place in larger district initiatives. In 2016, our district's board of education approved a $6 million budget to support our literacy initiative. While many failed to see how their content areas fit into this initiative, we advocated for funding not only to purchase resources but also to provide our teachers with intensive training in using those resources. This is how we funded our DBQ Project Year One Coaching Cohort.

Each year, districts submit applications for entitlement funds to state education agencies under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, which provides supplemental funding to state and local educational agencies to acquire additional education resources for schools serving high concentrations of students from low-income homes. These resources are used to improve the