

## **The Emergence and Failure to Launch of Hybrid Teacher Leadership**

**Sylvia S. Bagley**

*University of Washington, U.S.A.*

**Jason Margolis**

*Duquesne University, U.S.A.*

Hybrid teacher leadership (HTL) – that is, teachers whose official schedule includes both teaching K–12 students and leading teachers in some capacity – seemed poised to evolve as a more systemic enterprise at the turn of the century; however, implementation has been surprisingly sporadic. In this article, we explore Washington (a state long known for its support of teacher leadership) as a case study of HTL’s failure to launch fully as a statewide initiative. Through examining the intersection of recent research and the diverse considerations related to the creation and maintenance of HTL roles, our goal is to provide meaningful insights into the re-envisioning of HTL in the 21st century. While numerous challenges prevail with structuring and supporting HTL, its potential to broadly impact teacher learning, professional development, and student outcomes make the enterprise worth continued consideration and support.

A move towards hybridity within teacher leadership research and practice was a hallmark of the field in the United States (U.S.) as the 21st century began (Margolis, 2012). The idea of honoring and building upon teachers’ current lived expertise as classroom teachers while simultaneously affording them compensated leadership opportunities to impact colleague’s instructional practices seemed ideal, and desirable by many. So, why is this not now the norm across the U.S.? In our article for this special issue of the *International Journal of Teacher Leadership*, we argue that this movement – as demonstrated through our case example of Washington state – has thus far failed to fully manifest for a number of reasons which are both highly localized and also speak to the larger current state of teacher leadership. These lessons learned from the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be carefully considered as states, districts, and schools across the U.S. continue to explore how to best support effective teacher leadership work within inevitable budget constraints.

While hybrid teacher leadership (HTL) practice and research seemed poised to evolve as a more systemic enterprise in the United States during the first two decades of the 21st century, implementation has not been consistent, and this promising model of teacher leadership has not flourished in expected ways. The HTL “next-wave” teacher leadership movement has instead been swept into a broader array of creative attempts to leverage expertise and enhance student outcomes within always-tenuous financial and political landscapes.

In looking at the failure of HTL roles to scale in ways that have more broadly impacted teacher learning and professional development, we hope to provide insights into what might come in the near future – or, as this special issue queries, “What’s next?” We are hopeful that our examination of the intersection of recent research and the diverse considerations related to the creation and maintenance of hybrid teacher leadership roles will provide meaningful insights into the re-envisioning of teacher leadership in the 21st century.

## Definition of Terms

To begin, we will define and conceptualize our terms – something that, surprisingly still to this day, much teacher leadership literature neglects (see Wenner & Campbell, 2017, p. 160). The two key terms here are “teacher leader” and “hybrid teacher leader.” For the purposes of this article, a “teacher leader” is defined as a K-12 classroom teacher who has some sort of formal role (which can be loosely or tightly constructed) designed to influence the instructional practice of their colleagues. We recognize that this definition is unique to the U.S. context, and that other countries and regions may operationalize the term quite differently. This definitional choice was made because informal teacher leadership in the United States – that is, the sporadic, emergent, relational impact teachers potentially can have on their colleagues – has yet to be conceptualized in a way that has moved teacher leadership and practice forward in a systematic way, despite some gains in applying social network analysis to teacher leadership (see Coburn & Russell, 2008; Sun, Frank, Penuel, & Kim, 2013). Further, a lack of shared definitions in the field has stymied growth in conceptual and practical understandings of what teacher leadership is and can be (Frost & Harris, 2003; Margolis & Huggins, 2012; Wenner & Campbell, 2017), both in the United States and internationally.

Wenner and Campbell (2017) have defined teacher leaders as “*teachers who maintain K–12 classroom-based teaching responsibilities, while also taking on leadership responsibilities outside of the classroom*” (p. 140, emphasis in original) – thus focusing on teacher leadership that “honors both the teacher and the leader in the term teacher leader” (Wenner & Campbell, 2017, p. 141). This idea is in line with Bagley’s (2016) call to hyphenate the term “teacher-leader” in order to provide semantic and conceptual space for both “teacher” and “leader” identities, as well as to facilitate hybridity and synergy between the two. Therefore, within our broader definition of teacher leadership, we focus in this article on the hybrid teacher leader (HTL), defined as “a teacher whose official schedule includes both teaching K–12 students and leading teachers in some capacity” (Margolis, 2012, p. 292).

## A Brief Review of the Hybrid Teacher Leader Literature

In response to increasing responsibilities placed on principals in the United States to “distribute” leadership in schools (Heck & Hallinger, 2009), as well as the more aggressive push to connect leadership to student achievement in the post-No Child Left Behind (NCLB) federally mandated era (Jennings, Scott, & Kober, 2009), hybrid teacher leader positions began to proliferate across the country in the early 2000s (see also Spillane, Camburn, & Pareja, 2007). During this time, hybrid teacher leadership emerged as a prominent “new niche” for school leadership in the United States, described as sitting “between the classroom and the school’s administrators, and to some extent between the classroom and the district or the state” (Portin et al., 2009, p. vi). As opposed to previous teacher leader positions, which were primarily administrative or managerial, hybrid teacher leader positions were designed to provide embedded “coaches” for teachers so that curricular and instructional reform efforts were supported through teaching peers rather than administration, ultimately having a more direct impact on classroom practice systemically. In this sense, hybrid teacher leaders were to serve as “bridge people,” drawing from their familiarity with multiple contexts (e.g., teaching, organizational systems, school culture, students) to more positively affect teachers, and thus to more positively impact students (Brooks, Jean-Marie, Normone, & Hodgins, 2007). Hybrid teacher leader (HTL) positions put teachers at the center of reform efforts without having these talented educators

completely leave the classroom. Typical teaching-leading responsibility-models included 80%-20%, 50%-50%, and 20%-80%.

These positions had proliferated to the point that in some U.S. states, like Washington, “just over one-half of all school districts used HTLs in varying capacities” by the late 2000s (Margolis & Huggins, 2012). During this time, research on hybrid teacher leadership began to appear in peer-reviewed education journals, indicating the emergence of a phenomenon worthy of rigorous study and broader discussion within the larger field. Margolis’ (2012) study found that while hybrid teacher leaders suffered from role confusion, mismanagement of time, and tenuous relationships with teachers, they also had the potential to serve as a bridge between multiple subgroups within the systems in which they worked. This included linking together new state mandates, district initiatives, school culture, classroom realities, and the student experience, ultimately serving to reduce teacher resistance to change in advance; make reform policies more practically viable; and enable communication across educational hierarchies to increase the adaptability of initiatives.

Other research during this time similarly addressed the need to more carefully construct these potentially valuable new teacher leader positions specifically in terms of organizing the hybrid role and use of time (see, for example, Gallucci, Van Lare, Yoon, & Boatright, 2010). Margolis and Huggins (2012) found that the lack of explicit definitions of HTL roles led teachers in these positions, as well as their colleagues, to create de-facto definitions which often created problematic gaps between teacher leaders and the teachers they were working with. This was exacerbated by transient district leadership and numerous, sometimes-conflicting reform initiatives, leading some of the instructional coach-HTLs to retreat into administrative work rather than classroom-centered professional development. Research during this time found that HTLs were often underused or utilized inefficiently, leading to deteriorating relationships with colleagues as well as questions about the utility of their roles. However, there were also indications that better-defined HTL positions could advance the goals of school districts as well as enhance the learning of teachers and students.

In one of the last major publications on hybrid teacher leaders, Berry, Byrd, and Wieder (2013) explored the work of what they call “teacherpreneurs” – defined as “teachers who have found pathways to transformative professional leadership without leaving their classroom and students (p. i). Berry et al. cited research from a 2013 Metlife study which found that while 84% of teachers have little or no interest in becoming a principal, “23% are ‘extremely’ or ‘very’ interested in serving in a hybrid role as a teacher and leader” (p. xx). Their work shared primarily successful stories of classroom teachers who also impact the wider profession in both informal and formal ways. Ultimately, they argued that those closest to children (the nation’s 3.2 million teachers) need to have more control over the U.S. educational system (Berry, Byrd, & Weider, 2013, p. 124) – and that hybrid roles are a potentially transformative way to manifest this.

In sum, the emergent research on hybrid teacher leadership was, and still is, mixed – both in terms of impact on the individuals in these positions and the systems in which they work. This concurs with Wenner and Campbell’s (2017) review of the literature since 2004 of teachers in these positions. They concluded that individuals in HTL-like positions face negative conditions such as stresses related to lack of time and adversarial school climates as well as struggles navigating changing roles with peers and administration. At the same time, HTLs also experienced and created positive conditions, such as increased leadership capacity and professional growth for themselves and their colleagues. Inconclusive and disparate research

results, however, might be expected with positions that were relatively new to the educational system and would take some years to fine-tune.

Economic realities that came with the 2009 financial crisis significantly changed the landscape for education more broadly, including teacher leadership initiatives. One example was the slashing of bonuses in some states (though not Washington) for teachers who had achieved National Board certification, a process long linked to teacher leadership and teacher professionalism (Jang & Horn, 2017). The relative “cost” of teacher leadership for HTLs (e.g., Full Time Equivalent, or FTE, dollars needing to be spent for classes not being taught while a teacher is engaged in leadership activities) were clear from an accounting standpoint. The financially tenuous nature of HTL positions were also referenced in teacher leadership research, including position elimination for research participants in Margolis and Huggins’ (2012) study, and warnings related to lack of systemic and sanctioned opportunities for teachers seeking to “utilize their newly discovered leadership talents” (Margolis, 2008).

Currently, one of the authors of this article is involved in a wide-scale research project on the scope of teacher leadership in the United States, which includes identifying the most promising programs. Initial indications from early phases of the research are that there are far fewer sustainable models of hybrid teacher leadership than one would expect 20 years past the beginning of “the movement.”

To begin to explore the current status of hybrid teacher leadership in the United States in greater detail, we contacted key teacher leadership “informants” (individuals with significant knowledge of, or control over, teacher leader programs or roles) in Washington state. We chose Washington state as a case example to explore how hybridity is currently playing out in teacher leadership practice given its documented strong record related to teacher leadership in the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the U.S. In the 2000s, Washington state was a focus of research for those interested in teacher leadership (see, for example, Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession, 2009; Margolis, 2012; Margolis & Huggins, 2012). It also had one of the greatest percentages of National Board certified teachers in the country (a status it still maintains), indicating strong support across the state for this rigorous certification process. In addition, the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession – collective author of one of the earliest frameworks for teacher leadership (Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession, 2009) – is located in Olympia, Washington, and provides regular opportunities for teacher leadership development across the state.

### **Hybrid Teacher Leadership in Washington: Ebbs, Flows, and Eddies**

In our investigation of the current state of teacher leadership in Washington state, we found that the “movement” towards hybrid roles which seemed so apparent during the early 2000s has failed to launch. While some districts do choose to offer HTL roles, this is neither systemic nor widespread. Given the initial promise shown for hybridity, why is this the case? Below, we outline some potential reasons, noting both promises and challenges discovered as we conducted our inquiry and initial analysis. We begin by briefly contextualizing the state of Washington in terms of demographics, budget, and visible priorities vis-à-vis teacher leadership.

## State Context

Washington state has a total student enrollment of about 1.1 million, about 64,000 teachers, and 295 districts ranging in size from Seattle Public Schools (n=53,000 students) to rural Stehekin (n=4 students). Per pupil spending in Washington is just \$9,246 (in comparison with a national average of \$11,667), and the state has been wracked by insufficient funding woes for several years. Washington has been infamously declared out of constitutional compliance since 2010 due to failure “to amply fund a uniform system of education” (Washington Courts, 2017). However, despite severe budget challenges, the state remains highly supportive of mentoring programs for new teachers, with the current governor’s budget expanding the Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST) program in the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) so that it is on track to provide mentors for all teachers by the 2020-21 school year. The budget for this program has grown steadily from \$1 million in 2013 to \$10.5 million in 2017. Induction work with new teachers is a clear priority – however, it does not appear that other teacher leadership roles have as of yet been afforded the same longevity or legislative priority.

Washington’s most visible statewide initiative promoting leadership for teachers is the Washington State Teacher Leader Fellows Network (2018), founded in 2013 to “support district and community implementation of state learning standards” in mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) (and, more recently, science and Early Learning Guidelines). However, this initiative does not correspond with our definition of teacher leadership given it does not promote or support formal teacher leadership roles in schools. We make note of this program simply to indicate that recognition of teacher leadership through quarterly meetings of content-area teacher experts is prioritized to some extent on a statewide level in Washington, as are continued stipends for National Board Certified teachers (Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction: National Board Certified Teachers, 2018).

When gathering information related specifically to HTLs, we reached out to key informants on teacher leadership in diverse regions across Washington state, which includes a mix of rural, suburban, and urban districts of varying sizes (all districts are given pseudonyms below). Our informants included a high-level director at Washington’s statewide Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; district-level directors of curriculum and learning; other administrators with a direct role in crafting, hiring, and/or supervising teacher leadership roles; teacher leaders invested in advocacy work around HTL; and HTLs. We asked each informant to share their understanding of how teacher leadership has evolved over recent years in their context, with a specific lens focused on opportunities for hybrid teacher leader roles.

In our exploration of how HTL has evolved in Washington state, we sought to determine both how teacher leadership positions emerged within various districts, and how and why (or not) these roles incorporated hybridity. Perhaps not surprisingly for such a highly decentralized state, we found that roles have largely been crafted according to the needs of individual districts and their teachers, with many district administrators able to make budgetary and hiring decisions with some flexibility. To that end, while there are districts across Washington implementing HTL roles as we define them, they are doing so without formal guidance or legislative support, which means sustainability and spread are uncertain.

## Potentials and Challenges of Hybrid Teacher Leadership

Below, we outline some key potentials and challenges that persist in implementation of HTL in Washington. Considering the paucity of recent research on the topic, as well as anecdotal information that HTLs are struggling to take hold in other states as well, we believe this analysis may be helpful in understanding the broader current situation regarding hybrid teacher leadership in the United States.

### Ongoing Potentials of HTL

**Staying close to kids.** The most self-evident potential for HTL – indeed, arguably the factor that has always driven it forward – is the ability for teacher leaders to take on meaningful and necessary leadership work while staying close to the classroom, and most importantly, teaching children. Our informant in suburban Cloudview District (a now-retired Secondary Director of Curriculum and Instruction) told us it was a “win-win” for their district when they hired their first and second HTLs in 2008 and 2010 to develop new K-12 math and social studies curriculums. Our informant noted that when these teachers were negotiating acceptance of their new leadership positions, they made statements like, “I have to keep teaching – I’m a teacher at heart. Let me teach two periods and I guarantee you I’ll be able to do the leadership work in the rest of my contract”, and “I care about this project, let me go part-time.”

**Using one’s classroom as a “lab”.** Staying part-time in the classroom also provides HTLs with a consistent classroom space (or “laboratory”) in which they can carry out the work they’re assisting their colleagues with. As our Cloudview informant noted, their district’s first HTL (a math curriculum specialist) “wanted to demonstrate, in her class, the kinds of things she had been promoting and training teachers in, [to have] a place for teachers to come and see it happen in action.” Our informant added, “I think [TLs] increase their credibility with their peers if they’re teachers every day and trying to implement the changes in instruction that they hope [to see happening]”. Our urban Lane District informant – a full-time coach herself, leading a secondary math teacher leadership initiative which includes HTLs – similarly noted that, “Though I have done the work in my own classroom and not very long ago, if the teachers didn’t know me directly they were more likely to just see it is theory instead of practical”, and added her belief that “teachers buy-in more to someone currently doing the work of a teacher.”

The idea of needing one’s own classroom “lab” to enact new practices was also echoed by our informants in more remote rural districts, where it is generally harder to recruit highly qualified teachers (Malkus, Hoyer, & Sparks, 2015). For instance, a hybrid technology coach in rural Eaglemount district told us he personally requested his new position this year to be “0.2 in classroom and 0.8 as an Instructional Coach” given his concern over whether he could be as effective assisting with new technology advances without a classroom of his own. He directly shared his opinion with the district that “if I were out of the classroom for very long I would become obsolete pretty quickly.”

**Teacher input and agency.** This same HTL in Eaglemount shared that he chose his current position over one in another state in part due to the district's willingness to negotiate a hybrid role with him at his request. His story and others like it indicate that some HTL roles have been specifically crafted at the request of the highly successful teachers being solicited for the role, indicating that hybrid teacher leader roles may offer unique potential for teacher input and agency into their work contract and what they believe will work best for themselves, their students, and their school. This is echoed in the policy brief on HTL crafted by the advocacy group Teachers United of Washington, discussed in greater detail below (Teachers United, 2018, in press).

**Career exploration.** Finally, as indicated by our informant in Cloudview, a shift from full-time teaching into HTL roles has been viewed by some teacher leaders in Washington as a valuable opportunity to dip their professional toes outside of the classroom, in order to determine if they wanted to pursue an administrative path or continue teaching kids. Due to the financial costs and time commitment involved in pursuing administrative credentials, districts that allow teachers an opportunity to see if non-teaching work suits their temperament and goals before diving in may ultimately have better overall retention rates of both teachers and administrators. It also facilitates career paths for those who want to lead beyond their classroom but are not interested in going into administrative positions.

### **Ongoing Challenges of HTL**

The potentials of HTL are clear – but so are the challenges, which persist after many years.

**Logistics.** Logistical challenges related to implementation of HTL continue to prevail, indicating that not much has been done since earlier research to address this teacher leadership model on a systematic basis. On both a broader scale and within individual districts, ongoing discussion of the critical utility of HTL is lacking. Given inconsistent understanding of the term “teacher leadership” itself (Wenner & Campbell, 2017), it is perhaps not surprising that moves toward hybrid teacher leadership are equally puzzling to many. Our informants' responses all indicated a desire for better clarity and more intentional culture-building among teachers and administration in order to encourage qualified TLs to step into hybrid roles, and to discourage ‘coach bashing’ (a tendency identified by our rural Skyview informant as non-teacher leaders disparaging the work of those who step out of “the trenches” to do other work; this was something she had personally heard about, and knew had directly affected some teachers' willingness to serve in a coaching role in her small district).

Parameters regarding how much time and energy per week will be spent on each category of work for HTLs are still often not made clear, thus continuing to complicate both the work of HTLs and others' perception of their work (Margolis & Huggins, 2012). This has been noted in the coaching literature (Killion, 2009), and seems to hold true across teacher leadership roles as well.

In terms of scheduling, while hybridity makes intuitive sense in secondary settings given the modular nature of most teachers' contracts (with separate periods and rosters), in elementary schools this is not nearly as straight-forward. Job-sharing is a natural outcome of HTLs in elementary school, but job-sharing in a single-roster classroom is far from simple, and, as noted by our rural Willowside informant, may not appeal to many qualified elementary-level TLs unless explicit support is provided to prevent their time and attention from being spread too thin.

In rural Skyhawk district, our informant noted that since first offering TL roles in 2011, they had been open to hiring HTLs and offered such roles, but found that the inherent challenges described above made it more difficult than expected to find "willing participants". She noted, "I believe most teachers would like to see a hybrid approach; however, few are willing to take on the challenges," thus leading to creation of full-time teacher leadership roles instead.

**Perception of hybridity as "less than."** Although HTL is viewed in the research literature as a positive (perhaps ideal) structural option, this view is not shared by all practitioners. Our informant in suburban Willowside felt that newly formed hybrid TL positions for curriculum development in Health and P.E., for instance, were an indication that these areas were not prioritized *enough* to merit funding for full-time roles. In other words, a full-time TL position would validate the importance of these content areas within her district, while hybridity was viewed as "less-than."

To that end, as discussed below in our section on "Role shift and drift," HTL roles may fade away as the work becomes more substantial, warranting a larger (full-time) FTE status. When describing the evolution of TL roles in suburban Willowside District, for instance, our informant stated, "I believe that [initial curriculum specialist TL roles] were hybrid because no one knew the amount of work needed to create the common curriculum. As the work evolved, more FTE was added and the roles became full-time."

**Role drift and shift.** Without strategic initiatives and funding to back the systemic creation and support of HTL roles in Washington, such positions have tended to shift to more easily recognizable roles of TOSAs (Teachers on Special Assignment), which pull qualified teachers out of the classroom to engage in full-time teacher leadership roles before they return to teaching or move into administrative work (Washington County School District, 2017). We also found that hybrid roles may be "threatened" by increasing numbers of qualified individuals seeking part-time work. Two of our informants, for instance, noted the desire in their district to retain retired teachers on a part-time basis in order to serve in critical coaching or other teacher leadership roles; this idea is currently in legislation, with Washington Senate Bill 5310 – which would "increase post-retirement employment options for early-retirement teachers" – as of this writing on March 8, 2018 "returned to Senate Rules Committee for third reading" (Washington State Legislature, 2018). This may be motivated by financial incentives, given that it would allow crucial teacher leadership work to be done by qualified individuals who aren't seeking full-time benefits.



**Personal stress.** Finally, as found in previous literature and validated through discussions with our informants, the personal stress-toll on HTLs can be significant (Margolis, 2012). Eaglemount’s hybrid technology coach – who advocated on behalf of an HTL role for himself – conceded that the challenge of balancing both teaching and coaching work had definitely “upped his stress level” this year. This is echoed by many HTLs who find that juggling between different spheres ultimately creates a more-than-full-time position, rather than the straightforward balance of different responsibilities they were hoping for. Our Willowside informant similarly noted a widespread belief in her district “that a teacher cannot do both roles, and that one role (teacher or teacher leader) will suffer.” This ties directly to the need to find tenable solutions to the challenges of HTL as outlined here in order to ensure its efficacy and sustainability. We discuss this further in the following section.

As we conclude this discussion of hybridity’s nascent emergence and troubled sustenance in Washington, regression to previous models of teacher leadership (i.e., full-time release or stipends) seems clear, indicating that structural, political, and cultural conditions have not shifted sufficiently to support a systemic move towards a form of authentically distributed teacher leadership which does more than either provide nominal stipends or continue to pull highly effective teachers out of the classroom.

## Discussion and Conclusion

This leaves us wondering: might lack of sufficient research presenting validated findings on the effectiveness of HTL be hindering broad-scale implementation of hybrid teacher leadership roles? Without attention to the nuances of what is involved in allowing teacher leaders to both teach and lead – without working over-time, burning out, or leaving due to other factors – teacher leadership will remain stuck in a nebulous zone of “we know this is important, but we’re not sure how to monetize it, value it, or structure it.”

Without significant research or theoretical frameworks to support the value of HTL, there won’t be sufficient thrust to systemically push policies and financial support forward on a broader basis in the United States. While valuable HTL work will surely continue in pockets across the nation – given that highly effective practices continue to emerge in all educational spaces regardless of policy or funding mandates – we need viable HTL models to study in order to formally validate their merit. School or district-level action research (Mills, 2018) may be one way to provide preliminary data that could be built upon and validated more broadly.

Even the most systemic efforts at honoring teacher leadership work as useful and budget-worthy tend to drift away from hybridity as we have defined it in this paper. Looking outside of Washington, for instance, Tennessee is an example of a state with a highly systematic and rigorous approach towards allowing each school district to determine what types of teacher leadership roles it needs and can afford, an approach which has been advanced for several years and includes detailed breakdowns of roles, criteria for selection, expectations, and budgetary implications (Tennessee Department of Education, 2018). However, even with such an impressive statewide emphasis on intentional incorporation of teacher leadership, the majority of TL roles in this state remain non-hybrid.

While Washington state was once a leader in the TL and HTL movements, it has thus far failed to take up the HTL “project” in any systematic or sustainable way. Initial research on this phenomenon (Margolis, 2012; Margolis & Huggins, 2012) was discontinued as the roles themselves dissipated or fragmented. Focus in the state has remained on promoting more easily marketable forms of teacher leadership (such as National Boards Certification or Washington State Fellows) that provide stipends and/or social status through titles and networking but don’t move systems any closer to methodically providing teachers with hybrid leadership positions.

However, recent work by Teachers United in Washington state – a “teacher led education-policy advocacy organization that seeks to insert and elevate the voices of impactful educators in the education policy-making process at the district and state level” (Teachers United, 2018) – shows that collective advocacy for HTL is on the rise once again. A team of 12 full-time Washington teachers, who spent the last year reading and discussing literature on best practices for retaining high quality teachers, has crafted a research-based policy brief advocating on behalf of hybrid teacher leadership, which they define as follows: “A Hybrid Teacher Leader is an effective teacher leader who spends 40-60% of their contracted time in the classroom teaching students, while also performing clearly defined roles that measurably impact student and colleague growth, development, and success” (Teachers United, 2017, p. 1 of DRAFT). They are putting forth the following four recommendations, which they hope to bring to the next legislative session in Olympia, Washington in 2019:

1. Intentionally establish guidelines and minimum requirements for Hybrid Teacher Leader Roles.
2. Hybrid Teacher Leaders must impact student growth and foster colleagues’ professional growth.
3. The leadership work of the Hybrid Teacher Leader should be evaluated based on leadership standards.
4. Support, training, and professional development should be provided for all teacher leadership positions (including HTLs).

Teachers United’s nascent work shows that teacher leaders themselves are eager to move forward with once again prioritizing this stalled movement.

Given that schools – in line with society – are more complex than ever, it seems that HTL roles may be ready to re-emerge as part of broad-based, systemic initiatives to manage this complexity by increasing information sharing across different sectors of a school’s environment (Margolis, 2018). As argued by Teachers United, structured HTL positions in schools can help not only manage complexity, but do so in a way that draws from the grounded expertise of teachers who are closest to the daily realities of students’, teachers’, and parents’ needs. This facilitates better feedback loops within schools, where multiple perspectives must be integrated so that schools can make growth-oriented decisions. Given the diverse array of support outlined above, HTLs are in a unique position to help systems learn-as-they-go by integrating perspectives across the system – from the classroom (student, teacher) to the policy level (school administration, district administration, state, and national levels).

A new generation of teachers capable of leading the complex work of diverse 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms will be looking for innovative incentives to make this challenging career feasible and rewarding. The ever-increasing level of stress cited by teachers is frightening and disheartening (Greenberg, Brown, & Abenavoli, 2016), and HTL positions that don't actively work to mitigate such stressors will not be sustainable.

The possibility for success with hybridity still exists, but a strong case will need to be made that the challenges are worth overcoming. While we now have initial evidence that new teacher mentoring contributes positively to teacher retention (Plecki, Elfers, & Van Windekens, 2017), we don't yet have comparable evidence for other teacher leader roles (such as instructional coaches), let alone hybrid teacher leader roles. Gathering meaningful data won't be possible until we have sufficiently operationalized and begun collectively utilizing shared definitions of "teacher leader" and "hybrid teacher leader" (perhaps those proposed in this paper) that will allow for meaningful study and cross-comparison of outcomes.

The highly diverse set of needs across any school system – whether nation-wide, state-wide, district-wide, or school-wide – leads us to believe that HTL positions must remain "radically local" (Porter, 2001), given the always-unique priorities and constraints of each district, school, and teacher leader. With that in mind, a viable next step forward could include proposing a menu of research-based recommendations for HTL roles that allow sufficient flexibility for districts while also giving them ready-made models to try out. While the first two decades of HTL in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have been a time of possibilities hindered by uncertainty, there are signs that a careful analysis of, and accounting for, these uncertainties may yield even more possibilities for the HTL movement moving forward.

### **Acknowledgments**

*We would like to provide special acknowledgement to all the informants across Washington state who contributed their time and expertise to this article – with a special shout-out to Hope Teague-Bowling at Teachers United for offering invaluable access to a not-yet-published policy recommendation brief, as well as other helpful resources.*

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