



Meaningful School Change

A guide to leading & empowering site-based change that spurs student & educator growth



This collection of resources, tips, and activities is for educator teams doing school change work.

Pick and choose, rearrange, or tweak resources as best suits your team.

teacherpowered.org

Change is often messy, so schools on the pathway to transformation tend to be vibrant, rambunctious, and sometimes loud...

Transformation requires personal growth and school improvement, both of which are impossible without some level of tension.

-Justin Cohen, *Change Agents*

Meaningful school change looks different at each site.

Our focus is on creating collaborative, student-centered learning environments. At the end of the day, we do our work with and for the benefit of students. To do this at your school, you need to:

- ✓ ENGAGE SYSTEM LEVERS
- ✓ RE-IMAGINE THE ROLE OF ADMINS
- ✓ CREATE ENABLING CONDITIONS
- ✓ ANTICIPATE IMPLEMENTATION GROWTH & DIPS
- ✓ SET UP COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURES & PATHWAYS OF ACCOUNTABILITY
- ✓ CELEBRATE STUDENT & EDUCATOR OUTCOMES
- ✓ USE CONSISTENT PRACTICES

SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING


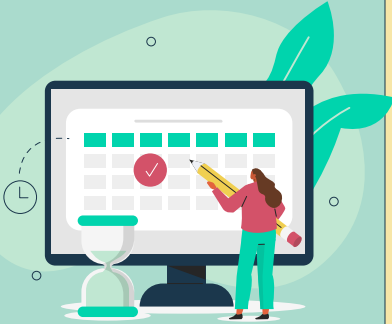




CHANGE MATRIX

Adapted from the Lippitt-Knostrer Model for Managing Complex Change.

Student-centered learning	System levers	District support	Collaborative structures	Consistent practices	=	High-functioning impactful school
Missing	System levers	District support	Collaborative structures	Consistent practices	=	Ineffective
Student-centered learning	Missing	District support	Collaborative structures	Consistent practices	=	Weak
Student-centered learning	System levers	Missing	Collaborative structures	Consistent practices	=	Vulnerable
Student-centered learning	System levers	District support	Missing	Consistent practices	=	Confusion
Student-centered learning	System levers	District support	Collaborative structures	Missing	=	Chaos

✓ ENGAGE SYSTEM LEVERS

LEVERS	IMPACT
Hiring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hire high quality educators with aligned values• Hire to compliment your team's strengths• Release educators that are not a good fit
Scheduling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create weekly team collaboration time• Be creative to create space for student-led projects
Learning program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design learning that is meaningful and assets-based for your community• Engage community partners• Decide what is best for your students
Professional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage teachers with teacher led PD• Build capacity by creating leadership opportunities in the building• Create ownership with co-designed units, lessons, and data analysis

✓ CREATE ENABLING CONDITIONS AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL

“Culture eats strategy for lunch” is a well known change saying.

If the school culture isn't in a healthy place then new strategies, initiatives, and programs will fail. Key characteristics of school cultures ready for meaningful change are:

1 Student-centered

Teams actively keep students at the center of decision-making and use several principles of student-centered learning in their learning program and school environment.

2 Collaborative culture

Innovative teams prioritize collaboration, learn collaborative skills, practice and refine these skills, and address the inevitable tensions that arise when working with other humans.

3 Transparency

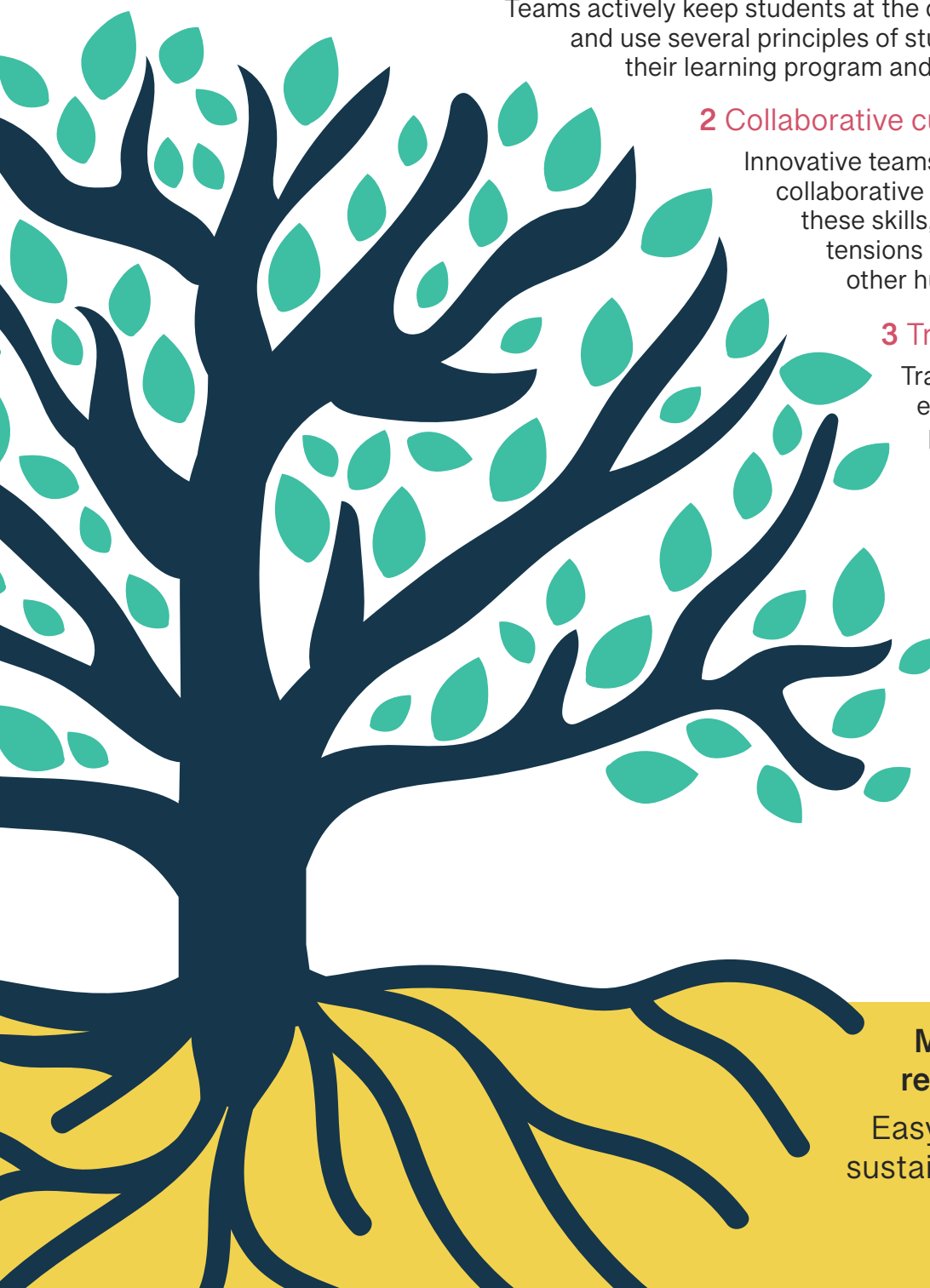
Transparency and trust are essential at successful teacher-powered schools. Transparency in all areas big and small contributes to trust in each other and the overall model of decision-making.

4 Learner mindsets

Teams actively engage in learning and improving themselves, including expanding content knowledge, developing leadership skills, and practicing self-care.

Meaningful change requires deep roots.

Easy changes don't lead to sustainable improvements.



✓ CREATE ENABLING CONDITIONS AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL



Districts have more success providing support and conditions that allow each school to thrive than they do replicating one model district-wide. Hyper-local system leaders enable faster, sustainable, and innovative change when certain conditions are present:

Rate your district
1 is low, 5 is high

1 Site level flexibilities

An understanding that schools have different needs. Identified areas where schools have autonomy (for example: PD, scheduling, or learning program). Teams are released from district items that don't apply to them.

2 Accountability pathways

Co-created with site administrators and teachers, which lay out agreed-upon timelines, assessments, data, etc.

3 Ally mentality

Says yes to ideas, requests, and solutions. Does what is within their power to advocate for teams' needs. Prioritizes site educators, spends time at each campus. LISTENS, builds trust and true relationships. Doesn't get defensive or make things personal.

4 Formalized shared governance

Documented through elect-to-work agreements, MOUs, or board-approved school teams structures and flexibilities. Innovative teams are protected from leadership changes.

5 Adjustments to district systems

It can't be business as usual when teams use collaborative leadership. Accepts co-leaders, hybrid roles, and rotating leadership positions. Knows if the answer is "we've always done it this way," it is probably worth updating.

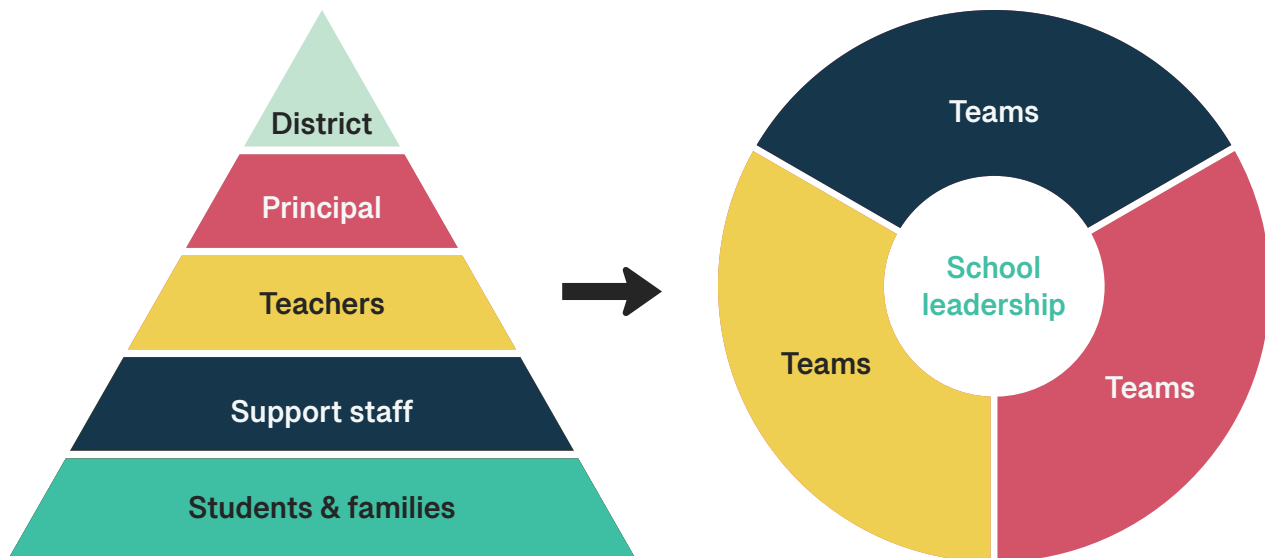
6 Protections for teams' time

Gives teams dedicated, regular time throughout the year for retreats, blocks of collaboration time, and co-planning days.

TOTAL =

24+ **Ready!** 8-23 **Almost there** 12-17 **Okay** Below 12 **Needs improvement**

✓ SET UP COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURES & PATHWAYS OF ACCOUNTABILITY



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Clarify team expectations, accountability, and assignments by recording your responsibilities as you see them. Have your colleagues record what they see as your responsibilities.
2. Review both and discuss any differences. Check off tasks you agree to own.
3. Move remaining tasks to Unassigned, review, and decide next steps for each.

Responsibilities (according to me)

Responsibilities (according to colleagues)

Unassigned

✓ USE CONSISTENT PRACTICES



MEANINGFULLY INVOLVE FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Meaningfully involving students, families, and communities goes beyond asking for their opinions. It means intentionally involving them in the design process, actively encouraging families and community organizations to be on campus and involved in student activities, and valuing families as experts in their larger communities.

It may mean regularly scheduled activities during non-school hours where the physical building is used for adult education, community trainings, or social services. It can also look like mentors for students and community leaders co-leading projects with teachers.

Beyond formal ways for students, families, and communities to be involved, teams intentionally create welcoming environments where everyone is treated as a valuable member of the larger school community. It is the big things and the little things that make a difference.



HONOR STUDENT VOICE AND CHOICE

Expanding student ownership and agency improves not only motivation, engagement, and achievement, but also students' sense of confidence and self-determination- cornerstones of equitable learning experience.

Schools implementing meaningful change intentionally and regularly assess how they are doing in this area inviting feedback from the students themselves. These teams actively hold up student voice and choice in designing learning and making school decisions.



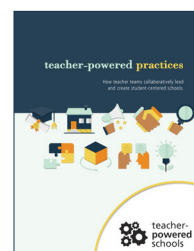
ENGAGE IN PEER OBSERVATION

Teaching is an art, one that good teachers are continually tweaking and finding ways to improve. An important part of this professional growth is peer observation, mentoring, and coaching.

Instead of observation having negative connotations, in teacher-powered schools teachers welcome this practice as one that allows them to learn and grow, whether they are the one being observed or the one observing.

Teams are dedicated to improving their craft and learning from each other, through spending time in each other's classrooms and discussing challenges.

More about these practices at teacherpowered.org/practices



SHARING POWER RUBRIC

Assess your team's efforts to share power and fully engage families and students.

The team...	Not really (1)	A little bit (2)	Much better (3)	Yes! (4)
Prioritizes student-centered decisions	Supports only 1 of the SCL principles	Supports at least 2 of the SCL principles	Supports 3 or 4 of the SCL principles	Supports at least 5 of the SCL principles
Actively engages families	Only regular school day options are available and only on site	Some options are available if families make the effort	Multiple options are available; some educators are actively building relationships and outreach	Multiple options are available; most educators are actively building relationships and outreach
Includes community members traditionally at the margins	Few members of our community are represented	Some members of our community are represented	All members of our community are represented	All members of our community are represented and part of decision-making
Supports a feedback loop	No feedback process or way to gauge success	Some feedback process; little or no data collection	Clear feedback process; less clear about using data	Clear feedback process to create self improving system with data
Has long-term sustainability	Just a one time project	Some policy changes have been made, but inconsistent	Embedded in school culture	Permanent, budget priority and includes community engagement



✓ RE-IMAGINE THE ROLE OF ADMINS

SHIFT YOUR MINDSET

Instead of thinking this...	Ask this...
I need to motivate and inspire people so they agree to do this initiative.	How can I strengthen our shared purpose and collaborative structures?
I need to give people advice and feedback so they can improve.	How can I build people's capacity for collective problem-solving?
I need to keep people accountable for their actions.	How can I support collective accountability?

TIME: OUR SCARCEST RESOURCE

Innovative teams know that learning and growth flourish when there is dedicated time to discuss, reflect, and engage with all stakeholders.

This time leads to more effective and efficient decision-making. To make good use of time:

- Leverage scheduling flexibilities to create dedicated collaboration time during the work day
- Partner with community organizations to lead engaging student projects and free up teachers for co-planning time
- Schedule retreats, step backs, and regular team time for discussions, reflections, and planning
- Invest in training to run meetings efficiently, and effectively, facilitate challenging conversations and plan time for reflection.



✓ ANTICIPATE IMPLEMENTATION GROWTH & DIPS

Meaningful school change is not linear.

There are successes, both large and small, and problems that frustrate everyone. This is part of the normal implementation process.

There is no magic solution to the complex challenges schools face—and looking for easy answers doesn't set anyone up for long-term, sustainable change and improved outcomes for students and educators.

A co-created design plan is essential.

This doesn't mean the principal and two teachers create the plan. It means the WHOLE team (including students and families) is involved in creating the plan—and ultimately agrees, through voting or consensus, that these changes are the right ones.

Encourage questioning, thought experiments, and trying out different strategies.

Implementation can be school-wide, or in a smaller subset of the school, like a grade level or department. It is an opportunity to test out a design plan. Expect to make several adjustments to the plan in real time. A benefit of being teacher-powered is the ability to make changes quickly to better meet the school community's needs.



WHAT TO EXPECT

- **3 steps forward, 1 step back**
- **Refining communication pathways**
- **Multiple iterations and adjustments**
- **Excitement and satisfaction**

When implementing any new program, it takes up to five years to see growth and impact.

Give your team time to settle in, refine your teacher-powered practices, and plan. This isn't to say that you should wait years to make changes, but you do need to be patient.

There will be dips in your team's implementation of the plan and in your results. This is part of the process. Use data to make well informed adjustments.

✓ CELEBRATE STUDENT & EDUCATOR OUTCOMES

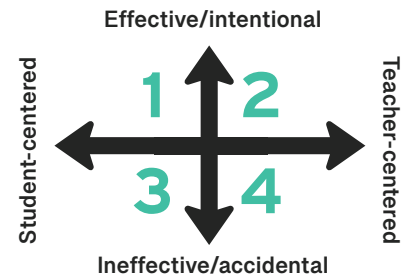
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The key question with any school redesign work: “Will it improve student learning?”

We know traditional academic data only captures part of the larger picture of school impact and outcomes. Teams need to look at multiple measures of data, both quantitative and qualitative.

Adjusting toward a collaborative team model that shares power with students, families, and the educator team moves the school’s climate to Zone 1 in the graph to the right: An effective, intentional, student-centered school.

Research shows that schools in this zone have higher achievement levels, as well as higher student engagement, and stronger school cultures.



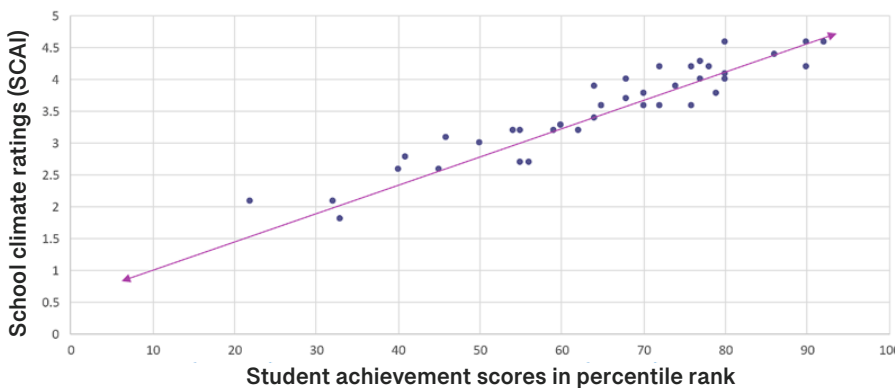
20% INCREASE IN ACHIEVEMENT IN ELA

11% INCREASE IN ACHIEVEMENT IN MATH

“We found that the degree of both instructional leadership and teacher leadership in schools is strongly related to the performance of schools.”

–Ingersoll et al, 2017. *School Leadership, Teachers’ Roles in Decisionmaking, and Student Achievement*

SCHOOL CULTURE



Alliance for the Study of School Climate.
Lead Researcher,
John Shindler, Cal State University, Los Angeles, CA.

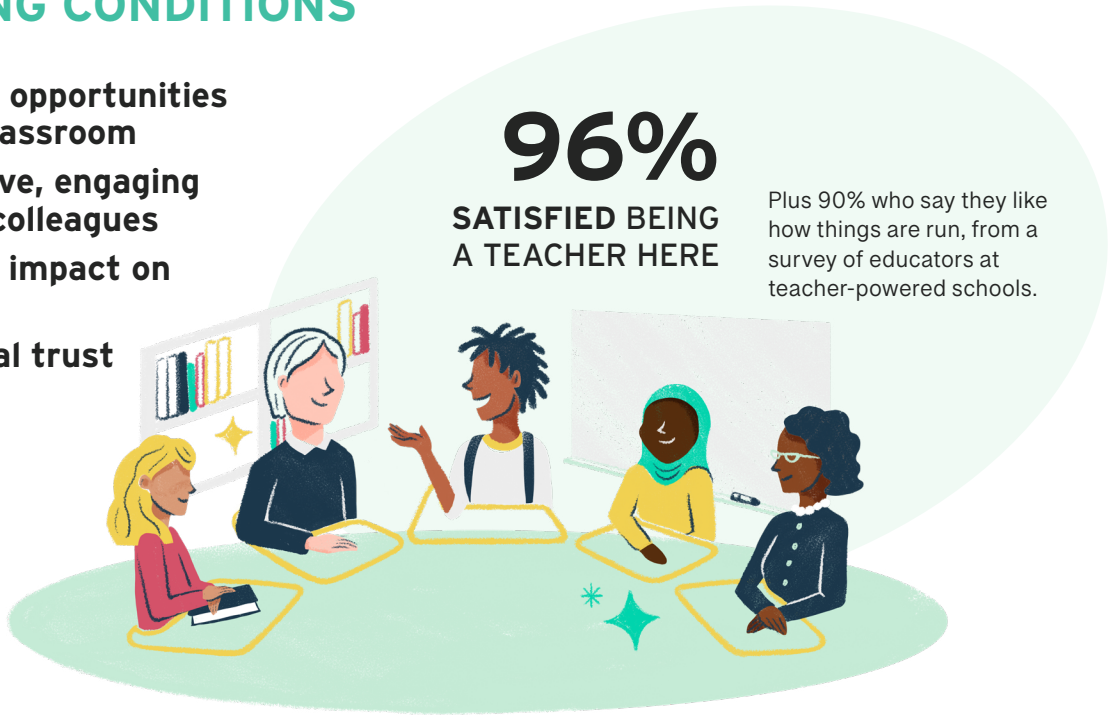
✓ CELEBRATE STUDENT & EDUCATOR OUTCOMES

IMPROVED TEACHER SATISFACTION & WORKING CONDITIONS

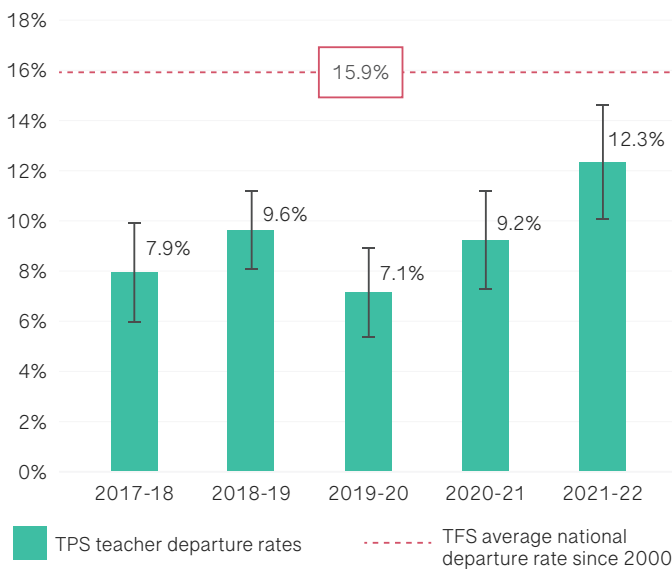
- Leadership opportunities from the classroom
- Collaborative, engaging work with colleagues
- Meaningful impact on students
- Professional trust

96%
SATISFIED BEING
A TEACHER HERE

Plus 90% who say they like how things are run, from a survey of educators at teacher-powered schools.



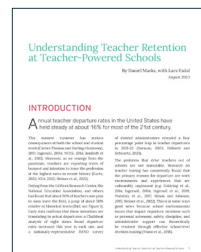
IMPROVED TEACHER RETENTION



TPS schools' teacher departure rates have undercut historic & contemporary national averages.

Marks, 2023. *Understanding Teachers Retention at Teacher-Powered Schools.*

Read the full report at teacherpowered.org/retention



NEXT STEPS

SCHEDULE

- Regular time with your team to discuss and plan
- Time with families and community members
- Space for student feedback
- Meetings with district leaders

LISTEN

- To support staff, paraprofessionals, and specialty teachers
- To families, alumni, and community members, especially those at the margins
- To all students across grade levels, especially those who are less engaged

CO-CREATE

- A shared purpose and set of values
- A clear organizational chart with roles and accountability pathways
- Agreed-upon processes for decisions

Teacher-powered resources are always free to download at teacherpowered.org.

For teams looking for more tailored support, visit teacherpowered.org/coaching and reach out about custom workshops and coaching packages.





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