

The Time is Ripe (Again): Roland S. Barth (and others)

“A school should be a community of leaders—not just a principal and a lot of followers.” [p. 16]

PLEASE READ THIS SYNOPSIS AND ONE BOXED INSERT

Five obstacles that typically stand in the way of wide scale *teacher leadership*:

- “...many principals need to control what goes on in school. Principals are ultimately responsible.” [p.10]
- “There’s also a taboo in our profession against one teacher elevating himself or herself above the others.” [p.10-11]
- “...teachers’ plates are full. Teachers already have a huge amount of responsibility for their students.” [p.11]
- “There’s also the subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle adversarial relationship that exists between teachers and principals, between unions and management.” [p.11]
- “...schools have been co-opted by a business model over the years....That business model does *not* favor teacher leadership.” [p.11]

Three circumstances bode well for teacher leadership now:

1. *A Need to Share the Load*. “For a long time, people have realized that the principal alone can’t run something as complex and enormous as a school. But now I think *principals* realize that.” [p. 11-12]
2. *A Curriculum to Create*. “The Common Core State Standards also represent an opportunity here. The standards specify what students should know and be able to do, but they don’t specify how teachers must teach those things. They’re intentionally leaving it up to each school to put together an effective curriculum that will lead to the accomplishment of those standards. Principals aren’t about to write a curriculum.” [p.13]
3. *New Models of Leadership*. “Today we see a proliferation of all kinds of alternative schools and pilot schools, among others. If you look at their organizational and decision-making structure, you’ll see that many accord teachers a major decision-making role, such as the ability to choose their colleagues, evaluate one another, and design the curriculum.” [p.14]

What to do:

➤ **For district/school leaders: Unlock the Passion to Teach:**

- Encourage teachers to do “what they believe is best for their students.” [for example, experiential education]
- Create opportunities for teachers to bring ‘themselves’ to their teaching [example, optional courses based on teachers’ interests]. [p.15]
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➤ **For teachers: Lead—and Win:**

- Teachers are already leaders—in their classrooms.
- “There is tremendous satisfaction that comes from making the jump, from being an owner rather than a renter here.”
- Teacher leadership creates opportunities for learning. “When you are responsible for something...you are invested in making it work.” [p16]