

2020

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Recommended Citation

Tudor, Emma (2020) "Six Strategies For Fostering A Faculty Leadership Culture," *EnglishUSA Journal*: Vol. 2, Article 3.

Available at: https://surface.syr.edu/englishusa_journal/vol2/iss1/3

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Six Strategies for Fostering a Faculty Leadership Culture

by Emma Tudor

Faculty leadership involves giving faculty members more responsibility in the governance of an institution, with more authority in decision-making and fostering a culture of collaboration to achieve shared goals. Improving faculty leadership in these ways proves to have a direct positive effect on school effectiveness, essential in today's increasingly competitive education climate. Faculty leaders have increased confidence, greater self-efficacy, improved morale and motivation, and an increased desire to remain in the profession.

In order to achieve a culture of faculty leadership, firstly there must be willingness for participation. This may be impacted by varying influences including senior leadership and faculty relationship, working relationships among faculty, capacity to contribute to decisions and having responsibility and accountability for students. It is therefore necessary to create a collaborative culture, with distributed leadership and associated values. Here are six ways to create an environment in which your faculty can thrive:

1. Curriculum and Policies Review

An institution's educational curriculum and policies are fundamental to the success of student learning. If possible, having faculty input in the review and development process can allow great opportunities to cultivate an environment of faculty empowerment and leadership. Faculty contributions can also improve the quality of the review, as they have hands-on experience using the curriculum and policies in the classroom.

2. Mentoring

Assign an experienced faculty member to buddy up as a mentor with a new member. They can work closely to lead them on issues such as lesson planning, using the curriculum, resources, processes, and administration. This type of mentoring can create a collaborative culture and supportive environment for new faculty members and help experienced faculty members achieve a sense of responsibility for their team.

3. Faculty Recruitment

Having your more experienced faculty members involved in the recruitment process gives them a huge sense of empowerment and ownership of the teaching team, while improving moral and motivation. Invite some of your faculty to join faculty recruitment sessions and have input on the hiring decision.

4. Specialty Advising

Notice your faculty members who have a special skill and encourage sharing and teaching with their peers. Setting up a scheduled slot where faculty can drop-in to advise and discuss their specialty with their peers, for example with the 'grammar guru' or the 'vocabulary vulture' etc.

5. Peer Observations

Your faculty can learn a lot from one another by observing each other in the classroom. Encourage them to self-reflect on their teaching skill, identify areas where they would like to develop and give them opportunity to observe a peer from whom they can learn this. For example, a teacher who struggles with teaching grammar observes the ‘grammar guru’ teaching a grammar class.

6. Professional Development

With increased recognition that quality instruction is perhaps the fundamental resource for student learning, it is crucial to ensure faculty are competent and growing. Invite faculty members to develop a professional development schedule. They can also assign themselves as the trainer to lead the workshop. If there is any budget for external training, invite them to research options and assign the budget as they see fit.

Emma is the Vice President of Standards for EnglishUSA and Senior Operations Manager at EF Education First. Her experience in English Language Programs spans 15 years and 6 countries. She is a regular conference speaker, a published author and awards reviewer for major industry associations.