



Teachers as leaders: Why haven't we seen this before?

Dr. Brandee Green, Director of Literacy and Instruction, Horse Creek Academy

Picture it. South Carolina, 2022. Teachers are compensated for additional work outside of contracted hours, leading others from surrounding areas on topics of their own choosing. Feeling appreciated, valued, and celebrated, these teachers aren't searching for alternative careers like many others in our field. They are woven into school leadership in ways that are allowing them to flourish and celebrate their passion for education — the reason they chose this profession in the first place.

Why don't we see more of this in education?

The Master Class sessions launched this year at [Horse Creek Academy](#) (HCA) enabled others to grow and allowed the presenters to more deeply develop their craft. Topics like using music in the classroom, identifying social-emotional triggers, and cultivating a positive school climate were just three of the 26 free sessions offered this past spring. Workshops were also included and provided a focused time where teacher leaders helped one another with grant writing and supported one another.

April Gattis, a first-grade teacher at HCA and Master Class presenter, shared, “Planning for my presentation has really refueled my energy for my classroom. I can’t wait to share with my audience. It’s like I’ve caught a second wind in my career!”

Teachers are leaders, and leaders are teachers. Thanks to the [Collective Leadership Initiative](#) (CLI), this isn't a work of fiction; this is real and happening now in parts of South Carolina.

Why don't we see more of this in education?

Flashback to earlier in the school year: I am reading proposals from eager teachers who are ready to lead. Our response to the call for proposals is exhilarating. The opportunity to be a part of the planning stages of what we are growing in our state through collective leadership is the chance of a lifetime. As I sit and read the proposals, I can't help but pause and reflect on how much joy this leadership framework brings and dream about what's to come for our state in education. Some of the best leaders are teachers.



Dr. Brandee Green is a lifelong learner passionate about all things education. Her current research interests involve education reform and alternative leadership and coaching models. Currently, Dr. Green is the Director of Literacy and Instruction at Horse Creek Academy Charter School in Aiken, South Carolina.



Why don't we see more of this in education?

Flashback further to a few years ago: I am a young (okay, maybe more than a few years ago), eager teacher. I'm reading everything that I can get my hands on about education. I am attending professional development opportunities, frequently with funds from my own pocket. I am eager to teach and lead. I am invited to lead professional development sessions from time to time, but often in isolation of any long-standing pushes for change — usually one-and-done types of training. I notice there never seems to be longevity or follow-through. As my career progresses, I move into and out of leadership roles, but nothing ever seems like quite the right fit.

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I was a teacher ready to lead and a leader ready to teach. But I felt as if I needed to choose between those two passions, and that didn't make sense.

Surely others have seen this before?

My career experiences and my desire to both teach and lead guided me to HCA. I learned about the [CLI](#) of which HCA is a part. My “why” was simple. I wanted to lead but believed the best leaders in a school are grounded in the classroom — never forgetting what it feels like to put our money where our mouths are. It just made sense to me and felt like the change I was looking for, for both myself and education in our state as a whole.

Two years, a pandemic, and a lot of change later, here I am, balancing my work as teacher and leader, supporting and growing colleagues through the first annual HCA Master Class season developed and presented by HCA master educators — teachers and leaders! Currently, HCA has nearly 900 students on the waitlist and almost 100 applicants for 10 employment spots for next year — evidence that collective leadership is working.

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I may not be able to explain why we don't see more of this in education, but I do know what the future should look like in education. [Collective leadership](#) is here to stay.

How can you begin to support this mind shift toward collective leadership in education for your school or district?

This story is published as part of a recent storytelling retreat hosted by the [Office of Educator Effectiveness and Leadership Development \(OEELD\)](#) within the [South Carolina Department of Education](#). The [Center for Teaching Quality](#), an OEELD partner, facilitated the retreat and provided editorial and publication support. Learn more about this work and read additional stories by following [@EducationSC](#) and [@teachingquality](#).