

# SEZP

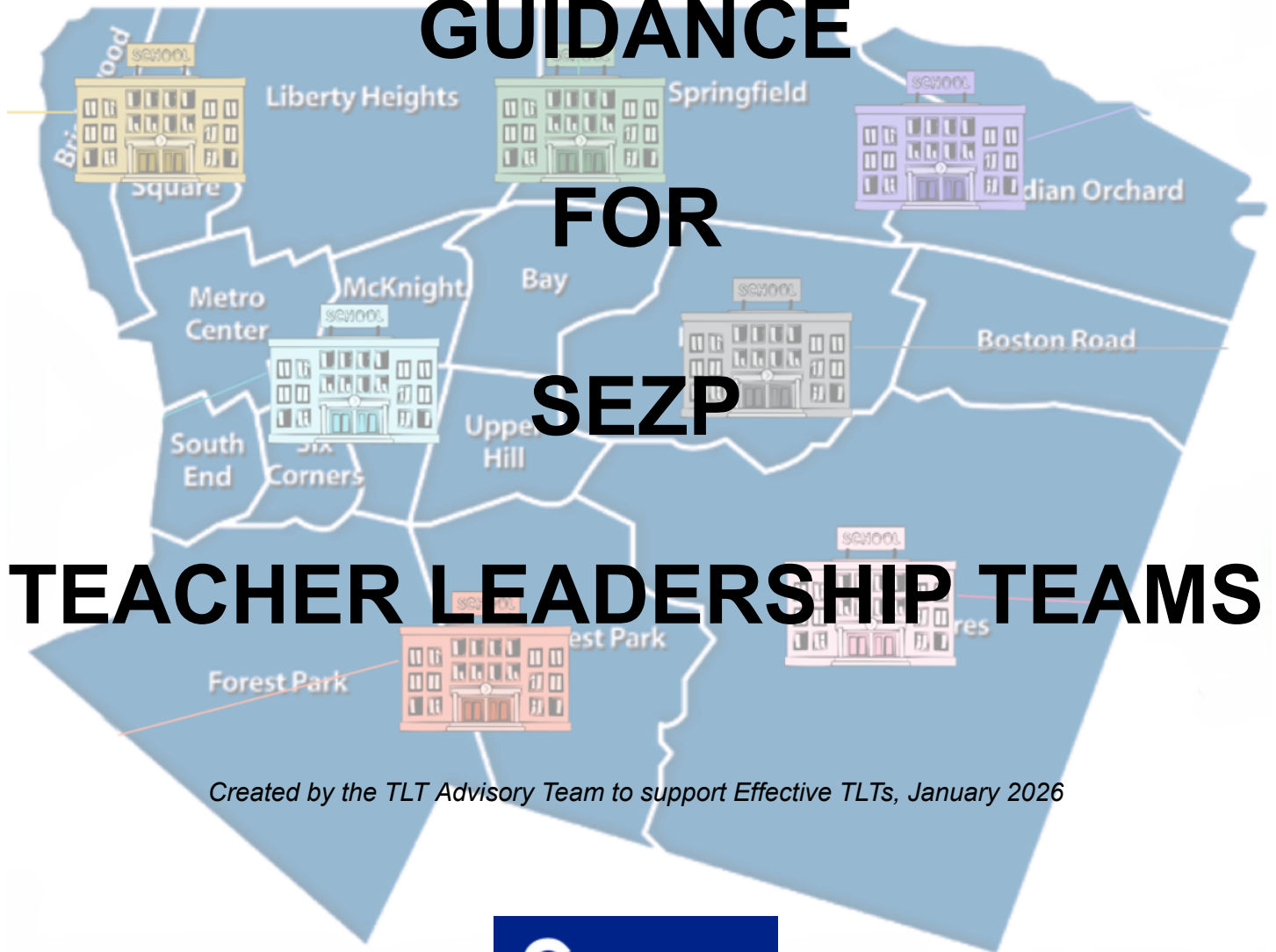
Springfield  
Empowerment Zone  
Partnership

## GUIDANCE

## FOR

## SEZP

# TEACHER LEADERSHIP TEAMS



*Created by the TLT Advisory Team to support Effective TLTs, January 2026*



# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	2
<b>Section 1: Understanding Teacher Leadership Teams</b> .....	3
• Definition, Purpose, and the Continuous Improvement Planning Process.....	3-4
• SEZP's 4 Phase Model for Continuous Improvement Model.....	5
• Team Composition and Terms .....	6
• Individual Roles and Responsibilities .....	6
• Selection Process and Timeline .....	7
• Representation and Decision-Making .....	7
• Key Milestones and Timeline .....	8
<b>Section 2: Ensuring TLT Success</b> .....	9
• Laying the Groundwork and Building Trust .....	9
• Running Effective Meetings .....	10
• Communicating with the School Community .....	11
• Managing TLT Transitions .....	12
<b>Looking Ahead</b> .....	13
<b>Appendices</b> .....	13

# Introduction

The SEZP-SEA Partnership Team believes that cultivating and sustaining a high-functioning Teacher Leadership Team (TLT) is an essential component of transforming schools for both the children who learn there and the adults who work there. Being part of a TLT is both a significant opportunity and a meaningful responsibility for all involved. Creating a transformative TLT requires a shared commitment to collaboration and an investment of time and energy from both school leaders and educators.

Empowering educators to have an authentic voice in shaping the vision, priorities, and working conditions for their schools is a key ingredient in creating more nimble and responsive educational environments that prepare students for a rapidly changing world. At their core, TLTs serve as vehicles for educator voice, school-wide collaboration, and shared decision-making. However, each TLT must engage in thoughtful planning within the group and maintain deliberate communication with the school community to operate effectively within their school's unique context.

## Document Structure

This handbook is organized into two main sections:

### Section 1: Understanding Teacher Leadership Teams

This section defines TLTs, explains their purpose, outlines membership and representation, and describes primary responsibilities.

### Section 2: Ensuring TLT Success

This section provides guidance and best practices for operating an effective TLT, including recommendations for meetings, transitions, and continuous improvement.

## Support and Resources

TLTs are encouraged to reach out to SEZP Leadership for support when needed. Please email Co-Executive Director Colleen Curran at [ccurran@sezp.org](mailto:ccurran@sezp.org) with any questions, concerns, or requests for assistance. In addition, TLT Advisory Team members for the 2025-26 school year can also serve as a resource for your school's TLT.

### ***TLT Advisory Members 2025-26***

[Jeff Copland](#), Kennedy Middle School  
[Cheri Drapeau](#), Kiley Prep  
[Gisella Grimaldi](#), Van Sickle Academy  
[Hayley Murphy](#), Duggan Academy  
[Mike Plummer](#), Academy at Kiley  
[TJ Rios](#), Discovery Polytech Early College HS  
[Andrew Vanasse](#), Chestnut TAG  
[Talia Wray](#), Discovery Polytech Early College HS

### ***TLT Advisory Legacy Members:***

[Darryl Delzie](#), Kennedy Middle School  
[Ann Haughton](#), Forest Park Middle School  
[Kim O'Grady](#), Kiley Prep

# Section 1: Understanding Teacher Leadership Teams

*This section defines TLTs and explains their purpose. It outlines who serves on the TLT, whose interests they represent, and the primary responsibilities of the team.*

---

## **TLT Toolkit for Section 1**

The following resources support the content in this section:

1. [The Work of TLTs](#)
  2. [Example: Arc of the Year](#)
  3. [Example: Overview to launch School Planning](#) (emailed in December to all TLT members)
  4. TLT Forming Stage Tools:
    - a. [Creating Learning Commitments](#)
    - b. [Possible Team Norms](#)
    - c. [Suggested Topics and Timelines for Meetings](#)
    - d. [Template for TLT Meeting Notes](#) (sample)
- 

## **Definition and Purpose**

The [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#) (CBA) states that *"all schools shall have a Teacher Leadership Team (TLT) as the vehicle for shared decision-making at the school level."* Teacher Leadership Teams are school-based teams created to ensure that educators play a substantive role in decision-making on issues of continuous school improvement and educator working conditions as outlined in our CBA. TLT members are responsible for seeking input from educators and sharing that input with the full faculty to ensure all voices are heard.

According to the CBA, TLTs are responsible for the *"development and approval of policies set forth in the annual continuous improvement plan, or subsequent revisions to this plan."* (see the Work of TLTs in the Toolkit above for a detailed description of the important work of TLTs)

## **Components of Annual Continuous Improvement Plans (Reflecting 2025-2028 CBA)**

### **1. Class Size Review**

Each TLT will review class sizes by February 1st and provide the principal with recommendations for addressing any challenges or opportunities related to class size for the following school year.

### **2. School Continuous Improvement Plan**

The annual continuous improvement plan includes three major components in 4 phases, which launches in December with work beginning in January. TLTs are responsible for Phases 1, 2, and 4.

**Phase 1, Jan-March, includes:**

- Educator Working Conditions** (including a school calendar for students and staff) for the school year ahead
- Defined Priorities Levers** anchored in data for the school year ahead
- Initial plan for summer school** - completed by Principals

**Phase 2, March-May, includes:**

- Goals** aligned to priorities determined in Phase 1 decisions
- TLT Transition Form**

**Phase 4, August-Dec**, requires socializing the improvement plan with the full faculty in the new school year and monitoring plan implementation

*(Phase 3 is a Strategic Plan created by the Principal over the summer months that allocates resources, plans necessary professional learning experiences, and outlines detailed actions to meet priorities and goals.)*

**3. Additional Components**

SEZP may establish additional components of a school's continuous improvement plan annually and will share these with the SEA prior to finalization and distribution to schools.

SEZP will provide each TLT with a Google Folder suite containing all guidance and documents needed for each phase of the Continuous Improvement Planning process for the upcoming school year.

***A Four-Phase Model for Continuous SEZP School Improvement:  
Building with School-Based Autonomy and Teacher Voice, Rooted in Accountability***



## Team Composition and Terms

According to the SEZP-SEA contract, there are three options for TLT member composition: two "default" TLT models and a TLT "with modifications" from the default models. All TLTs are comprised of educators selected by their peers. Please refer to the current CBA to learn more about TLT membership composition. (*see page 14 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement for a description of default models*)

TLT members are elected for **two-year terms** to ensure continuity in the group's work from year to year.

## Individual Roles and Responsibilities

All TLT members are responsible for the following:

- **Serving for a two-year term**, unless the educator no longer works in the school
- **Attending regular TLT meetings** at least monthly, but as frequently as weekly and as scheduled
- **Following through** on action items and tasks between meetings
- **Reflecting on and understanding** quantitative and qualitative data about your school from SEZP's Roadmap for Student Success (end-of-year and mid-year reports)
- **Making time to learn** about your team's questions and concerns related to the school continuous improvement plan and representing those interests at TLT meetings
- **Working collaboratively** with the principal and TLT members
- **Seeking input and communicating decisions** and the rationale behind decisions to your team
- **Developing the annual School Continuous Improvement Plan**

## Selection Process and Timeline

New members of the Teacher Leadership Team shall be elected annually **between mid-August and October 1st** of each school year at a full faculty meeting. The election date shall be publicized to all faculty at least two weeks in advance and should be listed on the TLT Transition Form (part of Phase 2 of School Planning). Best practice is to hold elections during August PD week or the first week of September to allow the TLT to form and organize early.

### Election Process

Teacher Leadership Team elections shall be carried out by the school's union representatives with support from SEA leadership:

- Only members of the bargaining unit may be present during the meeting and vote
- Educators may self-nominate
- Candidates must explain why they wish to be elected to the full staff and their representative teams in person or by email
- Teams will vote by secret ballot
- In instances where an additional building representative is needed, the building SEA representative will be chosen following the election of team representatives from the SEA building representatives
- A principal or their designee may be present when election votes are counted

## Representation and Decision-Making

Each TLT member is expected to understand and advocate for the interests of the group they represent (e.g., 7th grade team) during TLT meetings, listen to the perspectives represented by fellow TLT members, and work collaboratively to make decisions in the best interests of students and the school while considering practical operational and financial constraints.

### Balancing Representation and Collaboration

While each TLT member should accommodate the needs and interests of the group they represent, making decisions often requires compromise. Whenever possible, the TLT should make decisions by **consensus** or mutual agreement, which means making decisions that everyone on the team can support, even if it means a represented subgroup may not receive 100% of what they want.

### Two-Way Communication

TLT members are expected to facilitate regular two-way communication between the group they represent and the TLT as a whole. In practice, this means TLT members should:

- Regularly communicate with colleagues about upcoming TLT agenda topics
- Solicit feedback from colleagues on those topics
- Share interests and perspectives at TLT meetings
- Report back to colleagues on decisions, outcomes, and the factors that led to final decisions

## **Key Milestones and Timeline**

Each December, SEZP uploads Continuous Improvement Plan templates and guidance into the SEZP Google Folder suite. TLTs will also receive an email officially launching next year's process. Embedded in the emailed document are specific timelines for each phase of the Continuous Improvement Plan Process. *(see example Continuous Improvement Planning Overview emailed to TLT members in December linked in Toolkit on page 3).*

### **Modifications to Educator Working Conditions After SEZP Board Approval**

From time to time, an SEZP school may encounter an unforeseen calendar issue not identified in the spring prior to the launch of the new school year. Examples include when a day is mistakenly marked as "off" that should be a school day, when a conflicting event emerges after the calendar has been approved, or when the TLT wants to revisit a prior choice about dates. In such cases, the principal may present a proposed calendar adjustment to the full Teacher Leadership Team only after first obtaining tentative approval from SEZP (to ensure transportation and student meal services are available for the revised date).

# Section 2: Ensuring TLT Success

*This section provides guidance and best practices for operating an effective TLT, including recommendations and tips on how to run effective meetings. When possible, we have included links to helpful resources, protocols, and customized templates.*

---

## **TLT Toolkit for Section 2**

The following resources support the content in this section:

1. [Stages of Team Development](#)
  2. [Establishing Psychological Safety Experiences for TLTs](#)
  3. [Template for TLT Meeting Agendas](#)
  4. [Reminder: Suggested Meeting Topics + Timeline](#)
  5. [TLT Self-Assessment Rubric](#)
- 

## **Laying the Groundwork & Building Trust**

Individuals elected to the TLT hold an important leadership role and are responsible for collectively making decisions that affect all educators at their school. Sometimes making those decisions will be challenging given competing interests and operational constraints. For the group to be effective, it is essential that TLT members take time to establish trust with one another and create a safe space for problem-solving, respectful disagreement, and deliberation from day one.

### **First Meeting Foundations**

We recommend that each TLT dedicate their first one to two meetings to laying the foundation for a year of successful collaboration. **Creating a regular TLT meeting schedule is important.** Specifically, TLTs should aim to accomplish the following:

#### **Build Relationships and Understanding**

- Get to know each other and build relationships and build psychological safety. We strongly encourage TLTs to conduct the above psychological safety experiences for TLTs linked above.
- Understand individual preferences in group work
- Establish operating norms and learning commitments for your TLT

#### **Plan for the Year Ahead**

- Create a meeting schedule and timeline for the year, keeping in mind important school and Zone milestones (e.g., School Quality Reviews, team meetings, staff surveys, school planning deadlines)
- Develop a staff communications plan that includes multiple methods for two-way communication regarding regular meetings and important decision-making during the school planning process

# Running Effective Meetings

## Meeting Frequency and Structure

The TLT is required to meet **at least monthly with the principal**, reserving 10 minutes of each meeting without the principal at the beginning for educator conversation. Setting a regular meeting schedule at the start of the school year and adhering that schedule is a best practice. However, our most effective TLTs meet **weekly when school planning launches in January**. This ensures the team has sufficient time to plan, solicit feedback from the school community, and make informed decisions by mutual agreement.

## Clear Internal Roles and Responsibilities

Identifying and assigning roles and responsibilities is an important early step in developing an effective team. Roles can be assigned for the full year or rotate from meeting to meeting, but it is essential that everyone on the TLT is clear on who is responsible for what. Consider these useful roles:

- **Meeting Facilitator/Chair** – Responsible for facilitating the meeting and keeping the team engaged
- **Timekeeper** – Responsible for keeping the meeting on schedule (sometimes managed by the facilitator, but often helpful to have this live with another person)
- **Note-Taker** – Responsible for capturing decisions, next steps, and key points/considerations leading to decisions, and for distributing notes to the TLT within 48 hours of the meeting
- **Agenda Developer** – Responsible for creating the agenda (everyone should have an opportunity to provide input, but one person needs to finalize and distribute it)
- **Transition Lead** – Ideally a returning TLT member responsible for ensuring the TLT election takes place in a timely fashion and ensuring a smooth transition for new TLT members

## Meeting Agendas with Clear Objectives

Creating a consistent format for your meeting agenda can make the agenda development process more efficient. At a minimum, the agenda should clearly identify desired outcomes and objectives for the meeting and devote sufficient time to each item. It may also be helpful to identify whether an item demands a decision at the meeting or is just for discussion. We recommend allotting a few minutes at the end of your agenda to set agenda items for the next meeting. Consider using the template linked (#3) in the toolkit on page 7.

## Consistent Format for Capturing Notes

Creating a consistent format for capturing notes can be very helpful in keeping your meetings transparent and making it easy for both TLT members and the broader school community to stay informed about the team's work. Notes should always clearly capture:

- Decisions made by the group
- Next steps with assigned owners
- Important takeaways or discussion points without public attribution (especially if the information was critical in informing the group's decision on an important topic)
- Proposed topics for the next meeting or even set the agenda for the next meeting with reserved time for unexpected topics
- Make notes accessible to your faculty

## Communicating with the School Community

One of the most essential roles of the TLT is to keep the school faculty informed and included in the TLT's decision-making process. The CBA states that "*SEA leadership/staff and educators in the school are welcome to attend meetings of the Teacher Leadership Team,*" and we encourage you to ensure that faculty are aware of your meeting schedule and welcomed to attend. However, since the majority of educators will not regularly attend TLT meetings, it is the responsibility of the TLT to develop strategies to ensure that faculty feel the work of the TLT is transparent and that they are informed.

Effective communication with all staff requires multiple strategies. Consider these approaches:

- Email TLT meeting agendas and summarized notes to all faculty
- Post summarized notes in an area regularly visited by faculty
- Post TLT meetings on the internal school calendar; link to the agenda/notes in the calendar appointment
- Provide a brief verbal summary of TLT decisions at regular all-faculty meetings
- Provide a brief verbal summary of TLT decisions at other team meetings (e.g., grade level meetings, content team meetings)
- Save meeting agendas and notes to a shared folder that all staff can access
- Establish regular time at team meetings for TLT members to gather feedback from their teammates on topics related to TLT work
- Establish TLT "office hours" so staff members can ask questions and provide feedback on TLT work

# Managing TLT Transitions

TLT members should set aside their last one to two meetings to discuss and prepare for the transition to a new TLT in the coming year. Because the composition of the TLT is likely to change with some new members joining, the dynamics of the group will inevitably shift as well. We recommend that the TLT take the following steps at the end of the school year to prepare for the transition:

## Assess Current Membership

- Identify which TLT members have terms ending and determine whether those individuals plan to run for re-election

## Communicate with Stakeholders

- Notify teams/groups of staff who have a TLT representative whose term is ending
- Share information about serving on the TLT and determine if any team members are interested in potentially running to serve on the TLT in the coming year

## Plan for Elections

- Work with the principal to set a tentative timeline for TLT elections in the coming school year and put date on Transition Form
- Assign a returning TLT member as the transition lead to ensure elections and kickoff TLT meetings happen in a timely fashion
- Alert faculty to anticipated openings and when elections will take place
- Ensure the Building Rep is prepared to run elections on posted date

## Organize Documentation

- Organize all TLT agenda and documents (with the exception of school planning documents which will be managed by SEZP) with clear labels so new TLT members can access relevant historical information about the TLT's work when they are elected

## Reflect on Performance

- Block time for an internal reflection on the TLT's performance
- Discuss and document the following:
  - What worked well about the TLT this year?
  - What was challenging about the TLT this year?
  - What changes do we hope to make in the coming year?
  - Consider developing a short faculty survey to understand your TLTs areas of strength and growth

# Looking Ahead

The work of Teacher Leadership Teams is central to creating schools where educators have authentic voice and where continuous improvement is embedded in the culture. As you embark on or continue your TLT journey, remember that building trust, maintaining transparent communication, and staying focused on student success are the cornerstones of effective shared leadership.

We encourage you to use this handbook as a living document—return to it regularly, adapt the strategies to fit your school's unique context, and share your successes and challenges with SEZP Leadership and the TLT Advisory Team. **If you have feedback on this tool, please share it with us.** Together, we can create learning environments where both students and educators thrive.

---

## Appendices

The following appendices provide templates, tools, and additional resources to support your TLT's work:

- **Appendix A:** [Data Protocol for Reviewing the Roadmap for Student Success](#) (tool)
- **Appendix B:** [School Priorities - Guidance and Template](#) (Phase 1 School Planning Doc)
- **Appendix C:** [Educator Working Conditions - Guidance and Template](#) (Phase 1 School Planning Doc)
- **Appendix D:** [Student and Staff Calendar - Guidance and Overview](#) (Phase 1 School Planning Doc)
- **Appendix E:** [Summer Learning Plan](#) (Phase 1 School Planning Doc)
- **Appendix F:** [Priority Levers - Guidance and Template](#) (Phase 2 School Planning Doc)
- **Appendix G:** [TLT Transition Form](#) (Phase 2 School Planning Doc)
- **Appendix H:** [List of Possible Norms](#)
- **Appendix I:** [Creating Learning Commitments](#)
- **Appendix J:** [Creating Psychological Safety Experiences](#)
- **Appendix K:** [Agenda Template](#)
- **Appendix L:** [Notes Template](#)
- **Appendix M:** [TLT Self-Assessment Rubric](#)
- **Appendix N:** [2025-2028 Collective Bargaining Agreement](#)

---

For questions, support, or feedback on this handbook, please contact:  
[Colleen Curran](#), SEZP Co-Executive Director

### **TLT Advisory Members 2025-26**

[Jeff Copland](#), Kennedy Middle School  
[Cheri Drapeau](#), Kiley Prep  
[Gisella Grimaldi](#), Van Sickle Academy  
[Hayley Murphy](#), Duggan Academy  
[Mike Plummer](#), Academy at Kiley  
[TJ Rios](#), Discovery Polytech Early College HS  
[Andrew Vanasse](#), Chestnut TAG  
[Talia Wray](#), Discovery Polytech Early College HS

### **TLT Advisory Legacy Members:**

[Darryl Delzie](#), Kennedy Middle School  
[Ann Haughton](#), Forest Park Middle School  
[Kim O'Grady](#), Kiley Prep