

BUILDING A PROFESSION

Elevating teachers by transforming
and supporting their learning



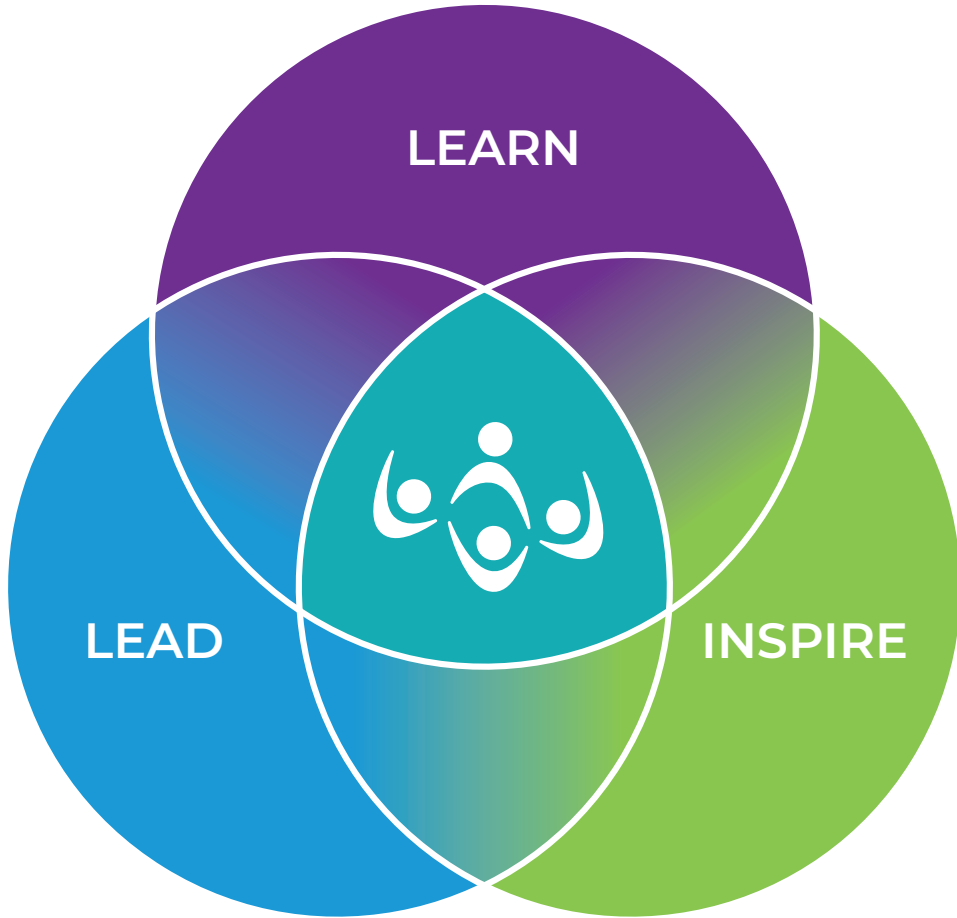
ARIZONA
K12 CENTER



The urgency for young people in Arizona to have access to excellent teachers has never been greater. Today's students will be our nation's future leaders, thinkers, and problem-solvers, and the demands on them will be significant.

Arizona must be able to rise to this important challenge by treating and supporting teachers as the true professionals they are. By providing Arizona's teachers with transformational professional learning and leadership opportunities that meet the demands of the 21st century, the Arizona K12 Center will continue to ensure that Arizona's students have access to educators that are empowered to support them as they gain the critical knowledge, skills, and dispositions that they will need to successfully navigate a complex future.

Almost 35 years after the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy published its report *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*,¹ the field of teaching continues to struggle with being viewed as a 'true profession.' As scholar Jal Mehta points out in his work, without substantial change, the field of teaching will not be able to attract and retain the types of talented, committed, and innovative practitioners that are needed to sustain the profession.² The Arizona K12 Center has been, and continues to be, dedicated to this very concern.



LEARN

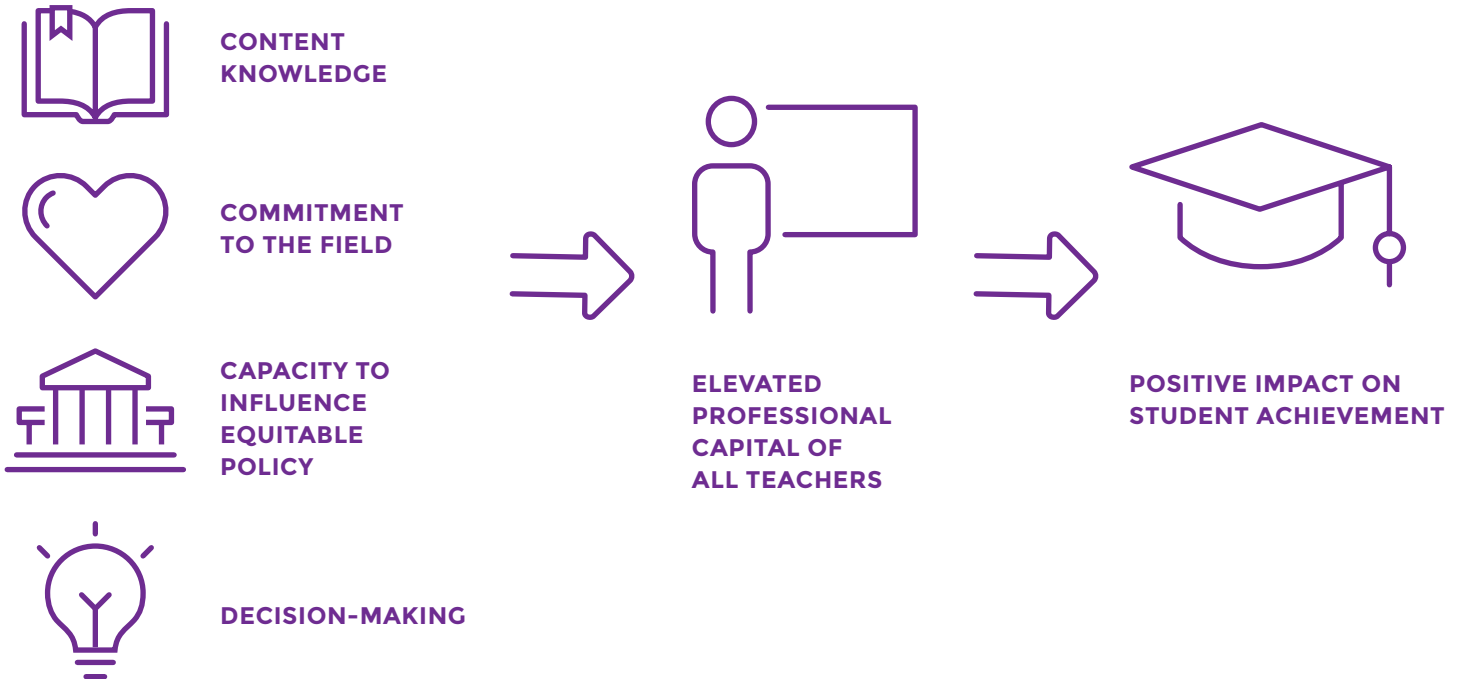
A woman with long, wavy hair and a young girl wearing a black hijab with white dots are looking at a book together. The woman is on the left, leaning over the book, and the girl is on the right, resting her chin on her hand. The background is a blurred classroom setting. The entire image has a blue and purple color overlay.

If the Arizona K12 Center develops learning opportunities that facilitate innovation and critical thinking in the classroom, then Arizona's students will have the critical knowledge, skills, and dispositions to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

Ample and robust research supports the notion that highly effective professional learning for teachers has a direct impact on student achievement. For the past several decades, the American school system, with its strong emphasis on standards-based school reform, has put a premium on what students know and are able to do.³ But recent studies suggest that the hyper-focus on student learning should not be limited to students alone. In fact, initiatives that focus strictly on student achievement fail without giving equal focus to the professional learning of teachers. A report by the National Staff Development Council asserts, “If we want all young people to possess the higher-order thinking skills they need to succeed in the 21st century, we need educators who possess higher-order teaching skills and deep content knowledge.”³

In order to increase the skills and knowledge of teachers, scholars support the need for continuous development to elevate the ‘professional capital’ of all teachers.⁴ This has been shown to have a significant positive effect on the professionalizing of teachers. Professional capital is not limited to content knowledge, but includes commitment to the field and capacity to influence equitable policy and decision-making. A stronger emphasis on teacher agency is likely to result in increased professional capital. A 2016 report *Moving from Compliance to Agency*⁵ makes a clear distinction between ‘traditional agency,’ which is characterized by passive participation in professional development events, and ‘emergent agency,’ defined by empowered teachers identifying their own learning objectives and engaging in continuous improvement.⁵

EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR TEACHERS HAS A DIRECT IMPACT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT



The Arizona K12 Center focuses on programs that move a teacher's practice forward. We make sure that what we offer meets the needs of teachers across the continuum of practice. In recent years, the Center has focused its efforts on the implementation of the Professional Learning Plan, technology integration, and support for preservice and early career teachers.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLAN

Arizona K12 Center's **Professional Learning Plan** has evolved over the years and provides teachers a road map to guide their own professional learning. This effort is informed by research on the powerful implications of 'teacher agency,'⁵ which centers teachers as the most important actors in improving student learning. It gives **teachers voice and agency** over their own professional learning and can serve as a powerful source of qualitative and quantitative data on teaching and learning. Grounded in standards

and data, the Professional Learning Plan's tools and resources serve as a point of reflection for teachers to develop a plan for their own professional learning that impacts students.

TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

How do we ensure that teachers know how to integrate 21st century tools so that the learning is not about the device but the learning itself? With the advancement of the internet, more and more of today's technologies are accessible to a greater number of students. But as scholar Linda Darling-Hammond cautions us, "When technologies try to replace teachers, research consistently finds little benefit."⁶ The Center works diligently to support teachers as they develop the confidence and know-how to bring these tools to life in the classroom. Arizona's **Technology Integration Matrix** was first introduced in 2011 by the Arizona K12 Center. A great deal has changed since then, but

what has been consistent is this tool's use by educators worldwide. With updated lesson plans and videos on the horizon, as well as an advisory team, the Technology Integration Matrix will not only continue to be relevant but will serve as a **repository of innovative teaching strategies and ideas** from some of Arizona's best teachers.

SUPPORT FOR PRESERVICE AND EARLY CAREER TEACHERS

Research shows that teacher turnover is highest for teachers who enter the field unprepared,⁷ yet Arizona schools need every teacher to stay and thrive. The Center has been tackling this problem since its inception. All teachers start out wanting to be their very best. By introducing the work of the Arizona K12 Center early on in **preservice and the first years of a teacher's career**, we are building strong professional learning habits through **targeted learning opportunities**. Just as educators are expected to

differentiate for their students, so should specific support efforts differentiate for teacher learning. The Center's programs **Fueled for Success** for preservice students and **Sharpen Your Skills** for beginning teachers are designed to meet adult learners where they are to help them move their practice forward.

Policymakers often act as if teachers need to be 'fixed' and told what to do but, with guidance and support, the answers are often already in the classrooms waiting to be uncovered. Empowering teachers to improve their own practice is the hallmark of the Arizona K12 Center. We are proud of the support we provide teachers in all phases of their careers.

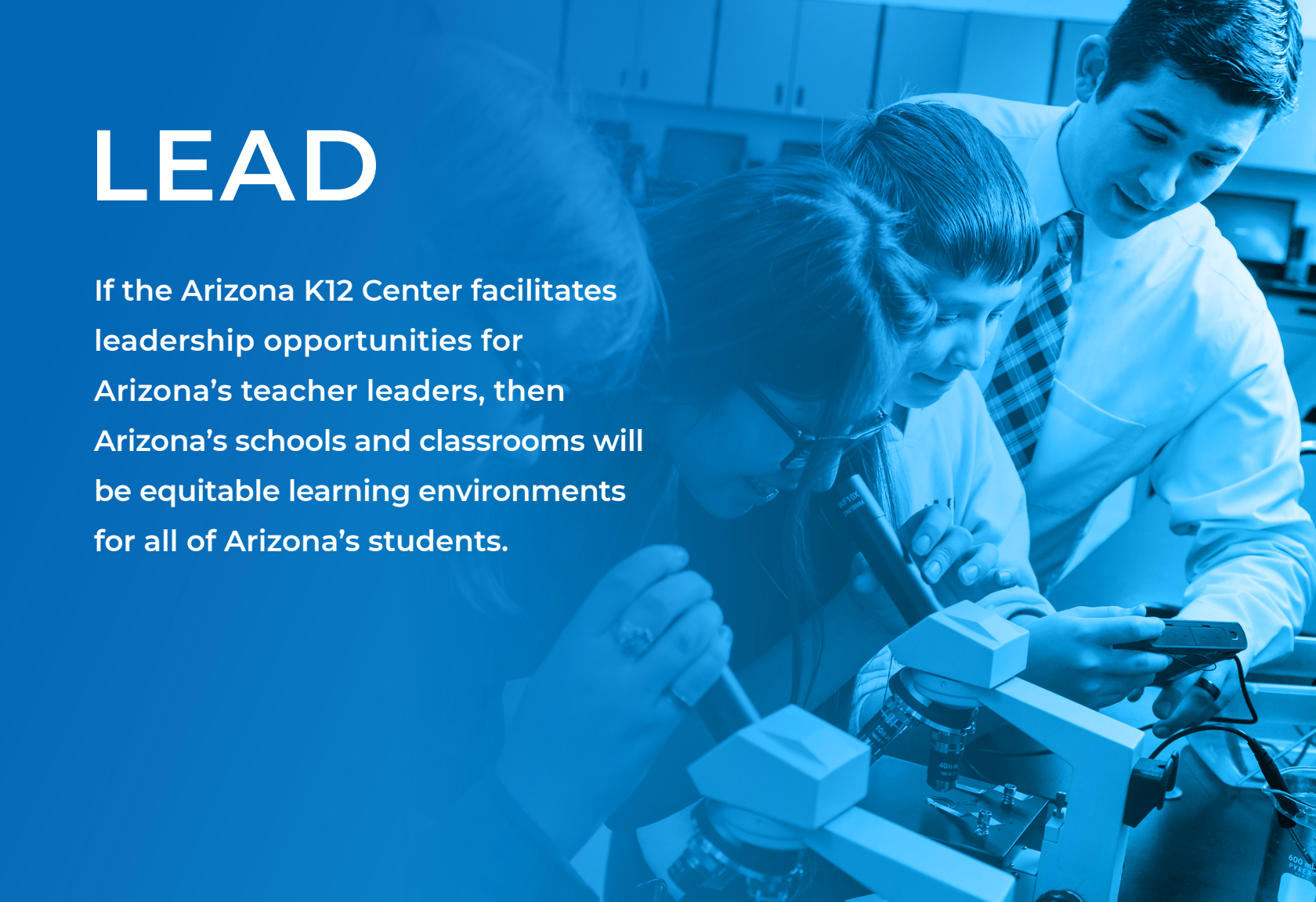
“My goal is to be the lead learner in my classroom. I learn from and with my students and colleagues. I strive to model the habits of curiosity, wonder, and growth mindset for my students.”



Beth Maloney, NBCT, Dysart Unified School District

LEAD

If the Arizona K12 Center facilitates leadership opportunities for Arizona's teacher leaders, then Arizona's schools and classrooms will be equitable learning environments for all of Arizona's students.



John Dewey's late 19th century vision reminds us that the essential knowledge of the teaching profession is constructed within the classroom setting by the day-to-day lived experiences of teachers. Teachers should, as Dewey suggested, be treated as professionals capable of taking "intellectual initiative" and organizing their own work, rather than relying heavily on outside consultants.⁸

Teachers cannot simply take autonomy, however. Central to the notion of teacher leadership are the trust and discretion that school and system leaders are willing to demonstrate. As a report from the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy suggests, teachers must be trusted to "think for themselves, act independently, collaborate with others, and exercise critical judgement" if they are to teach their students to do the same.¹

When teachers are supported to act as professionals, they become leaders. Educators representing a broad range of contexts (e.g., PK-12 education, higher education, state agencies, etc.) conclude that teacher leaders, by virtue of the professional relationships they sustain with their colleagues, have a tremendous amount of influence with regards to classroom practice.⁹ While 'school leadership' often connotes principals or other professionals with formal power (e.g., title, formal role, etc.), teacher leaders are able to leverage their relational influence in order to affect significant change in their schools and districts. Furthermore, teacher leaders who are not only masters of their pedagogy, but also well-informed of policy at the local, state, and national levels, are best positioned to advocate for student needs.

SCHOOL AND SYSTEM LEADERS MUST TRUST TEACHERS TO:

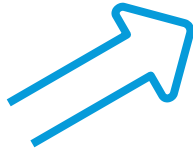
**THINK FOR
THEMSELVES**



**ACT
INDEPENDENTLY**



**COLLABORATE
WITH OTHERS**



**EXERCISE CRITICAL
JUDGMENT**



When given opportunities to lead in their schools, districts, and communities, teachers become empowered to share their knowledge in order to create equitable and high-quality learning environments for all students. While teachers have historically defined their professionalism by their high levels of autonomy, it is essential that autonomy does not lead to isolation.

Scholars suggest that sharing knowledge and establishing standards around quality is what is needed in order for teaching to be viewed as a true profession.¹⁰

The Arizona K12 Center has always maintained that strong teacher leaders are needed for schools to thrive, and that distributed leadership is central to any successful school. For the past 20 years, the Center has worked tirelessly to help teachers discover and develop their own capacity for leadership. The Center's work has focused on the development of the **Arizona Teacher Program**

(formerly known as the Arizona Master Teacher Program), where we train and support mentors working with novice teachers, guide teachers through the process of National Board Certification, and develop teacher leaders who lead from both within and outside of the classroom.

NEW TEACHER SUPPORT

Teachers don't need gimmicks to remain in the classroom. What they need are quality learning opportunities and supportive colleagues. For almost 15 years, the Arizona K12 Center, in partnership with the New Teacher Center, has been **training and supporting mentors** who work with novice teachers in their schools and districts. Research shows that well-supported novice teachers are twice as likely to stay in the profession as those that are not.⁷ Grounded in standards, well-designed tools, and high-quality training, schools and districts are seeing powerful results. To sustain our efforts around mentor

support, the Center's work is designed to better meet the needs of today's teachers and students. By providing varying tiers of support, we hope to expand the use of mentoring in this work.

The **Arizona Teachers Academy** was initiated two years ago and we are now seeing the graduates from this program in classrooms throughout Arizona. Working with schools and districts throughout the state, the Arizona K12 Center wants to ensure these graduates have access to a high-quality mentor who is in their classroom observing, providing feedback, and helping them move their practice forward.

NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION

In Arizona, the pursuit of **National Board Certification** is synonymous with the Arizona K12 Center. For over 10 years, we have been supporting and guiding teachers through their pursuit of Board certification. Today, we have

almost 1,500 National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) who can be found in classrooms throughout Arizona. More importantly, we have been partnering with districts to help discover meaningful ways NBCTs can lead from both within and outside of the classroom. The effects of NBCTs on student performance are supported by research and shown to be positive in terms of student gains on reading and math assessments.¹¹ Through additional funding by the Arizona Board of Regents and the **Arizona Teachers Academy**, the Center seeks to broaden and deepen our work around National Board Certification with the end goal of not only retaining our teachers, but developing new roles and opportunities for them.

TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Informed by research on teacher leadership¹² and in partnership with the Center for Teaching Quality,¹³ the Arizona K12 Center created its

own Arizona **TeacherSolutions Team**. This team of 16 teacher leaders spend the year crafting and pursuing their own leadership journeys to provide models for other aspiring teacher leaders. The past two years have focused on equity and have culminated with team members inspiring others by sharing their stories and learning at the annual **Teacher Leadership Institute**. Their stories serve as a catalyst for change and demonstrate that leadership is not a title but, rather, the actions we take to create change.

Teacher leadership has been central to the mission of the Arizona K12 Center since we began this work 15 years ago. We know that when we see leaders who look like us and teach students like ours, we better understand our own limitless potential. That is why our goal remains to showcase the powerful work of Arizona's teacher leaders.

“It doesn’t matter how many tasks you check off your list, how many programs you build, or how many systems you maintain. If you don’t inspire individuals to leverage their strengths for the greater good, then your impact has room to grow.”



Christie Olsen, NBCT, Lake Havasu Unified School District

INSPIRE

If the Arizona K12 Center shares the inspirational stories and practices of Arizona's teachers, then more students will have access to innovative and creative approaches in learning.



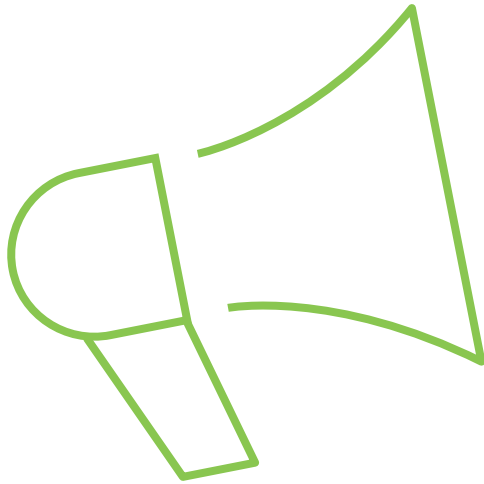
Teachers who have access to high-quality professional learning experiences and are trusted and respected as leaders feel empowered to innovate in their schools and inspire their students and colleagues. Researchers from the Learning Policy Institute found that teachers' leadership capabilities are strengthened by opportunities to lead beyond the classroom as they share innovative practices and broaden their professional learning networks. They further found that teachers felt inspired by their own work and reported feeling 'proud and empowered.'¹⁴

But mere access to these kinds of experiences is not enough. Given the highly social and relational aspect of teaching, most teachers engage in frequent storytelling with their colleagues in order to make sense of their daily interactions with students; share their classroom experiences; and counteract the isolated nature of the profession. But the daily informal and varied levels of storytelling that occur in teacher

workspaces and lunch areas are unlikely to have any systemic impact on the practice.¹⁵ Teachers need support in crafting and sharing their stories so that the work they do in their classrooms can inspire and impact the broader community. Research shows that when teachers share their stories, colleagues are able to reflect on their own practices and consider new possibilities.¹⁶

Inspiration is what moves us forward and challenges us to think differently. It is often what keeps us going when everything around us seems to be falling apart. Teachers are also often inspired through the stories and voices of other teachers. The Arizona K12 Center has been a source of inspiration for so many teachers. Using their voices as our inspiration, we continue the teacher blog ***Stories From School AZ***, the production of our podcast, ***3Ps in a Pod***, and to strengthen our use of social media to tell the stories of teachers, including the revamped Arizona K12 Center blog ***Homerroom***.

WHEN TEACHERS SHARE THEIR STORIES,
COLLEAGUES CONSIDER NEW POSSIBILITIES



STORIES FROM SCHOOL AZ

Being able to shine a light into our classrooms and tell the stories about the intersection of policy and practice is central to ***Stories From School AZ***. With 20 bloggers throughout Arizona, *Stories From School AZ*, in partnership with the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession, shares unvarnished stories on a wide range of topics including assessment, literacy, and equity. Since 2010, teachers have shared their own stories of inspirational educators, their first days of teaching, and great moments of humility.

3PS IN A POD

Wanting to tell the stories of practice, policy, and passion was the impetus for the launch of the Center's podcast, ***3Ps in a Pod***. Never did we imagine that schools would use it as a form of professional learning in PLCs. With 21,000 downloads and counting, this podcast continues to be a viable avenue for not only inspiring others but for learning. Its ubiquitous nature makes our reach profound. In the coming year, we plan to use it as a vehicle to tell more in-depth stories in a series format around equity and student well-being, as well as a place to share stories directly from the classroom.

HOMEROOM

By harnessing social media, we have been able to tell and share the stories of teacher leaders through our *YouTube* channel and our blog ***Homeroom***. More importantly, we have actively engaged learners and leaders throughout Arizona in the things they care most about. *Homeroom* gives us a chance to focus on such heady topics as school safety and standards to more light-hearted topics such as dressing on a teacher's salary and making the most of your morning commute.

The Arizona K12 Center has always operated on the fundamental belief that inspired teachers inspire others. In the summer of 2018, the Center's Board of Directors charged the Center to "elevate teaching and learning by sharing the innovative practices of Arizona's teachers." With this front and center, we will advance this work by continuing to share the inspirational stories through further development of *Homeroom*.

“A teacher that inspires greatly impacts the lives of their students far beyond the classroom walls. To inspire is to forge strong, lifelong relationships.”

Treva Jenkins, NBCT, Maricopa Unified School District



What's Next

LEARN. Professional learning is enhanced when it is job-embedded and grounded in data. We want to expand the use of our Professional Learning Plan within districts and in preservice. Its Reflective Tool can be a powerful source of qualitative and quantitative data around teaching and learning. With accompanying standards, teachers have the opportunity to design a professional learning plan that works for them in the context of their teaching.

LEAD. Teacher leaders need meaningful leadership roles that extend their reach and maximize their expertise. We want to explore the feasibility of offering a meaningful teacher fellowship program where teachers can expand their own critical knowledge, skills, and dispositions around teacher leadership. While still in its infancy stages, we see this as not only a meaningful learning and leading experience but also an opportunity to connect and engage with local, state, and national policymakers.

INSPIRE. Inspiration is what moves us forward and challenges us to think differently. We want to elevate the use of *Homeroom* to be more interactive. Using *3Ps in a Pod*, we will share the stories of Arizona Teachers Academy graduates from their first days and years in teaching through learning and leadership opportunities along the way. We firmly believe that when we do this, we inspire others to do the same.

For the past 20 years, the Arizona K12 Center has elevated teachers by transforming and supporting their learning. We know what works. Teaching is a complex profession that requires support all along its continuum. We possess that support, and, through collaborative partnerships, will continue to challenge ourselves to learn, lead, and inspire. It is our job to meet each teacher where they are and help them move their practice forward. Arizona's students deserve no less.

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Join the Arizona K12 Center
as we encourage teachers
to learn, lead, and inspire so
Arizona's students can flourish.

Learn more at **AZK12.ORG**

602-443-6444 • info@azk12.org



“When teachers learn, kids learn;
when teachers lead, kids lead;
and when teachers are inspired,
kids are inspired.”

– Kathleen Wiebke, NBCT, Executive Director