
Instructional Partnership Initiative Teacher Guidebook



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Introduction & Welcome

Welcome to the Instructional Partnership Initiative (IPI). Thank you for participating in this approach focused on professional support and learning. This guidebook was created to assist your partnership and provide you with the background and context necessary to facilitate a successful year of professional growth. It is based on insightful feedback from teachers like you who participated in the program last year, and it was created with you in mind.

The partnership is designed to help you use the information and feedback you received from evaluation last school year in positive and collaborative ways. All teachers have areas of instruction that can be strengthened, but many do not receive the necessary support to translate evaluation information into positive and lasting change in instructional practice. We hope this initiative will help create supportive, effective partnerships that encourage both teacher and student growth.

In the following pages, we will provide you with in-depth information to guide your partnership.

Making This Guidebook Work for You

This guidebook was created with teachers in mind with the purpose of enhancing your partnership. It will provide guidance for making the most of your time together. In this guidebook you will find an outline of the program expectations as well as examples and suggestions, ranging from a detailed semester timeline to individual meeting activities. For each recommended activity, you will find companion resources for your work, either in the guidebook or online. We hope that each pair will use this guidebook to create a partnership that is catered to its needs, styles, and desires.

Why Have We Been Paired Together?

It is important that teachers receive support to help translate evaluation information into positive and lasting change in instructional practice. This initiative will help you to do just that.

The Instructional Partnership Initiative (IPI) uses indicator-level evaluation data to provide school principals with recommended teacher matches that could benefit from working together in a yearlong partnership. These matches are based on complementary strengths and areas of growth on specific instructional practice area(s). Partners can then work together to refine those instructional practices. The partnership provides opportunities for personalized professional development and a concrete strategy for teacher feedback and improvement. In past years, teachers who invested in the program saw significant improvements in evaluation scores in their areas of focus.



*“My partner and I both have different strengths.
We can both learn more from each other.”
— Participating teacher from 2013-14*

Program Expectations

Your decision to participate in the Instructional Partnership Initiative indicates your interest in professional growth and your willingness to build a strong partnership—this is a critical first step.

This partnership will work well if you commit to meeting regularly. As early as your initial partner meeting, we encourage you to determine the amount of time you can commit to the partnership. Revisit the topic often, and be realistic.

We encourage you to hold an initial meeting as soon as possible, meet regularly throughout the year (at least once a month, if not more), and participate in other partnership activities (e.g., peer observations, lesson planning, co-teaching, etc.) at least several times a semester. Consider using district- or school-level strategic plans or other guidance as you create your partnership goals.

This guidebook outlines possible activities to enhance your partnership throughout the year, as well as detailed resources to lead you through those activities. The suggested activities will be particularly beneficial in the initial phase of your partnership. You will likely find sustaining the partnership and self-identifying activities easier after the initial few meetings. The suggested timeline provides guidance for when these activities should be accomplished. Teachers who invest in the partnership early find it easier to make time for partnership activities throughout the rest of the year.

Suggested Activities

While this guidebook is meant to be used a resource rather than a set of required undertakings, we know that beginning a new partnership can sometimes be challenging. Therefore, we've created a list of recommended initial activities, beginning with your first meeting.

1. Hold an introductory meeting as soon as possible (p. 11-12)

At this meeting, you should get to know one another a bit more, and develop norms. We hope that you will share what you value and need in collaborative work, so that you feel safe in sharing instructional practices with one another.

2. Hold a meeting to set goals (p. 13)

At this meeting, you should develop goals to guide your partnership. We hope that you will share your evaluation data to develop targeted and specific goals to work toward over the course of the year.

3. Participate in Initial Partnership Activities, such as:

Peer Observations (p. 16-18)

Lesson Planning (p. 20)

Co-teaching, modeling, watching video, or other activities (p. 23)

There are many ways to engage in the partnership that will impact planning, instruction, and classroom environment.

The ***Additional Supplemental Resources*** section (p. 22) will lead you to the Instructional Partnership Initiative website, which has additional resources.

Detailed Partnership Guidance

Milestones & Goals Checklist

The following is a worksheet that can be used to track your progress over the year. You can fill it out at the beginning and check off tasks as you go, or you can fill it out in real time as your partnership evolves. We encourage you to meet at least four times a semester, recognizing that the more often you meet the greater the likelihood for growth (we recommend meeting every other week). The professional learning that you undertake in this partnership may qualify as Professional Development Points with proper documentation. Tracking IPI activities on this log may prove a quick and simple way to provide that evidence. More information can be found on p. 20.

Initial Activities

✓ Meeting Type	Notes	Date
<input type="checkbox"/> Introductory meeting		/ /
<input type="checkbox"/> Goal-setting meeting		/ /
<input type="checkbox"/> Partnership Activity 1*		/ /
<input type="checkbox"/> Post-Activity Conference		/ /
<input type="checkbox"/> Meeting		/ /
<input type="checkbox"/> Partnership Activity 2		/ /
<input type="checkbox"/> Post-Activity Conference		/ /
<input type="checkbox"/> Meeting		/ /
<input type="checkbox"/> Partnership Activity 3		/ /
<input type="checkbox"/> Post-Activity Conference		/ /
<input type="checkbox"/> Meeting		/ /

**Partnership activities can be observations, co-teaching, lesson planning, debrief sessions, etc.*

Sample Partnership Activity Sheet

✓	Meeting Type	Notes	Date
✓	Introductory meeting	Met in Sarah's room. Introduced ourselves/got to know one another. Established norms and set up standing meetings (every other Tues.)	Fri. 8/22/14 (30 mins)
✓	Goal-setting meeting (Standing Meeting)	Met in Kevin's room. Walked through our evaluations, figured out we really want to work on: questioning and classroom management.	Tues. 8/26/14 (1 hr)
✓	Pre-Observation (Standing Meeting)	Went and got coffee. Set a plan for Sarah to observe Kevin. Worked through pre-observation doc. in guidebook.	Tues. 9/09/14 (45 min)
✓	Observation	Sarah observed Kevin	Wed. 9/17/14 (20 min)
✓	Post-Observation (Standing Meeting)	Met in Sarah's room. Used debrief template to guide our conversation. Incredibly helpful—we revised our goals as a result.	Tues. 9/23/14 (45 min)
✓	Standing Meeting (Standing Meeting)	Did a check in – Kevin's room. Decided it would be helpful for Kevin to observe Sarah. Worked through pre-observation document.	Tues. 10/07/14 (30 min)
✓	Observation	Kevin observed Sarah	Thur. 10/16/14 (20 min)
✓	Post-Observation (Standing Meeting)	Got coffee after school. Used debrief template. Both seeing progress in practice. Decided working on lesson plan together would be helpful.	Tue. 10/21/14 (45 min)
✓	Lesson Planning (Standing Meeting)	Worked through lesson plans together, helped develop specific activities to enhance questioning. Used the "Supplemental Resource" section of guidebook to access TN lesson plan template.	Tue. 11/04/14 (1hr)
✓	Lesson Plan Debrief (Standing Meeting)	Met in Sarah's room. Debriefed putting co-developed lesson plan into practice. Identified successes and areas for refinement.	Tue. 11/18/14 (45 min)
☐	Semester Wrap-Up	Met in Kevin's room. Discussed the work we've done together over the last five months. Reflected on goals and how we'd like to approach the partnership next semester. Will keep standing meetings, but plan to start with lesson planning, then do observations.	Scheduled: Tue. 12/02/14

Suggested Partnership Meeting Agendas

Below are sample agendas that are helpful in fostering collaborative partnership.

Setting Norms Meeting Agenda

Purpose: Create a trusting, productive partnership

Estimated time: 30 minutes

Meeting resources: This agenda and Norm-Setting Guidance (p. 11-12)

Getting to Know You (If you and your partner already have a working relationship, skip these questions).

- How did you enter teaching, and how did you come to this school?
- How long have you been here? What grades and subjects have you taught?
- What is your class like this year?
- What would you like me to know about you as a teacher, a learner, and a person?

Set partnership norms (see next page for guidance).

- What concerns do you have about a peer partnership aimed at professional growth?
- How can we address or minimize these concerns?
- Norm-Setting Guidance

On the next page you will find guidance for establishing norms for your partnership, but the guidance is not exhaustive. We encourage you to consider a variety of values and norms, such as: honesty, assuming best intentions, respecting each other's time, and being present during meetings.

Guidance: Setting Norms

Areas of Focus	Shared Values	Norm Statements
<p>Trust-building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you want to discuss our partnership publicly? • Are you willing to share evaluation scores? Will you agree to keep what is discussed in meetings confidential? 		
<p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is important to you when you are talking to someone? • How do you communicate that you are looking for solutions versus looking for understanding? • How would you prefer to receive feedback? • What methods of communication work best for you? (email, phone, in person, etc.) 		
<p>Decision Making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has been your experience in collaborative decision-making? What do you find works best? • How do you like to be involved in solving collaborative issues? 		

Goal-Setting Meeting Agenda

Purpose: Set goals and share data

Estimated time: 30-45 minutes

Meeting resources: This agenda, S.M.A.R.T. goal questionnaire (p. 14), and peer partnership cycles (p. 15)

The purpose of today is to determine professional goals for the partnership.

1. Describe your particular context: your students, your classrooms, and even your evaluation data.
2. Based on the outcome of the previous conversation, what are your hopes or outcomes as a result of the peer partnership? What do you hope to gain? Think about short- and long-term goals; tangible, specific, and realistic about what you can achieve.
3. How will you measure your success and improvement?
4. What is your work plan for the semester/year? Your partnership cycle will last one year (pp. 12-13 may be helpful in planning your work together).
5. How often should you meet? (Strong partnerships meet frequently for planning and debrief sessions, in addition to regular check-ins. Setting a standing meeting can be particularly valuable. It is also recommended that partners observe each other's classroom several times per semester. You might consider scheduling this -- or another activity -- at this time.)

Additional Goal-Setting Resources

Below is a one-page resource adapted from Project SMART that will assist you in forming your goals. In order to foster a productive and comfortable environment for both partners, norms and expectations should be clearly articulated.

S.M.A.R.T. Goal Questionnaire

Goals:

Specific. What will these goals accomplish? How and why will they be accomplished?

Measurable. How will you measure whether or not your goals have been reached?

Achievable. Is it possible? Do you have the necessary resources to accomplish your goals? Will meeting your goals be challenging yet possible?

Results-focused. What is the reason, purpose, or benefit of accomplishing the goal? What is the result (not activities leading up to the result) of your goals?

Time-bound. What is the established completion date, and does that completion date create a practical sense of urgency?

Revised Goal:

Peer Partnership Cycles

Peer partnership, like many models of organizational change, has a cycle. Peer partnership cycles can be used to envision your work throughout the course of the year, or it can be helpful with one specific partnership activity. Below is one example, but a partnership could develop their own cycle together.

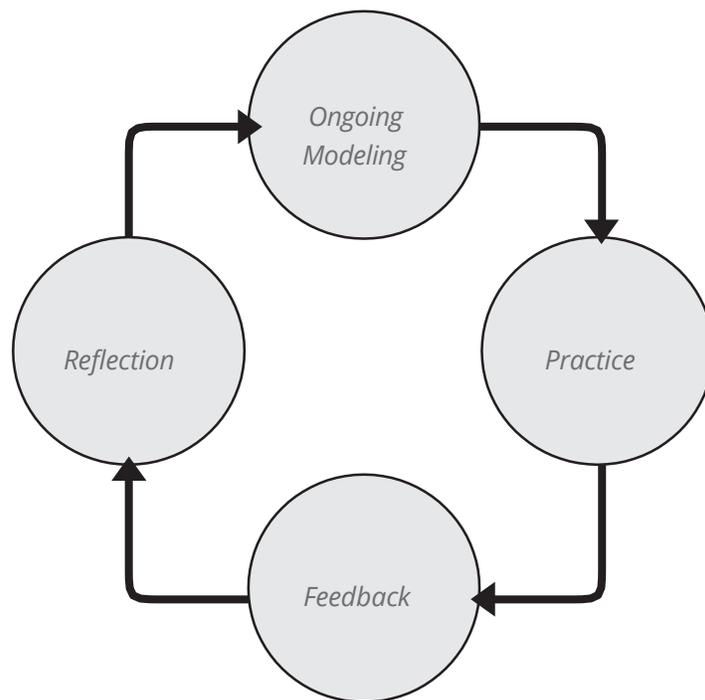
Over the course of the year:

- identify areas of focus
- participate in activities to strengthen those areas of focus
- debrief on the activity's impact
- reflect

Specific to a singular partnership activity, such as peer observation:

- identify area of practice to look for in your partner's lesson
- observe
- debrief and offer feedback
- reflect

Sample Cycle of Effective Professional Development Through Partnership



By discussing the peer partnership cycle as a team and mapping it out together, you are more likely to identify problem areas as well as to commit to the cycle. Consider creating a cycle of your own—containing as much detail as appropriate. *Note:* a partnership cycle does not need to have four components per the example; you can include more or fewer components to fit your needs.

Peer Observation

Purpose: Intentional observation will help ground your practice. It is recommended to approach peer observation through three meetings: Pre-Observation, Observation, and Debrief.

Estimated time: 45 minutes (Prep/Debrief) 20-45 minutes (Observation)

Meeting resources: Pre-observation questions (p. 17), observation template (p. 18) and debrief questions (p. 19)

Peer observation is a critical partnership activity. The included materials will help you prepare, observe, and reflect upon your observations. If your schedules do not allow you to observe one another, we recommend working with your principal to provide the opportunity for co-observing another class together.

Envision each observation to have three components, each addressed in a separate meeting:

Component 1	Prepare for the observation together (see <i>Pre-Observation Questions</i> , p. 17)
Component 2	Observe partner's class (see <i>Observation Template</i> , p. 18)
Component 3	Meet together to debrief/discuss the observation (see <i>Debrief Questions</i> , p. 19)

Peer observations should be a safe space where you can receive constructive feedback and observe key practices in action. In peer observations, the goal is not to be “perfect” or to be “on” for the observation. Rather, you should present an authentic teaching episode where both your strengths and needs are on display for your partner to see and discuss with you in the debrief session. Keep partner norms and expectations in mind, ensuring that you respect one another's space in the classroom.

Pre-Observation Questions

Consider discussing these questions before your observation.

- How can I best respect your classroom space?
- Are there any classroom dynamics I should be aware of?
- What indicators do you recommend I look for [your area of instructional growth/strength]?
- What is your plan to embed your area of instructional growth/strength into this lesson?
- How long would you like me to observe?
- When can we get together after the lesson? If there is not a standing meeting established, make sure that your debrief session is scheduled soon after the observation.

Observation Template

Use this template to guide your peer observations

Peer Partnership Goal	
Agreed Area of Focus	Indicators/"Look Fors"
Evidence in Students	Evidence in Teacher
Things the teacher has done well <small>(e.g., structure, clarity, pace, organization, interaction, body language, visual aids, enthusiasm, etc.)</small>	Areas for reflection and possible improvement
Notes, Questions, and Next Steps	

Debrief Questions

Before your meeting, take some time to individually reflect on what went well and what could be improved.

- How do you think the lesson went?
- In what ways did the teacher's instruction help students?
- What did you notice the teacher could improve upon? What did students struggle with?
- What practices did the observed teacher use that related to the instructional area of focus? How were they successful? What could be improved, and based on what evidence?
- What barriers did you find/notice in implementing these practices?
- How can you continue working on/refining these areas of practice in future classes?
- What are our goals for our next observation?

Lesson Planning Meeting

Purpose: To create rigorous, well-organized lesson plans that are student-centered while collaborating, getting new ideas, and learning how your partner plans

Estimated time: 30-45 minutes

Resources: Multiple templates are available via www.team-tn.org/IPI/

After you have identified areas of growth and the goals surrounding them, consider how these goals will translate into classroom practice. Keep in mind what might work best for your students, what you are most comfortable with, and how the lesson plan can guide the implementation of these goals.

Partnership Activity Documentation

The following chart provides you with the space and the opportunity to document the work that exists in the partnership. You may find this useful as you reflect on specific experiences and plan next steps later in the year. This documentation could also be useful in providing evidence to support the professionalism component of your annual evaluation.

Additionally, teachers can earn professional development points (PDPs) for time spent collaborating as part of IPI. PDPs can be added to an educator's record via [TNCompass](#); the following log can be used as documentation for PDP submission.

Additional Supplemental Resources

The Instructional Partnership Initiative (IPI) is committed to continuous improvement. There is a growing body of resources and materials that may support peer partnership and facilitate strong activities. A range of additional material, including some developed by the Tennessee Department of Education, is available via the IPI website: www.team-tn.org/IPI/.

Resources include:

- Alternative templates for partner activities such as:
- Peer observation
- Lesson planning
- Co-teaching guides
- Videos of effective practice

For more information, please write to us at TEAM.Questions@tn.gov.



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

A quick guide to your most frequently asked questions is below. We have also listed page numbers where additional information can be found throughout the guidebook.

Why is the department involved in this initiative? What does it have to do with teacher evaluation? (p. 6)

Most teachers are evaluated regularly, but few receive the support they need to use the feedback from their evaluations to improve their practice. The IPI can help teachers do just that, and it provides an opportunity for increased collaboration and professional learning.

While this initiative uses data from the evaluation system to propose matches, it is not a part of the evaluation process. Rather, the IPI is a tool for using data from the evaluation system to improve practice. Teachers are not evaluated based on their participation. Finally, even though test scores are part of the state evaluation system, they are not used in creating the matches. The IPI is entirely focused on improving instructional practice based on scores from classroom observations.

Why should my school or district implement the IPI?

The pilot study of the initiative showed significant positive effects, including increased student test scores, increased teacher evaluation scores, and more positive views of evaluation among teachers in participating schools. IPI is a simple, no-cost way to provide teachers with personalized professional learning and to build capacity at each school, without requiring a large time commitment. In addition, most participating teachers enjoyed the ability to collaborate and reflect on their practice.

How are teachers paired? (p. 6)

Evaluation data is used to make suggested teacher pairs based on teachers' complementary strengths and areas of growth on specific instructional practice area(s). This matching is done based on indicator-level observation scores from previous evaluations, and not overall observation scores. The focus of the pairings is not on teacher performance but rather on the recognition that professionals always have areas in which they can improve, and there is usually someone around who can help them in that endeavor. As a result, these partnerships should allow teachers to collaborate on specific practices.

Principals may refine the suggested matches as they see fit. Previous principals have made decisions based on teachers' personalities, experience, schedules, and grades/subjects taught.

What do teachers do?

The IPI guidebook provides a number of suggestions, but all activities are determined by the teacher pair. We encourage partners to set goals and develop a plan to meet these goals early in the year. Past participants have found meeting regularly and observing classroom practices to be particularly helpful. You can find more detail on the website at www.TEAM-TN.org/IPI/.

Is this a mentoring or coaching program?

Instructional partnerships are meant to be true partnerships between two teachers. Pairings are made based on specific and complementary strengths and areas of growth informed by classroom observation. This in no way speaks to one's overall ability as a teacher; both teachers will bring unique perspectives into their partnership that will allow each of them to grow professionally and learn from one another.

What's the role of the principal in each partnership?

The principal takes a small role in the beginning of the year to establish the partnerships. Otherwise, participating teachers should own the partnership together. Principals can provide support and guidance, but participating teachers determine what their unique partnership will look like.

What is the time commitment?

For principals, we ask that principals refine the partnership matches where they see fit, speak to teachers individually to ask them to participate, and speak to partners together to kick off the initiative. Principals may also check in with pairs throughout the year to see how the partnership is going.

For teachers, regular meetings are strongly encouraged in order to provide each teacher with a valuable experience; however, they should not expect an excessive time commitment. The IPI is designed to be flexible in order to accommodate teachers' busy schedules; partners can commit as much time as they are able to invest.

Does my school or district have to pay for this?

No, there is no cost for schools or districts to set up instructional partnerships. All guidance materials will be provided free of charge.

Has this been tested before?

The IPI has been piloted in multiple districts across the state. Teachers participating in partnerships improved their students' achievement scores significantly over the course of the year, compared to similar teachers who were not a part of the initiative. Teachers in the partnerships generally reported it to be a valuable experience.

Will teachers get paid for this?

No, teachers will not get paid for participating in this professional learning opportunity. Professional growth that can lead to improved classroom practice and evaluation scores, combined with the satisfaction of sharing expertise and ideas with a colleague, will make the partnership experience worth teachers' time. Students will likely benefit from their teacher's participation in an instructional partnership as well.

I have a question, but it is not listed here.

Email us at TEAM.Questions@tn.gov, and we will be happy to help.