

Principal Guidebook Instructional Partnership Initiative



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Introduction and Welcome

Welcome to the Instructional Partnership Initiative. The Instructional Partnership Initiative (IPI) is a nocost strategy designed to help teachers use the information and feedback they receive in the teacher evaluation process to improve their practice.

Through the IPI, partnerships are made between teachers with strengths in particular areas of practice and teachers who have room to grow in those same areas. These partnerships will enable teachers to work together throughout the year to strengthen their instructional skills. This guidebook provides more detail on how to set up this initiative within your school.

What is the Instructional Partnership Initiative?

IPI is an approach to professional learning and school collaboration that has had success in Tennessee schools in improving teacher practice and school culture, as well as directly raising student test scores. It works as follows:

- The Tennessee Department of Education provides you with fine-grained data-based teacher match suggestions based on rubric observation indicators rather than overall scores.
- These indicators serve as a focus for collaboration aimed at improving specific teaching practices.
- The collaboration leverages in-school expertise for personalized professional learning.
- This professional learning has the **built-in flexibility** that comes with being centered on the needs and activities of the teachers involved.

Why should my school implement IPI?

A pilot study of the initiative showed significant positive effects, including increased student test scores, increased teacher evaluation scores, and more positive views of evaluation and school culture among teachers in participating schools. IPI is a simple, low-cost way to provide teachers with personalized professional learning and to build capacity at your school. In addition, most participating teachers enjoyed the ability to collaborate and reflect on their practice.

How is IPI different from other professional learning collaborations?

IPI is focused on improving teaching practices by highlighting specific indicators on the observation rubric as targets for partnership work. It is data-based, using evaluation indicators to match teachers in partnerships so everyone can learn rather than using overall scores to match higher and lower performing teachers for mentorships. It is personalized and flexible so that teacher partners can focus on how they want to address targeted observation indicators.

How can IPI be used with other professional learning collaborations?

If your school has a mentoring program or Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), consider using match suggestions to set up partnerships within these groupings, and having them focus on specific teaching practices in addition to other areas of learning. You may also wish to use partnerships to help launch PLCs by having partners sometimes meet with other pairs to, for example, consider how their

focus practices work together. The department and TEAM coaches are happy to work with you around specific programs to integrate IPI into your school.

What is the relationship between IPI and teacher evaluation?

While it uses data from the evaluation system to propose matches, IPI is not a part of the evaluation process. Rather, IPI is a way to support teachers in improving practice by using evaluation data. IPI offers sustained and collaborative support focused on specific observation indicators by strategically matching teachers for such improvement work. It is not based on overall evaluation scores; rather, matches target specific indicators to allow for focused, personalized professional learning

What is the role of the principal in each partnership?

Participating teachers will determine what their unique partnership will look like, but principals can offer support and clear expectations that can help IPI succeed. Principals can:

- Consider the suggested matches to determine the best matches for your teachers. Consider school-level issues such as teacher subject areas, grade levels, schedules, and personalities.
- Introduce IPI to participating teachers by explaining the initiative, providing the specific indicator(s) on which you want each partnership to focus, and offering clear expectations for how they can work with their partners.
- Provide partners with support. This may mean giving participating teachers collaborative work time, suggesting IPI activities, checking in with partners to hear what they are learning, and making sure they receive credit for participation in this professional learning opportunity when completing professionalism rubrics. It may also be used as a follow up from evaluation observations as a vehicle for teachers to create their own action plans.

What is the role of the teachers?

Teachers set goals for their partnerships around improving their teaching practices, create action plans for achieving those goals, support one another in ways that target specific indicators of these practices, and reflect on their progress together. The IPI guidebook provides a number of suggestions that previous participating teachers have found helpful—meeting regularly, planning together, observing classroom practices—but all activities are determined by the teacher pair.

Implementing the IPI

Establishing the IPI is easy and requires a minimal time commitment. There are only four key steps for principals:

Step One: Develop teacher partnerships based on proposed matches.

Step Two: Meet with each teacher individually. **Step Three:** Schedule partnership meetings. **Step Four:** Confirm partnership information.

Step One: Develop teacher partnerships based on proposed matches.

The Tennessee Department of Education will contact principals through email and provide potential partnership matches. This information will allow you to pair your teachers in partnership, either using the suggested matches or refining the matches based on your knowledge of what is best for your faculty. **It is most important that you develop a final list of partnerships in a timely manner**. In the past, principals and teachers have found that getting the partnerships established as soon as possible was key to the program's success.

How are teachers paired?

The department uses prior-year scores from classroom observation rubrics in a matching algorithm to propose a set of recommended partnerships that is 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 overall 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.

Through an online portal, the department will provide principals with a menu of partnership match suggestions. Principals refine the suggested matches given their knowledge of local context; previous principals have made decisions based on teachers' schedules, personalities, experience, and grade or subject taught. Some have made adjustments or included additional pairs based on evaluation-based areas of reinforcement and refinement. Using their selected matches, principals then introduce IPI to pairs and support their work throughout the year.

How can I use proposed matches to develop partnerships?

Below you will find an explanation of the resources you will receive to make the best possible matches. Please use your expertise of your staff and school to develop and refine your matches. However, each teacher targeted should be included in a partnership and each participating teacher should be included in only one partnership.

Guide to IPI Portal

As an IPI school, you will have access to the IPI Portal that contains your matches.

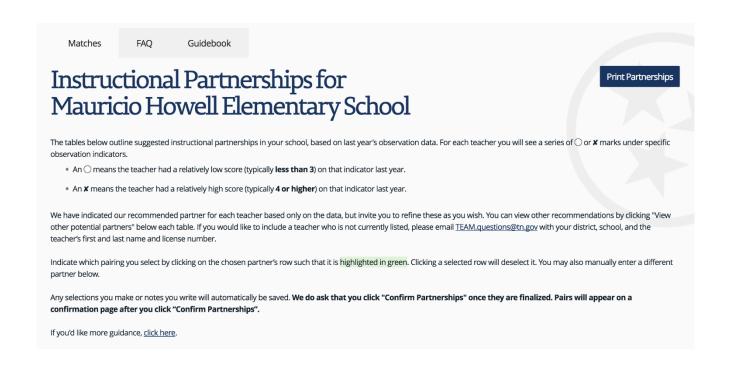
Accessing the IPI Portal

There are two ways to access the IPI Portal.

- Principals who received access to Single Sign On (SSO) from the department can access the IPI
 Portal with that login. For instructions on setting up SSO, <u>click here</u>. Once SSO is set up, an icon for
 the IPI Portal will appear on the dashboard.
- Principals who do not yet have an SSO login will receive a separate username and password from the department to access the IPI Portal at https://ipi.tnk12.gov. If you do not have access to SSO and did not receive login credentials, please reach out to Paul.Davis@tn.gov.

1. Viewing recommended matches and other potential partners

Once in the portal, instructions are provided for viewing, accepting/changing, and submitting matches. Further guidance on logging into the portal is located at http://team-tn.org/ipi/ipi-for-principals/



The website includes a separate table for each teacher in your school who has been identified, based on observation scores alone, as an individual who could benefit from the support of an instructional partner.

For each of these teachers, the names of proposed partners are located below the original teacher's name. First, one proposed partner, based solely on the data, will appear for each teacher. This is the "recommended" pairing.

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Please note that these lists and matches were generated based on the best information available at the time of matching.

To see other potential instructional partners for this teacher, click on "View other potential partners" at the bottom of the chart. These are other teachers whom you might consider as alternatives to the "recommended" partner.

2. Choosing partners

To indicate the desired pairing, click on the chosen partner's row. Clicking a selected row again will deselect it. If you have a different partner for this teacher in mind that does not appear in the expanded list, a teacher partner can be manually entered by clicking "Manually pair another teacher."

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Extended Partnerships Option

IPI was initially designed to create matches that only pair teachers in the school who had the most significant instructional weaknesses with those who had the greatest complementary strengths. However, many principals have noted that they would like to have the option of using the program across the school. If you would like to view an additional and broader set of matches that pair those teachers in your school who are not currently matched, you can email Machel.Mills@tn.gov to request that these be added to your portal page.

3. Confirming matches with teachers

When confirming matches, be sure to:

- a. include each teacher targeted for assistance in a partnership; and
- b. ensure each participating teacher is only assigned to one partnership.

Now you are ready to meet with your teachers individually to discuss partnerships. Do not click "Confirm Partnerships" until teachers have agreed to participate in the initiative. You can log into the portal and update partnerships at any time.

Step Two: Meet with each teacher individually.

While evaluation data is sensitive, it is important that teachers clearly understand why they have been paired. It is possible to explain the pairing without sharing actual evaluation scores. Additionally, it is important to ask teachers individually whether they are willing to participate in an instructional partnership. Below are some talking points to help facilitate these brief meetings.

You will also be provided with a letter you can share with participating teachers to help explain the initiative and its benefits. You can give teachers this information during the initial conversations.

These initial meetings are critical to setting up effective partnerships. However, they do not need to be long, and they can easily be combined with other interactions.

Talking Points: Approaching teachers with identified strengths

Provide context.

- Teachers are matched based on complementary strengths and needs based on last year's evaluation data.
- Teacher strengths complement their partner's areas for improvement.
- Describe why you think they will be successful with this partnership and your confidence in their abilities.

• Frame as a collaborative partnership.

- Teachers do not need to feel like experts to participate; they should work with their partner as equals.
- Reiterate that they are not alone: they will receive a guidebook that will provide a suggested structure and ideas of learning experiences; there are supplemental resources on the website; and you are there to support them.

Emphasize IPI as an opportunity, not an obligation.

- Give the teacher a choice about whether to participate.
- Emphasize that they will also learn and benefit by discussing and reflecting on their craft with a colleague.
- Explain that partnering is an opportunity to help a colleague in the pilot study, teachers targeted for assistance significantly improved their students' achievement scores.

• Listen to and address their concerns.

- Confidentiality: Make sure that these are private conversations and that the teachers know their evaluation scores are private.
- Time: Explain that while regular meetings and activities are expected, this partnership should not be a huge time commitment. If you feel comfortable, you can offer additional support such as release time to all teachers to meet and observe each other.
- Ability: Reiterate that you believe this teacher has the skills to make this partnership effective.

• Encourage questions

- Explicitly tell them to ask questions at any point during the conversation.

 When a teacher asks a question, keep in mind that they may be processing this information for the first time.

Talking Points: Approaching teachers with identified areas for growth

Provide context.

- Explain the Instructional Partnership Initiative and its goals (to help teachers improve their practice through collaborative partnerships).
- Explain that they were matched based on scores in specific areas of practice.
- Be clear that they are <u>not</u> bad teachers, just that they have lower scores in particular area(s)
 of practice.

• Frame as a collaborative partnership.

- Explain that this teacher's partner is not their "coach;" rather, they should work with their partner as equals.
- Reiterate that they are not alone: they will receive a guidebook that will help them set up the
 partnership, there are supplemental resources on the website, and you are there to support
 them.

• Emphasize IPI as an opportunity, not an obligation.

- Explain that this partnership is an opportunity to incorporate feedback, develop a relationship with a colleague, improve practice, and improve evaluation scores.
- Provide context on the pilot study, in which teachers targeted for assistance significantly improved their students' achievement scores.
 Give the teacher a choice about whether to participate.

• Listen and address their concerns.

- Confidentiality: Make sure that these are private conversations and that the teachers know their evaluation scores are private.
- Time: Explain that while regular meetings and activities are expected, this partnership should not be a huge time commitment. If you feel comfortable, you can offer additional support such as release time to meet and observe each other.
- *Ability*: Reiterate that this is not a reflection of their overall ability, but rather an opportunity to improve in a few areas where they have lower scores.

• Encourage questions.

- Explicitly tell them to ask questions at any point during the conversation.
- When a teacher asks a question, keep in mind that they may be processing this information for the first time.

Step Three: Schedule partnership meetings.

After both partners have confirmed they will be working together, consider holding a brief kick-off meeting with the pair. Here, the main goal will be to make the introduction and to ensure that both teachers understand the goals and expectations of the IPI. Again, meeting separately with each pair is critical to set up the partnerships for success. We have included talking points for this meeting on the next page.

Talking Points: Teacher partnership meetings

- Introduce the teachers to each other (if necessary).
- Explain potential benefits.
- Explain the pairing without sharing actual evaluation scores.
 - For example, note specific indicators in which a teacher may need support without discussing those specific evaluation scores.

• Share expectations.

- Be open about strengths and areas for growth.
- Reiterate that consistent contact throughout school year is vital to success.
- Feel free to set more direct expectations. For example, you might ask teachers to meet together for the first time in the next week and request that they observe each other once in the next month.
- Be clear about goals: the partnership should align with your school's mission and values.

• Explain your role.

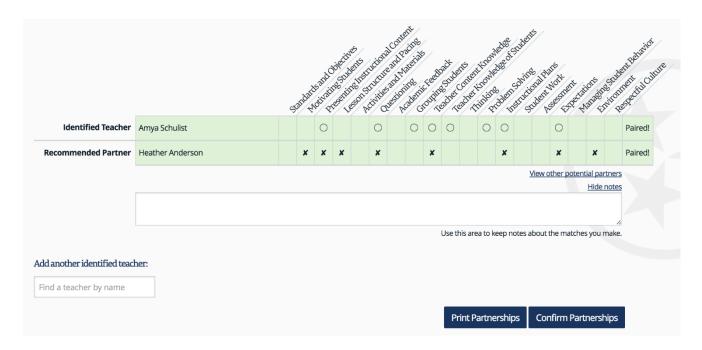
- Explain that the partnership is entirely non-evaluative.
- Explain that it is up to them to develop a good partnership.
- If you feel comfortable, you can offer additional support such as release time to meet and observe each other.
- Be enthusiastic about the partnership.
- Point them to existing resources.
 - Provide each teacher an electronic copy of the IPI Teacher Guidebook. Refer them to the IPI website (www.team-tn.org/IPI/).

Step Four: Confirm partnership information.

As soon as you have made your matches and secured agreement from both participants, return to the IPI Portal and confirm final partnerships.

Steps:

- 1. Log into the IPI Portal via SSO or at https://ipi.tnk12.gov.
- 2. If necessary, you can update your previously chosen partnerships by clicking the "Paired" partner again to deselect it, and then clicking the new partner.
- 3. When your partnerships are correct, click on "Confirm Partnerships." You will then see your final list of partnerships and have the opportunity to print this list.



Thank you for submitting your set of instructional partnerships! We're excited your teachers will be participating this year. **Identified Partnerships** Identified Teacher Partner Teacher Noble Halvorson Audrey Marks Jermey Wilkinson Madalyn Lueilwitz Javon Jacobs Nora Conroy Karina Schmeler Johathan West Abby Wilderman Rachelle Wolff Amya Schulist Heather Anderson Click here to edit your identified partnerships. **Print Partnerships**

Guidance for New Principals

Below are suggestions specifically for principals new to their schools who might be unfamiliar with their teachers' individual strengths and needs.

- Be upfront with teachers. Explain that you want to provide individualized support, but don't yet have the in- depth knowledge of their strengths and needs to know how to support them best.
 These pairings are a way for you to provide personalized professional learning based on their evaluation scores.
- Don't be afraid to make matches based on the data or what you already know about your teachers (grade, subject, schedule, etc.). While many principals do refine suggested matches based on their knowledge of their staff, several proceed with the matches suggested by the data.
- Seek support from another administrator or a teacher leader. Some new principals have asked
 assistant principals who have worked at the school in previous years to manage or support IPI.
 Their knowledge of your staff could help in refining matches and in thinking about how to
 approach teachers.

Advice and Common Practices

Below you will find some common practices and advice from principals that participated in the IPI pilot.

- Think about each teacher's time when making matches. You can reassure teachers that this will not be a huge time commitment. You may also want to:
 - Consider each teacher's schedule. Some principals prefer to partner teachers with the same free period so they can meet regularly. Other principals prefer to partner teachers with different free periods so the teachers can observe each other's classes during their free period.
 - Consider providing release time or coverage for teachers to meet and observe one another.
- Emphasize that IPI is a partnership, rather than a mentoring relationship. Teachers with a particular area for growth may not want to be mentored, and teachers strong in a particular area may not feel "expert" enough to be a mentor. Instead, this program is about both teachers working together to reflect on and improve their practice.
- Frame IPI as an opportunity, rather than a requirement. Teachers should be given the choice to participate and not feel forced. However, you can and should encourage teachers to try it out by explaining how they could benefit from participating.
- Make sure to talk to teachers one-on-one to ask if they'd like to participate. Evaluation is a sensitive topic, and teacher's feelings about their scores should be respected.
- Check in with participating teachers regularly. This does not have to be often or a formal check in. Checking in gives you the opportunity to hear about how IPI is going for them and encourages them to actively engage in IPI activities.

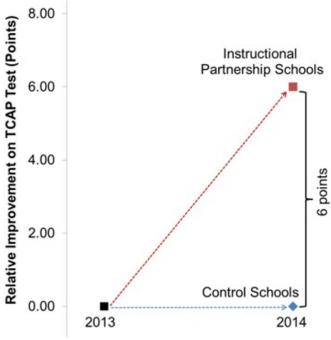
Frequently Asked Questions

Why is the department involved in this initiative? What does it have to do with teacher evaluation?

Teachers need structured guidance and support in order to translate evaluation into lasting instructional change. IPI will help teachers receive that support while providing an opportunity for increased collaboration and professional development.

- While the IPI uses data from the evaluation system to propose matches, it is not a part of the evaluation process. It is a tool to improve practice (and evaluation scores).
- Teachers are not evaluated based on their participation. Even if teachers disagree with their evaluation scores, they can still benefit from the program.
- Even though test scores are part of the state evaluation system, they were not used in creating the matches. The IPI is entirely about instructional practice, based on scores from classroom observations.

Why should my school participate in this program?



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.

What is the time commitment for setting this up?

After matching and launching the initiative, IPI does not require a significant time commitment from the principal. TEAM coaches, as well as district personnel from some districts, will provide principals with extra

support and guidance on how to finalize partnerships, approach teachers, and guide the partnership work.

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. IPI is designed to be flexible to teachers' busy schedules; partners can commit as much time as they decide to and are able to invest.

Do we 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.

How are teachers paired?

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.

How should I refine the matches?

The recommended and potential matches are based on the data. Other considerations might include the following: personalities, experience, schedules, grade/subject area. Every suggested teacher with a specific area for growth should be included in a partnership. Each teacher should participate in only one partnership.

What do teachers do?

A number of suggestions are outlined in the teacher guidebook, but all activities are completely up to them. Our suggestions include:

- Meeting regularly (at least once per month)
- Peer observations/feedback
- Lesson planning
- Co-teaching, modeling, watching video

When can my teachers and I find time for this?

Principal-led conversations with teachers can be brief and happen during normal daily interactions. They should include an individual teacher meeting and a partnership meeting. Teachers can meet whenever works best for the both of them. It is suggested they set a regular meeting time and to try their best to stick to it.

Is this a mentoring or coaching program?

Instructional partnerships are meant to be true partnerships between two teachers. Both teachers will bring unique perspectives into their partnership that will allow each of them to grow professionally through learning from one another and having a partner in self-reflection.

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 can principals do to make partnerships more effective?

Principals who take the time to explain IPI carefully to their teachers are more likely to have successful partnerships. In addition, emphasizing that this is a partnership rather than a mentoring program is key. Finally, checking in with participants regularly and offering support (for example, providing coverage for teachers to observe each other) allows for much more active partnerships.

Has this been tested before?

IPI has been piloted in multiple districts across the state in the last two years and has worked quite well. Teachers targeted for assistance in these districts improved their students' achievement scores significantly over the course of the year, compared to similar teachers who were not a part of the program. Both teachers in the partnerships generally reported learning a lot from the partnership and found the experience to be worth the time and effort.

How can I convince my teachers to want to participate? What is their incentive?

The IPI provides a structure for collaboration and professional growth. It establishes a rare opportunity to get feedback on evaluation scores from another teacher who demonstrates skill in that area. Teachers appreciate the opportunity for individualized professional development. Teachers who are strong in particular areas have said they appreciate the opportunity to take on a leadership role and reflect on their practice through this valuable collaboration. Additionally, with documentation, 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.

Where can I share my feedback about the program?

This initiative supports and encourages continual improvement, and we're more than happy to receive feedback. Please email Machel.Mills@tn.gov to share your feedback throughout the IPI or to ask for additional information or resources that would support the instructional partnerships.

I have a question not listed here.

Please reach out to Machel.Mills@tn.gov with additional questions.