Leadership Matters

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Leadership is essential for elementary science; however, leaders need support just as much as those they lead.

By Page Keeley

Elementary science leaders come in various forms—teacher leaders, instructional coaches, PLC facilitators, resource providers, curriculum or assessment coordinators, professional development providers, new teacher mentors, school principals and administrators, science specialists, and anyone who has influence on elementary teaching and learning of science within the K–16 system. As president of the National Science Education Leadership Association (NSELA), I am pleased to launch a column to explore aspects of developing and supporting elementary science leadership within the classroom, school, district, and beyond. We will share tools, strategies, professional development models, needs of diverse classrooms, resources, and more to support the expanding role of K–5 science leaders. Who is the audience for this column? Those who take on the commitment to strengthen elementary science education for both students and teachers will benefit from this column.

In talking with elementary teacher leaders and specialists, I hear a common theme: year after year, support for elementary science is increasingly shaky. There are many reasons for this, such as ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the concerns that learning loss in mathematics and reading may push time and resources for teaching elementary science to the margins. It has become clear that helping elementary science leaders at every level step up, step into, and maintain their roles is more important than ever before in supporting the vision of what’s worth fighting for in your school. Perhaps you have a professional learning model that other leaders could adopt. Maybe you have a strategy for building K–5 teachers’ confidence to teach science. You might consider sharing how you use a professional publication, whether it is a book or an article, to engage others in improving their practice. Mentors and instructional coaches can share tips for supporting new or novice teachers. You can write about strategies for supporting teachers in using three-dimensional teaching, formative assessment, meaningful integration with literacy and mathematics, or innovative instructional models to build in time for science. Summaries of research studies that help leaders build a case for teaching elementary science or supporting the professional learning needs of teachers are also welcome.

And for the elementary science leaders who will be reading and using the ideas and suggestions in this column, NSELA and Science and Children would love to hear from you. What would you like to see in this column to support the important work you do? Contact Column Editor Kathy Renfrew at ksciencelady@gmail.com with your suggestions or submissions. In the meantime, stay tuned for the next issue of Science and Children for articles by leaders, for leaders. Together we can make a difference to support the foundation for K–16 science learning!

REFERENCES


Page Keeley is the 2022–23 president of the National Science Education Leadership Association (NSELA; nsela.org) and a past-president of NSTA.