

## MELISSA COLLINS

Memphis, TN

### **What attracted you to the Teach Plus TLPL program?**

Professional learning experiences are important because they give me opportunities to reflect over my practice. As a result, I like the TLPL program because educators come together to solve their own problems of practice with little influence from other parties. Teachers have complete autonomy over their professional growth.

### **What course(es) are you currently leading and/or have led through this program?**

Currently, I am leading Math Collaborative Network for grades K-5 with Shelby County School District.

### **Why did you chose this particular topic(s)?**

My district has adopted a new curriculum called Eureka Math. Several of the teachers in my school were having a difficult time adjusting to it. I realized that Eureka Math could be the springboard to aid our students and teachers in connecting with the mathematical shifts and standards.

### **What classroom experience do you bring to it?**

I had a conceptual understanding of how to implement the standards and shifts because of my involvement as a Core Advocate with Student Achievement Partners. I know that kids need to build fluency and have a conceptual understanding of work, and that rigor must be present to move students to the next level.

### **What type of coaching did you receive from Teach Plus?**

Teach Plus used the “train the trainer” model to help me build my leadership capacity. As I was trained, I received guidance and support before delivering training to others. With Teach Plus, I understood the importance of being transparent with my participants and learned the power of sharing my story to make a connection with my participants. I also learned the icebreaker activities, or how to engage participants through hands-on and team building experiences.

### **How did this coaching help you in developing and facilitating the course?**

The coaching helped me to understand how to work with adult learners so they could feel a part of the training. The participants could see themselves as co-facilitators of this work. As a result, the teachers wanted to collaborate so they could grow and develop for better student outcomes.

### **Can you describe the facilitation experience that you led?**

In facilitating the training, I would engage in high impact research for my participants. I would include one or two methods, articles, or strategies for each team. We would discuss the method, strategy, or article and decide what would be its impact in their classroom setting. We also analyzed students' work every session to decide if what we implemented changed student achievement. The participants could see that I was invested as they are in growing as a professional. Every session, we would do a brainstorming activity to reflect on our practices. Participants also presents their work and celebrated their successes!

**What were the participants' reactions?**

The participants were actively involved and engaged. They appreciated the strategies, methods, and research that was part of the program, and embrace the changes for their students and for themselves.

**Did the course participants use the strategies they learned to change their practice? If so, how?**

The participants begin to use the strategies to enhance their practices and to aid students in mastering taught concepts. For example, participants who taught grades K-2 wanted to implement application problems daily to help with conceptual understanding and fluency. As a result, the students began to build an awareness of how to solve the problems using the Read, Draw, and Write method.

**What were some of your own learnings and takeaways from the TLPL experience?**

The TLPL allowed me to take ownership of problems of practice and allowed me to develop solutions and raise the bar for my students. The experience made me realize that learning can be a 360-degree cycle. You must identify a problem of practice, establish a goal, research and implement, and evaluate students' work along the way as your frame of reference.

**How does this PD differ from the PD you generally participate in through your school/district?**

The PD in my school or district has often been mandatory or on a topic/concept that was not beneficial to me as a practitioner. The TLPL is more impactful because I have an opportunity to take ownership of my own learning. I can identify a problem of practice and be engaged in developing a solution for my students and my own practice.

**What has been the effect of this work on your own classroom practice? Do you feel that you've become a better teacher by participating in Teach Plus TLPL?**

My practice has changed due to this work. Analyzing student work has become a priority in my classroom. I identify students' problems so I can implement strategies to support them. The Tennessee Department of Education has recently contacted the superintendent of Shelby County Schools and asked to speak to me because my students scored so well on the 2nd grade TN Ready assessment.

**How would you describe your professional growth in becoming a teacher leader to your peers?**

Teacher leadership allows me to lead change in my school, and at district, state, national, and international levels. As a teacher leader, I am vested in the lives that I touch daily. It is essential for me to be a life-long learner, so I can help students advance in and outside the classroom.

**Would you encourage other teachers to take part in Teach Plus TLPL?**

I would encourage other teachers to take part in Teach Plus TLPL to impact their educational practice.

**If all PD were teacher-led, what effect would it have on the profession?**

If all PD were teacher-led, the profession would change because teachers would see themselves as change agents. They would take ownership of identifying problems and developing solutions which will be a great outcome for students.