

AN OPPORTUNITY CULTURE FOR ALL

MAKING TEACHING A HIGHLY PAID, HIGH-IMPACT PROFESSION

* SUMMARY *

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In most locations, the relationship between organized teachers and reformers remains at best a tenuous truce and at worst a pitched battle. None of us are really getting what we want. Teachers are no closer to achieving the respect and substantial, sustainable rewards for their contributions that they deserve. Student achievement has barely budged.

We see a way out, if leaders nationwide commit to excellent teaching for all students. Achieving this will require new school models that extend excellent teachers' reach—while providing *all* teachers with time for learning on the job in teams, so everyone can develop toward excellence and earn far more, sustainably.

Studies prove that excellent teachers close achievement gaps, cultivate students' higher-order thinking, improve children's lifelong prospects, and bolster our national security and economic power.

However, today's classrooms do not have enough of these teachers—at least, not in today's one-teacher-one-classroom mode. Studies show that only about 25 percent of today's teachers produce enough progress—well over a year's worth of learning growth annually—to help students close achievement gaps and leap ahead. Students starting behind need multiple years of excellent teachers to catch up. Students in the middle need the same to advance to honors work. Even if schools dramatically improved recruiting, retention, and dismissal policies, most students still would not have enough excellent teachers.

In *3X for All: Extending the Reach of Education's Best* (2009) and *Opportunity at the Top* (2011), we presented a vision for reaching every student with excellent teachers in charge of their learning. Schools can use job redesign and age-appropriate technology to extend excellent teachers' reach, directly and by leading other teachers, in fully accountable roles, for more pay—within budget.

As schools and teachers have begun implementing this vision, we have seen potential for extended-reach models to start a virtuous cycle of teacher selectivity, opportunity, and higher pay—for all. We call this an “Opportunity Culture”:

- * **Selectivity** about who enters and remains in teaching becomes easier when schools offer the engaging, developmental, financially rewarding jobs with outstanding peers that high performers want. When good teachers benefit developmentally and financially from having great peers, *everyone* has a reason to advocate for selectivity.
- * **Opportunity** for **career advancement while teaching** and rigorous, **on-the-job learning** become possible when fully accountable, excellent teachers advance by leading, collaborating with, and developing peers in teams to reach more students. Co-teaching on teams where excellence is acknowledged provides authentic on-the-job learning and enables a team's teaching to rise to the level of the most skilled teachers in each instructional area. Paraprofessionals scheduled correctly enable these teams to collaborate during school hours and reach far more students.

- * **Pay** that is substantially higher—six figures on average, within budget—becomes possible, without forcing class-size increases, when teams reach more students than possible in today's one-teacher-one-classroom mode. Less-costly paraprofessionals save teachers time for reach, and academic resource teachers shift into fully accountable teaching roles, making teacher pay increases of 20 to 130 percent possible. Reallocation of *other* spending to higher teacher pay is also crucial to achieve six-figure average pay.

A little history helps to understand why schools are so far from this vision, and why more current and new spending must return to teachers.

Between 1970 and 2010, real per-pupil spending increased 146 percent, but teacher pay per hour remained *flat*. Pay stagnated just as teaching became more challenging. New demands arose to meet individual students' needs within economically, academically, and linguistically diverse classrooms, and results came to include thinking and problem-solving skills, not just basics. Some new funds were crucial to pay for special education and to help English language learners.

But if schools had proportionally invested just two-thirds of these spending increases in teacher pay, *average* pay today would exceed \$100,000. Instead, districts poured money into most everything *except* higher pay. Effectively, schools picked teachers' pockets for decades.

Simultaneously, the job market changed. Other professions

offered substantially greater paid career advancement opportunities and increasingly let the best professionals lead and develop teams. Teaching remained a profession of solo practitioners: Teachers who wish to lead can rarely teach, and those who wish to teach cannot lead peers.

By the 2000s, less than one-quarter of teachers graduated in the top one-third of their college classes, entry of teachers from bottom-tier colleges surged, and entry of top students plummeted. Of course, many outstanding teachers enter the profession every year, and it takes more than academic achievement to excel in teaching. But these trends are signs of the profession's challenges.

A radically new course is essential to reverse these trends. The “Opportunity Culture” vision fits the bill.

New models must allow great teachers to reach additional students, without decreasing personalized learning. When structured correctly, **all teachers can earn** somewhat more, and team leaders can earn far more. Three of teachers' favorite models are:

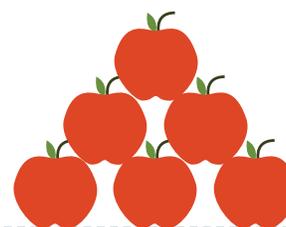
- * **Multi-Classroom Leadership.** Excellent teachers lead teaching teams while teaching—reaching far more students with excellence. Lead teachers assign roles and co-plan instruction to help team teachers excel and develop and are accountable for the learning outcomes of all the team's students. Paraprofessionals help make the best use of everyone's time.
- * **Time-Technology Swaps.** Students work online—as little as one hour per day—to master basic skills, freeing teachers' time for team planning, development, and teaching more students. When great teachers control the use of digital learning, they can ensure that it fits the needs of their students. Paraprofessionals supervise digital time and offline project work and skill practice.
- * **Elementary Specialization.** Teachers who have demonstrated excellence in one subject or subject pair (for example, math/science or language arts/social studies) teach just those subjects, with paraprofessional support saving time for teamwork and extended reach.

When schools cannot recruit great teachers in person, they can allow them to teach from remote locations using video technologies, collaborating with teammates present in classrooms with students. Small class-size increases also increase reach, but most pilot schools have opted for the team-based models above.

Pilot schools across the U.S. show promising indicators. Charlotte-Mecklenburg's four Project L.I.F.T. schools received 708 applications for 19 Opportunity Culture jobs in schools where some teaching jobs previously went unfilled. Nashville's iZone drew similar interest. Rocketship Education, whose seven schools together rank as California's top public school system for low-income elementary students, uses a Time-Technology Swap and specialization. Other schools are joining the movement, and pilots are already planning to scale up. But in a nation of 99,000 schools, **implementation** is far too slow.

To achieve this **vision** before another generation slips through our nation's schools, governors and state legislatures must commit to excellence for all students and far higher, sustainable pay for teachers. States must overhaul the myriad **policies** that cap teachers' pay far below their worth and cap the number of students for whom great teachers may take responsibility. These policies were built for one-teacher-one-classroom modes that limit teachers' and students' opportunities to excel.

With these changes, our nation could provide teachers with sustainable, well-paid career advancement, rigorous development on the job, and whole careers' worth of engaging work. Schools could ensure excellent teaching for all students, consistently, increasing their lifelong prospects. Our economy, national security, and social stability would improve. We call this an Opportunity Culture for *all*.



See the full report, *An Opportunity Culture for All*, at http://opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/An_Opportunity_Culture_for_All-Public_Impact.pdf.

This publication was made possible by support from Carnegie Corporation of New York. For a list of other funders of the Opportunity Culture publications and website, see [here](#). The statements made and views expressed are solely the responsibility of Public Impact. For more information about the Opportunity Culture initiative, visit OpportunityCulture.org.

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Please cite this report as: Hassel, E. A., & Hassel, B. C. (2013). *An Opportunity Culture for all: Making teaching a highly paid, high-impact profession—Summary*. Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact. Retrieved from http://opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/An_Opportunity_Culture_for_All_Summary-Public_Impact.pdf

