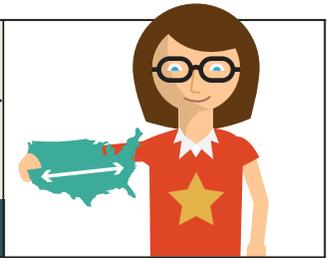


METROPOLITAN NASHVILLE'S INNOVATION ZONE

HIGH-NEED SCHOOLS HELP TEACHER-LEADERS WITH PAID, YEARLONG STUDENT TEACHERS

AN OPPORTUNITY CULTURE CASE STUDY



Reach Model in Use

- ★ Multi-Classroom Leadership

Fact File

- ★ Innovation Zone (iZone) created in 2011 for Metropolitan Nashville's high-need, low-performing schools
- ★ Three of the 10 iZone schools were selected to implement Opportunity Culture models in 2013–14 to extend the reach of excellent teachers and their teams
- ★ “Aspiring teacher” positions created at Opportunity Culture schools, paying student teachers for a full year in the classroom, where they learn and serve on a teaching team
- ★ Aspiring teachers earn \$10.52 per hour, or nearly \$15,860, and receive benefits, plus the opportunity to have an early shot at full-time jobs at the end of their year. In contrast, typical student teaching is unpaid and lasts much less than a year.



SUMMARY

In Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (MNPS), three persistently low-performing schools started 2013–14 with a plan: Redesign teachers' jobs to extend the reach of their best teachers to more students, and lift the achievement of these high-need schools. These schools had ranked in the state's bottom 5 percent on state assessments in the three years leading up to 2011.

In 2012–13, at Buena Vista Elementary, just 7.5 percent of tested students were rated as “proficient or advanced” in English language arts (ELA), and just 15 percent in math. At Bailey STEM Magnet Middle, that percentage was only 12 percent in math and 17 percent in ELA, and at Robert Churchwell Museum Magnet Elementary, just 19 percent of tested students were at least proficient in each subject.

Leaders of Nashville's new Innovation Zone (iZone), created to help low-performing, high-need schools, considered ways to turn these three iZone schools around, and settled on piloting the job-redesign concepts of Public Impact's Opportunity Culture initiative. These concepts call for schools to extend the reach of excellent teachers and their teams to more students, for more pay, within regular budgets, providing enhanced time for collaboration and on-the-job learning at school. Each school creates a school design team of teachers and administrators charged with selecting and adapting the Opportunity Culture job models that best fit their school.

All three schools—Buena Vista, Bailey STEM, and Robert Churchwell—chose to move from their one-teacher-one-classroom model to the Multi-Classroom Leadership model. Under this model, an excellent teacher—the multi-classroom leader, or MCL—reaches more students with excellent instruction by continuing to teach while leading a team of teachers who use the leader's methods and tools. Accountable for the learning results of all the students reached by his or her teaching team, the MCL earns more—through the school's regular budget, not through temporary grants. Redesigning jobs for higher pay without relying on grant funding ensures that these positions can be paid more for the long term, not just temporarily.

Then the schools added a twist: a yearlong, paid student teaching position. Aimed at increasing the pipeline of great teachers and putting another adult in every classroom, the aspiring teachers program placed 33 master's degree candidates in these three schools.

The district worked with teacher preparation programs at three universities that expressed interest in the aspiring teachers program—Lipscomb, Vanderbilt, and Trevecca Nazarene—to create a program similar to Tennessee's state internship program. Under the state program, education students at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville go through a yearlong student teaching internship as “fifth-year undergraduates,” which is much longer than the other universities' typical student teaching.

This study provides a snapshot of the impetus for creating the aspiring teachers program and its first months of implementation, based on interviews with aspiring teachers and iZone leaders and principals.

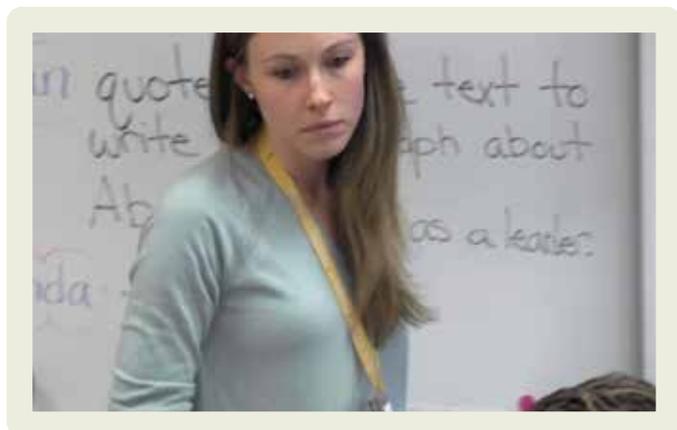
CREATING A GREAT-TEACHER PIPELINE, SUPPORTING INSTRUCTION

iZone leaders created the aspiring teachers program to serve several needs. They wanted to focus on recruiting and retaining great teachers, and they intended for the aspiring teacher role to serve as a stepping stone to becoming a full-time teacher in these high-need schools, where first-year teachers often struggle. They wanted to continue to develop their current teachers' skills: As aspiring teachers train under an excellent MCL, the other teachers on the MCL's team can develop leadership skills themselves by providing frequent feedback to the aspiring teachers.

The leaders also wanted another adult in the classroom who could assist in instruction in a personalized learning environment, all the while learning from a great teacher.

In addition, principals saw a strong need to have more adults in the building to help with small-group instruction. An external review of instruction in one iZone school found that it had high-quality small-group instruction, but suffered from frequent distractions during small-group time as teachers monitored and redirected other students in the room. The school thus sought to provide better support for the time students spend working independently in “learning centers” while protecting teachers' time in small-group and direct instruction.

The schools also wanted to help their adults build relationships with their students, who often come from unstable environments.



Aspiring teachers such as Laura Laufman at Bailey STEM Magnet Middle School support their teams while receiving intensive, on-the-job development.

“At Bailey STEM Middle, the original idea behind aspiring teachers was grounded in a focus on behaviors and culture,” says Derek Richey, director of operational innovation at MNPS, so that aspiring teachers could help serve as “camp counselors” or “learning advisors” to build and sustain relationships with students.

Principals at the three schools worked closely with Richey to figure out how best to fit aspiring teachers into their Multi-Classroom Leadership model.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS, MANY DUTIES FOR ASPIRING TEACHERS

Aspiring teachers work within MCL teams, providing support to the MCL and the MCL's team teachers, and learning and developing with the MCL's guidance.

The aspiring teacher commits to working 176 days, or 35 weeks, during the school year, far longer than the typical student teacher placement of about 15 weeks. By state statute, student teachers must serve 75 days, and they often work in different schools during that time. Aspiring teachers, however, work in the same school throughout the year, generally serving the same class during that time.

Aspiring teachers stay with students throughout the day; their jobs involve supporting the team teachers with all aspects of teaching, including small-group instruction; online learning; and supervising students during meals, transitions, and recess.

In 2013–14, of the 33 aspiring teachers hired, 28 were students in a teacher preparation program; the remaining five were para-professionals already working at the school, such as teaching assistants or a permanent substitute teacher.

HIRING AND EVALUATING ASPIRING TEACHERS

Richey reports that recruiting aspiring teachers proved fairly easy because the pay and strong training were seen as an attractive alternative to traditional student teaching.

In recruiting education students to apply for aspiring teacher positions, MNPS emphasized to them the value of the yearlong position when they searched for their first jobs after graduation. Richey took principals with him to recruit at area universities, holding information sessions with master's degree candidates.

A DIFFERENT STUDENT TEACHING MODEL

Nashville's aspiring teacher position aimed to:

- ★ Build a pipeline of great teachers prepared for the challenges of high-need schools.
- ★ Improve and increase personalized instruction.
- ★ Develop current teachers' leadership skills.
- ★ Provide more opportunities for meaningful student-teacher relationships.

The program targets students in master's degree programs with the expectation that they would have more flexible course schedules (often taking night and weekend classes) and potentially a higher level of preparedness if they were changing careers.

A third-grade aspiring teacher sees the program as ideal for older students or those changing careers, adding, "I thought this was a great opportunity. I'm 29 and was worried about having to do unpaid student teaching."

Richey did the initial screening of applications, sending groups of applicants to each school in an attempt to keep each university's cohorts together. The hiring principal and mentor teachers interviewed prospective aspiring teachers and, in some cases, observed them during a structured interaction with students. Not all the applicants Richey sent were hired. The schools worked to pair aspiring and team teachers well, and found that a good "pairing" strategy was important to the success of the teams. After they were hired, aspiring teachers then participated in two weeks of school-based professional development led by their MCLs and the teachers on their teams before the school year began.

Compensation

MNPS hires aspiring teachers as district employees, paying them \$10.52 per hour for about 1,500 hours of work in the 10-month position, or nearly \$15,800, and offering them benefits, plus the promise of having first shots at full-time jobs at the end of their year.

Depending on the number of aspiring teachers hired, the salaries represent approximately 6 percent to 11 percent of a principal's budget, if aspiring teachers are used schoolwide. This portion of the budget is funded by using aspiring teachers to replace vacant teaching or other staff positions within each school, resulting in overall savings that also fund higher pay for MCLs.

Supporting and Evaluating Aspiring Teachers

As the program began, iZone leaders and principals saw evaluation as a way to support and develop aspiring teachers. Schools are asked to use a modified teacher evaluation with a formal rubric. Aspiring teachers are ultimately accountable to their MCLs, who in turn are accountable for the outcomes of all students served by

the teaching team. Aspiring teachers receive support from a mentor teacher at the school—generally the MCL, but occasionally also an assistant principal—and a university supervisor. Informal mentoring also occurs daily from team teachers who provide feedback and support on the job.

A mentor teacher's duties include working directly with both the aspiring teacher and university supervisor as a team, developing a plan for sharing instructional and student support responsibilities, providing regular feedback, and completing a university-provided evaluation at the midpoint and the end of each semester.

The university supervisor's duties include conducting at least 25 hours of supervision and mentoring and five formal evaluations per semester. The supervisors are responsible for responding to weekly journal submissions from the aspiring teachers, as well as providing regular feedback on planning, assessment, classroom management, and teaching.

TEAM TEACHERS, ASPIRING TEACHERS SEE POWERFUL BENEFITS

"Honestly, there's no way if I just student-taught I'd be ready for a classroom right away," a fourth-grade aspiring teacher says—an opinion voiced by many aspiring teachers. "I was able to see the way to introduce the students to the classroom. You see how students gain, through data and as they grow. You see the whole experience of the school. I need to be in the middle of it to learn. It's more beneficial to see 'Oh, this is what kids need.'"

The benefits go both ways, according to both team teachers and MCLs. They say that the extra adult to lead small groups matters greatly, and training a future teacher puts a bit of pressure on the team to "up its game."

"If an aspiring teacher is trying to learn from me, I want to always be doing my best instruction," a third-grade team teacher explains. "I don't want to let them down." This teacher explains that working with both an MCL and an aspiring teacher creates a circle of learning:

Having an aspiring teacher who's looking to me for direction, and also having an MCL who is checking my standards, holds me more accountable. It's nice, because there were times last year where I felt like, "I don't know how to do this or how to teach this." For example, one time this year, my kids were struggling to understand the theme of a text. My MCL came in the next day and modeled a lesson to my whole class for me. It was so helpful for me, for the aspiring teacher, and for the kids.

Moreover, most aspiring teachers report feeling like a full member of their teaching teams, with responsibility to lead small groups from the beginning and increasing responsibility to lead a class as the school year progresses. At one school, for example, an aspiring teacher covers a class while the rest of her team attends a

AT A GLANCE: BREAKING DOWN ONE ASPIRING TEACHER'S JOB

A typical breakdown of duties for one first-grade aspiring teacher included the following:

- ★ **Much small-group instruction:** “Every day I do a small-group rotation—I see all 18 of them [the students under my team teacher] every day, all day—for about four hours.”
- ★ **Daily feedback and coaching:** “[It occurs] every day, with either the MCL or a [team] teacher.”
- ★ **Consistent planning and collaboration time:** “We have some type of planning meeting or collaborating three days a week, about an hour each.”
- ★ **Noninstructional duties:** “In noninstructional time, I’m preparing lessons, making copies ... I also take kids to specials. My team teacher and I also both eat with the students every day—to build a caring relationship.”

schoolwide meeting to analyze student learning data. This aspiring teacher creates and executes her own lesson plan.

A third-grade teacher describes other benefits of the model:

When I first heard about the [MCL] model, I thought, “I don’t want a million adults in my classroom if it’s not purposeful.” There’s me, my aspiring teacher, [others such as specials teachers and special education teachers], sometimes the MCL—it’s a lot of adults, but it’s nice, actually. Our kids need that extra attention and individualized, more targeted instruction. At the beginning, they were a little confused: “We have two teachers?” They didn’t know, at first, that they had to listen to the aspiring teacher. Now we’ve straightened it out. And with aspiring teachers getting more comfortable, it’s hard to tell from the outside who the lead is and who the aspiring teacher is.

The potential for better student outcomes is the driver and ultimate goal of this staffing model. “We will work to establish how to evaluate this initiative,” Richey says. “We know it needs to be rigorous.”

RESOLVING CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE EXPANSION

Creating the aspiring teacher program at the same time as the schools piloted Multi-Classroom Leadership put many changes on teachers’ shoulders as they adjusted to the team-teaching model and the planning, collaboration, and coaching time it required. Although most of that change was welcomed, teachers identified the following challenges, which the district is working to address.

Creating a Committed Cohort of Aspiring Teachers

In the first month of the school year, one school dealt with four aspiring teachers quitting their jobs, which school and iZone leaders attributed to a lack of fit with a turnaround school culture and the demands of working in a high-need school.

One of the first-grade teachers stresses that commitment is crucial for the students, saying that her students took it personally when their aspiring teacher quit. “They kept talking about the previous aspiring teacher...; the kids took it hard, like daddy walking out. We are the consistency to their inconsistency outside these doors.”

Ensuring That MCLs and Team Teachers Have Time to Train Aspiring Teachers

Another first-grade team teacher says she first focused on the notion of having extra help, rather than how much she would have to teach an aspiring teacher.

When you thought about extra help, you didn’t think about also teaching that person. And you can’t teach “with-it-ness.” Understanding the way to ask a child something is important—having the aspiring teacher understand the demographic and culture of the school [matters].

Early feedback from MCLs suggests they continue to try to find enough time to spend with their aspiring teachers. In practice, aspiring teachers receive a great deal of mentoring from the other teachers on their teams as well.

Making Time for Aspiring Teachers to Experience All Forms of Teaching

Aspiring teachers say the focus on small-group instruction limits the time spent observing other team members teaching. “In student teaching, you get to watch a lot,” a first-grade aspiring teacher says. “Here, I don’t get to watch guided reading because I have to teach a different group. I wish I could do more of that.”



After her year as an aspiring teacher at Buena Vista Elementary, Jayme Hubbell was offered a job as a kindergarten lead teacher. Watch her in a video [here](#).

In addition, some aspiring teachers work in several classrooms, making it more difficult for team teachers to train them and evaluate their instruction.

The teams were unclear about who may lead the class when the teacher of record is out. Over time, the aspiring teacher may take over the class instead of a substitute, but that remains unclear or up to individual schools. (Aspiring teachers are themselves eligible for substitutes when they miss work.)

Aligning Support for Aspiring Teachers

Aspiring teachers get varying levels of observation, feedback, and coaching support from their universities. Some team teachers and MCLs reported too little direct communication between themselves and the university mentors.

EXPANDING THE ASPIRING TEACHERS PROGRAM

Although the first year of recruiting resulted in many applications—nearly 100 in a three-week window—Richey says that MNPS expects a broader and even stronger pool of candidates in coming years for aspiring teacher positions because they provide such a leg up in landing a regular job in the district. He believes that more applicants will allow for greater selectivity in the future.

Richey points out that expanding the pipeline to other district and iZone schools also would create a more predictable way to find teachers. He says the district may open the program to undergraduate education programs.

In addition, Richey explains, MNPS wants to use the aspiring teachers program to improve relationships with teacher preparation programs and to ensure that candidates come into the teacher pool fully prepared. “We could make this the primary pipeline for getting into MNPS schools—how we hire all of our first-year teachers into Metro schools. We hire maybe 500 to 600 teachers a year, and we may never get to that point, but you could see 50 to 100 teachers hired out of this pipeline.”

Acknowledgements

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