AN OPPORTUNITY CULTURE *FOR ALL*

MAKING TEACHING A HIGHLY PAID, HIGH-IMPACT PROFESSION

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Here is the state of things: In most locations, the relationship between organized teachers and reformers—whether superintendents or advocacy groups—remains at best a tenuous truce and at worst a pitched battle. Looking back over the decades, though, none of us are really getting what we want. Teachers are no closer to achieving the societal respect and substantial, sustainable rewards for their contributions that they deserve. Student achievement has barely budged, depriving students of an equal shot at the American dream.

Some teachers rightly fear that today's reform climate risks demeaning the profession. They see policymakers focusing their energy on removing bad teachers, ending tenure, and eliminating or reducing the extra pay teachers now earn for advanced degrees and experience. They see much less effort to give them more opportunities to advance their careers and develop on the job, and to earn more for it. No wonder many teachers are skeptical, if not outright hostile, to the changes afoot.

We see a way out, if all of us can accept that traditional policies have effectively picked most teachers' pockets during their careers, and that reforms need to focus on building an outstanding profession.

Change would be worth the effort. Studies prove the enormous effect that excellent teachers have on closing achievement gaps, cultivating students' higher-order thinking, improving children's lifelong prospects, and bolstering our national security and economic power.[1]

However, today's classrooms do not have enough teachers who achieve the high-growth, higher-order learning our modern economy demands—at least, not in today's one-teacher-one-classroom mode. Studies have shown that only about 25 percent of today's teachers produce enough progress—well over a year's worth of learning growth in a year's time—to help students close achievement gaps and leap ahead.[2] Students starting behind need multiple years of these great teachers to catch up. Students starting in the middle need the same to advance to honors-level work. (See "Measuring Performance," page 3.)

A great teacher in one of every four classes is just not enough. A student starting behind who achieves a standard year's worth of growth every year under today's good, solid teachers will still end up behind—or, more likely, dropping out. But efforts to attract and retain more excellent teachers for U.S. classrooms, and to dismiss ineffective teachers, have not yet resulted in far more students having excellent teachers.[3]

How, then, can schools reach more students with the high caliber of instruction that great teachers provide—while also building a profession that attracts, develops, and keeps more teachers who teach at this level?

In 2009, we presented a vision for addressing this challenge in *3X for All: Extending the Reach of Education's Best*, which we updated in 2011 with *Opportunity at the Top*.[4] In these papers, we described how schools could use job redesign and age-appropriate technology to extend excellent teachers' reach, directly and by

CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF AN OPPORTUNITY CULTURE

Schools use job redesign and age-appropriate technology to let excellent teachers **extend their reach** to more students, for more pay, within budget. Extended-reach models also increase development on the job, and enhance authority and credit for teachers who reach more students with excellence. Our updated vision for this reach extension, informed by teachers and leaders implementing these models, includes these critical elements:

- **Selectivity** about who enters and remains in teaching, both to better serve students and to enable consistently excellent teaching teams.
- **Opportunity** for *career advancement* through reach models that include authentic on-the-job teacher-leadership, and rigorous *on-the-job learning* in teaching teams responsible for the same students.
- **Pay** for teachers that is far higher—potentially six figures on average, within budget—by combining extended-reach staffing models with reallocation of other spending to teacher pay.

leading other teachers, in fully accountable roles, for more pay—but within budget. In most models, class size remains the same.

When crafted correctly, reach models allow excellent teachers to be responsible for more students' learning and to help peer teachers excel. Good teachers learn on the job while contributing to excellent outcomes. In most models, teachers work in teams and can support each other during collaboration time built into the school day. (See "Opportunity Culture Principles," page 4.)

Having worked with and documented school teams moving toward this vision for two years, we now update again.

We still envision excellent teachers leading their profession to achieve great results by using job redesign and age-appropriate technology to extend their reach to more students, for more pay, within budget. And it has become increasingly clear to us how **extending the reach of excellent teachers starts a virtuous cycle** enabling increased teacher selectivity, opportunity, and pay—for all:

* **Selectivity** about who enters and remains in teaching becomes far easier when schools offer the engaging, developmental, financially rewarding jobs with outstanding peers that high performers want and that reach models allow. And when good teachers benefit developmentally and financially from having great peers, *everyone* has a reason to advocate for selectivity.
* **Opportunity for career advancement** and rigorous, **on-the-job learning** become possible when great teachers advance by collaborating with, leading, and developing other teachers in teams to reach more students (without forcing class-size increases). 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 in-school collaboration time and greater reach.
* **Pay** that is far higher—potentially six figures on average, within budget—becomes possible when teams reach more students than possible in a one-teacher-one-classroom mode. Using less-costly paraprofessionals to save teachers time for reach, shifting academic resource teachers back into fully accountable, higher-paid teaching roles, and reallocating existing and new spending to higher teacher pay can together make teaching a six-figure profession.

Achieving this vision will require a dramatically different course.

New school models that extend excellent teachers' reach make this new course possible, particularly when tailored to allow *all* teachers to succeed in teams—increasing the odds of widespread improvement in teaching and learning.

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***.

THE PAST:
WELL-INTENDED EFFORTS FALL SHORT

Over four decades, states and districts moved in the opposite direction from a highly paid, high-impact profession. They built budgets around limited-impact, low-paid teaching roles.

Between 1970 and 2010, U.S. public education spending *per student* increased almost 150 percent in real terms.[5] Yet average teacher pay increased only 11 percent, as did teachers' work hours—effectively leaving pay flat.[6] If it had increased in proportion to overall per-pupil spending, teachers would earn well into six figures, on average.

Where did the money go? Schools did hire 60 percent more teachers—more than population growth required—in part to reduce class sizes and provide special education.[7] But spending on other positions and facilities grew much faster: Instructional coordinators and facilities costs and debt more than doubled; teaching aide positions grew twelvefold.[8]

Each may be defensible, but none boosted teacher quality, student outcomes, or pay.

Instead, teachers' salaries stagnated just as their jobs became more challenging. Our nation began expecting teachers to deliver measurable results, for *all* students. New demands arose to meet individual students' needs within economically, academically, and linguistically diverse classrooms. And "results" now included thinking and problem-solving skills, not just basic knowledge.

While all are compelling, these changes required stronger teaching.

Simultaneously, the job market changed. While teaching was once the go-to profession for educated women, other professions pursued gender diversity while offering substantially greater pay differentiation and career advancement opportunities for both men and women. While others moved toward team-based jobs that let people do what each does best to produce better outcomes together, teaching remained a profession of lonely solo practitioners.

Other professions let the best professionals lead direct service teams, but teaching *pulls its leaders out* of direct service to students. Generally, those who wish to lead cannot teach, and those who wish to teach cannot lead. Those who do lead within teaching are often not paid for it; when they are, it is often through temporary grants.

It's not surprising, then, that fewer top students became teachers. By the 2000s, only 23 percent of new teachers, and just 14 percent of those in high-poverty schools, graduated in the top third of college classes.[9] Data also indicate that between 1963 and 2000, the proportion of new female teachers coming from top-tier colleges dropped from 5 percent to 1 percent, while the proportion coming from bottom-tier colleges rose from 16 percent to 36 percent.[10] Of course, many outstanding professionals enter and remain in teaching—just not enough—and being a great student is not the only qualification for being a great teacher. But what a glaring sign of the profession's growing challenges.

What, then, must states, districts, and schools do? As many others have written,[11] they must reimagine the teaching profession, so that it offers the wide range of advancement opportunities common in other professions, allowing great teachers to keep teaching and have more impact on students and other teachers. We expect that these changes will increase the attractiveness of teaching, which in turn will enable greater selectivity about who teaches.

But how can education leaders accomplish this vision sustainably, and ensure that changes in the teaching profession drive student learning improvements? The answer includes three connected strategies, all driven by new school models that extend the reach of excellent teachers: **selectivity, opportunity, and pay.**

MEASURING PERFORMANCE

Repeated research by multiple researchers indicates that teacher performance, as measured by student growth, varies.* Although there is a healthy debate about the measures—whether today's standardized tests are adequate, and what other measures of success schools should use—economists have for decades found a nearly identical distribution of performance in other professional jobs across all sectors, using a wide variety of outcome measures.** So, however schools define teacher performance, they likely will continue to have a similar distribution. How high that distribution is centered and how much more positive impact stronger teachers can have on student outcomes—directly and by leading peers—is the topic of this brief.

*For sources, see endnote 7.
**For source, see endnote 8.

If average teacher pay had increased in proportion to education spending, teachers would earn six-figure salaries today.

OPPORTUNITY CULTURE PRINCIPLES

Teams of teachers and school leaders must choose and tailor models to:

1. **Reach more students with excellent teachers and their teams**
2. **Pay teachers more for extending their reach**
3. **Fund pay within regular budgets**
4. **Provide protected in-school time and clarity about how to use it for planning, collaboration, and development**
5. **Match authority and accountability to each person's responsibilities**

THE KEY: EXTENDING TEACHERS' REACH

Schools must create an "Opportunity Culture" that offers career advancement while teaching by extending the reach of excellent teachers to more students; supercharging the development of good, solid teachers; paying teachers more, sustainably; and enhancing the authority of excellent teachers in their schools.

That won't happen without dramatically redesigned schools that put excellent teachers in charge of more students' learning and other teachers' development on the job.

New school models must allow great teachers to extend their reach to additional students, without decreasing personalized learning or forcing larger class sizes. Opportunity Culture models[12] can:

- Extend the reach of excellent teachers to dramatically more students, directly and by leading teams of teachers. Schools must better use the talents of the excellent teachers they already have. By reorganizing roles and schedules, and by using age-appropriate technology, schools can put great teachers in charge of all students' learning.
- Provide roles for new and developing teachers to collaborate with, co-teach, and learn from great teachers in teams, with plenty of school-hour time to co-plan and learn, using the methods and materials of team leaders to achieve excellence with all students.
- Create savings that allow paying substantially more, not just to excellent teachers, but to *all* teachers when implemented at scale.
- Give great teachers more authority within their schools, with power to set a high standard of professional excellence that impacts teaching and learning throughout a school.
- Allow excellent teachers and their teams to use digital instruction not as a weak substitute for higher-order teaching and learning, but as a more individualized substitute for skill practice and repetitive exposure to key learning content.[13]

(See *Teachers in the Age of Digital Instruction* on page 5.)

For example, excellent teachers can lead *multi-classroom teams* while continuing to teach, assigning roles and co-planning instruction to help other teachers excel and develop. These leaders take accountability for the learning of all students in their "pods," and delegate responsibilities to teachers and paraprofessionals that make the best use of everyone's time.

Teachers can *specialize* in their best subjects or roles, with paraprofessional support saving time for teamwork and extended reach.

Or teachers can use *digital instruction* for limited, age-appropriate periods (as little as an hour daily), freeing time while students learn online for team planning, development, and teaching more students. We call this a "time-technology swap." When great teachers control the use of digital learning, they can ensure that it is used well to fit the needs of their students, just as they do with other materials and teaching tools. When they can earn more and help their teams succeed, they have even more reason to ensure great use of technology.

When schools cannot recruit great teachers to teach a subject in person, they can allow them to teach from remote locations, using digital technology such as online whiteboards, collaborating with teammates who are in the classroom with students.

Small class-size increases—within limits suggested by class sizes in high-performing nations—can also extend excellent teachers' reach. Few early pilots have chosen this model by itself, and no wonder: While it requires the least change in school processes, it maintains the one-teacher-one-classroom mode, and does not create a natural team of teachers who can help one another succeed.

All of the team-based models that extend reach provide time for crucial collaboration and job-embedded learning. **An Opportunity Culture isn't just for teachers who excel already, but for all teachers to discover and use their strengths.** Working in teams allows *all* teachers to contribute to results like those that their excellent peers now produce in the one-teacher-one-classroom mode. Through collaboration with or formal leadership from a teacher already achieving excellent results, others can make progress toward instructional excellence themselves.

An Opportunity Culture isn't just for teachers who excel already, but for all teachers to discover and use their strengths.

TEACHERS IN THE AGE OF DIGITAL INSTRUCTION*

How might emerging technology change teaching? We expect that as digital tools proliferate and improve, solid instruction in the basics will eventually become "flat"—available anywhere globally. The elements of excellent teaching that are most difficult for technology to replace will increasingly differentiate student outcomes.

In the digital future, teacher effectiveness may matter *even more* than it does today, as these complex instructional tasks are left to the adults responsible for each student's learning.

Digital fare will eventually replace much of the diagnosis of learning levels and the provision of matching instruction, particularly in core knowledge and skills, that today distinguish excellent teachers from their peers. Paraprofessionals will be able to supervise some learning time, without compromising outcomes.

But successful teaching is much more than delivery of core instruction, no matter how effective. It also requires:

- Motivating students to take on next challenges and persist despite barriers;
- Helping students with time and task management and other habits critical to success;
- Building children's and teens' social and emotional skills and fortitude;
- Mentoring and modeling life skills;
- Addressing personal and family situations that may impede learning;
- Helping students dig deeper into material and develop higher-order thinking skills (analytical, conceptual, and creative); and
- Taking responsibility for ensuring learning outcomes, making changes when a student's learning growth stalls—below or above standards.

These distinguishing aspects of teachers who produce outstanding learning results are not ones that technology can fully replace. Teachers who can lead and collaborate in efficiently staffed teams that use digital tools can drive up pay for all teachers—and improve outcomes for far more students than the one-teacher-one-classroom, low-tech mode allows.

*Excerpted and adapted from Hassel, B. C., & Hassel, E. A. (2012). Teachers in the age of digital instruction. In J. E. Chubbs, P. T. Hill, E. Laurans, & M. Haldeman (Eds.), *Education reform for the digital era* (pp. 11–33). Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Institute. Retrieved from http://www.edexcellencemedia.net/publications/2012/20120425-education-reform-for-the-digital-era/20120425-Education-Reform-for-the-Digital-Era-FINAL-Chapter-1.pdf

Including paraprofessionals on these teams saves money for higher teacher pay and, with proper scheduling, provides time for teaching teams to collaborate.[14] Paraprofessionals handle noninstructional and routine instructional tasks, which today consume so much of teachers' time. Teachers can focus their time on the most challenging elements of teaching, through collaboration with and leadership by peers who excel.

Teachers are leading the way in creating Opportunity Culture-style schools across the country, and it's their embrace of the possibilities now open to them that will make these concepts successful. In Charlotte and Nashville, enthusiastic teachers worked with administrators to choose and tailor the models their schools launched in August 2013, in some of the districts' persistently struggling schools.[15] Denver, Las Vegas, a handful of districts just getting started, and several charter networks are following suit.[16]

This is a start, but not nearly enough in a nation of more than 99,000 schools.

Selectivity: Who Enters, Who Stays

Like the world's top education systems, which draw entirely from the top 30 percent of their graduates,[17] states and districts must become selective about who may teach. They must ensure that new teachers are screened for academic success and the competencies that predict teaching excellence. And they must require practices that retain more excellent teachers.

Selectivity becomes significantly easier when schools can offer jobs that high-performers want. Charlotte and Nashville, the first districts to pilot reach-extension models, received about 30 applications per reach job opening—*in schools where teaching slots used to go unfilled*. Among the applicants were highly skilled, experienced teachers, including those who had been "promoted" out of classrooms.

Attracting high-potential teachers is important, but what about keeping them? When teachers work in teams and extend their reach with help from technology and paraprofessionals, greater pay and impact are not the only benefits: New work flexibility becomes possible. Teachers who are raising young children of their own or addressing other personal needs can work more flexible hours without reducing the number of students taught; teach part-time without reducing the number of students they reach; or play a team-teaching role while working partly from home.

Moreover, when all teachers can increase their excellence, impact, and pay by working on *high-performing teams* with excellent colleagues to lead and nurture them, good teachers suddenly have a huge incentive to advocate for the selective hiring and retention of excellent peers.

TEACHING IN AN OPPORTUNITY CULTURE*

Imagine this: Schools where all teachers can improve their teaching and are rewarded for getting better. Imagine schools where teachers focus on their strengths and interests, and where they have time during their work day to plan and collaborate in teams. Imagine schools where teachers who achieve excellence can multiply their impact by giving more students access to their teaching, and where they can lead peers while continuing to teach.

Imagine being a teacher in a profession that attracts and keeps the best and the brightest, where salaries compete with highly paid professions. Imagine a profession so full of opportunities and outstanding peers that teachers enjoy the challenge and feel proud to teach, knowing they are part of a selective, well-paid, high-performing profession critical to our nation's success.

An Opportunity Culture can take teachers there, and teachers have shown their enthusiasm for the possibilities it offers. In an Opportunity Culture:

- **Selection** uses highly selective screening methods, including academic success and competencies for great teaching
- **Teaching roles** are varied, use teachers' strengths, and increase the number of students reached with excellence
- **Teachers' impact** on students and peers increases with teaching excellence and leadership—with leadership positions that are well paid, fully accountable, and fully empowered to lead teams
- **Development** is embedded in daily teaching, led by trained teacher-leaders accountable for student outcomes, and customized to individual teachers and their students
- **Meaningful evaluations** help teachers know how to pursue excellence, and help schools know what career advancement opportunities to offer
- **Career advancement** is possible without leaving teaching: Teachers advance by reaching more students and leading peers, for more pay
- **Job flexibility** is high. By using teams *and* extending teachers' reach, schools make part-time, professional jobs possible within budget, and technology allows great teachers to teach students in need anywhere
- **Teacher retention** is high: The best remain in teaching
- **Excellent teachers are surrounded by colleagues** who are highly capable and committed to excellence
- **Dismissal** and low performance are rare, because few teachers incapable of excellence enter teaching
- **Teacher power** increases, especially for great teachers, in schools and the profession overall.

*Excerpted and adapted from: Public Impact. (2012). *An Opportunity Culture for teaching and learning: Moving toward a highly paid, high-impact profession.* Chapel Hill, NC: Author. Retrieved from http://opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/An_Opportunity_Culture_for_Teaching_and_Learning_Two_Pager-Public_Impact.pdf

Opportunity

Great teachers want **career advancement opportunities** that let them continue to teach, and many want to help their peers succeed. Reach models that extend teachers' reach to more students allow naturally funded career advancement, including leadership and development of peer teaching teams.

Good teachers want to break through to excellence, helping more students at all levels excel. Team-based reach models also provide the **job-embedded development opportunities** for all teachers that they want and that research shows improve instruction.[18]

Teams alone, though, are not the answer, just as unfunded or indiscriminate career advancement is not.

- Teams must openly acknowledge teammates' excellence in teaching—overall, with differing students, and in differing instructional roles.
- Schedules must permit teammates to collaborate regularly, even daily, during school.
- When teams have formal leaders, those leaders must be accountable for all of a team's student outcomes, rather than "my students" but not "yours."
- Formal team leaders must be trained to lead others in a collaborative environment.
- Paraprofessionals or other similar support on teams must free enough time for both collaboration and for teams to reach more students successfully.

These parameters help ensure that teachers who take responsibility for ensuring a high level of excellence for whole teams can earn substantially more, sustainably, while helping more students and teaching peers succeed.

Substantially Higher Pay

The notion of teacher career advancement paths is not new. But for decades, schools failed to make these paths substantially, sustainably paid.

How can schools pay more, without mushrooming budgets? They must combine reach models and a reallocation of spending to invest in teachers.

In most of the Opportunity Culture job models that extend great teachers' reach, students spend a small portion of the day with lower-paid paraprofessionals, who supervise digital instruction time, homework-at-school time, and elementary students' noninstructional time. Even when per-pupil funding remains the same, new costs (e.g., technology) are less than the staff cost savings, allowing substantial and sustainable teacher pay increases—in contrast to the temporary grants that typically have funded extra pay. Reach models allow paying teachers 20 percent to 40 percent more than the average in a one-teacher-one-classroom mode, and up to 130 percent more for teachers leading teams.[19]

As pay and opportunity attract and keep more great teachers (as surveys suggest they would[20]) and help good teachers produce excellent outcomes in teams with their advanced peers, schools need fewer employees in the supplemental roles that proliferated in the past four decades.* Resource teachers who took such roles for career advancement can return to the classroom, and to direct responsibility for students, with higher pay. The resulting savings, in combination with smart use of paraprofessional support on teams, allow pay increases at the higher end of the ranges above.

But reach alone will not double average teacher pay. The substantial school-level savings from extended-reach models must be combined with **funneling more of existing and new education spending where it matters most: to the teachers** who are accountable for student learning. In the past, schools have spent new money on most everything *except* higher pay and career opportunities for teachers.

These expenditures were undoubtedly well-intended. Hindsight now tells us that while spending money on so many things, our nation failed to invest in the most important thing: teachers directly responsible for student learning.

With reallocation of spending and new school models combined, teachers could finally get their due, with many earning **$100,000** or more (in real terms)—the six-figure pay that better reflects their economic value.[21]

* In our pay analyses, we assume that schools should and will keep English as a second language and special needs resource teachers.

While spending money on so many things, our nation failed to invest in the most important thing: teachers.

MAKING AN OPPORTUNITY CULTURE A REALITY

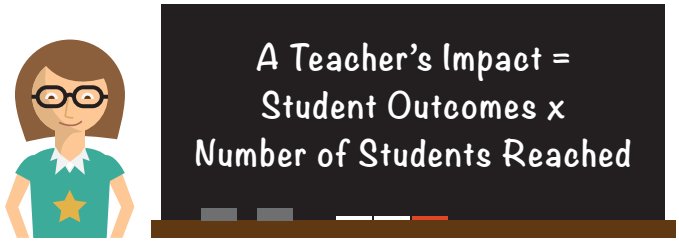
To achieve this vision, governors and state legislatures must commit to "excellence for all." They must mandate that schools reach all students with excellent teachers and their teams for more pay, and support the education leaders already moving in this direction.[22]

States also must overhaul the myriad policies that cap teachers' pay far below their worth[23] and that limit the number of students for whom great teachers take responsibility, directly or by leading peers.[24] These policies were built for a one-teacher-one-classroom mode that limits the impact of excellent teachers, improvement of their peers, and higher pay for all. States must do everything in their power to enable all schools to adopt reach models that enable the paid career advancement and job-embedded development necessary for an appealing, respected, high-performing teaching profession.

With these changes, students can have access to excellent teaching consistently, increasing both the joy of learning and job prospects. The public can reap the economic and social benefits of an educated populace. Teachers can have the well-paid, high-impact profession they deserve.

This vision draws on the hopes of millions of teachers, the passion of educators already implementing sustainable models of reach, and the work of diverse stakeholders—reformers, unions, child advocates, parents, and others—who want a better profession for teachers and better outcomes for students.

We can achieve this vision together, if we all commit to building an Opportunity Culture—*for all*.



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This paper is dedicated in memory of Sophie. We will do our best, Sophie, to grant your wish of a high school diploma and more to your peers everywhere. We feel love and gratitude for your inspiration and good values.