

SEIZING OPPORTUNITY AT THE TOP II

STATE POLICIES TO REACH EVERY STUDENT WITH EXCELLENT TEACHING POLICYMAKERS' CHECKLIST

BY PUBLIC IMPACT

What can policymakers do to ensure that every student has consistent access to excellent teaching? In this checklist, Public Impact details the policies that states and districts need.

Research continues to confirm that without excellent teaching consistently, most students who start behind stay behind, and too few middling and advanced students leap ahead. Even hardworking, solid teachers who achieve one year of learning progress leave achievement gaps intact. Schools that consistently provide all students with excellent teachers—those in today’s top 20 to 25 percent who achieve well over one year of learning progress—can close most gaps fast. But most schools provide students with teaching at this level in only one of four classrooms.

Rigorous recruitment, development, and retention, plus necessary dismissals will improve teaching. Nations making education surges have limited who can teach to their top high school or college students who also exhibit other qualities needed for great teaching. U.S. states should follow their lead. But this alone would not be adequate in our economy, absent paid career advancement that both makes the teaching profession attractive to more top candidates and allows rapid on-the-job development for all.

Yet most teachers today work alone. Excellent teachers rarely have authority, time, or sustainably higher pay to lead while teaching. Solid teachers are on their own, with few chances to learn on the job from excellent peers.

To ensure that every student has access to excellent teaching consistently, states and districts must also help excellent teachers extend their reach to far more students, directly and by leading teaching teams, and earn far more, within budget. “Reach extension” also creates new roles and in-school time for all teachers to learn on the job from the best, contribute to excellence immediately, improve, and pursue career advancement. Altogether, this creates an “Opportunity Culture” for students and teachers.

What Policy Leaders Can Do

First, state and district leaders must commit to reaching every student with excellent teaching consistently. Second, this checklist provides policies that state leaders can use to enable an Opportunity Culture statewide, in five categories:

- * Identifying and Developing Teaching Excellence
- * Flexibility to Staff Schools
- * Flexibility for Instructional Delivery
- * Accountability and Feedback for Results
- * Rewarding and Retaining Excellent Teachers

Policies are marked either as **🕒 urgent**, because they are urgently needed to support pilot districts or schools, or **👍 optimal**, to support successful scale-up across a state. States should allow waivers for pilots when lasting policy change cannot be made fast enough. Far more students can experience the consistently excellent teaching needed to close achievement gaps and leap ahead to advanced work.

The full report, *Seizing Opportunity at the Top II: State Policies to Reach Every Student with Excellent Teaching*, provides more detail to those crafting new policies.

This updates our earlier working paper *Seizing Opportunity at the Top*, based on experience collaborating with several districts and hundreds of teachers and administrators, and analysis of their states’ policies. Getting these policies right is especially important to the outstanding and committed teachers in schools implementing Opportunity Culture models, and to the students they serve.

This checklist is written for an audience already familiar with the five Opportunity Culture Principles and related terms. See OpportunityCulture.org for more about school models, career paths, and paying teachers more while letting teachers reach more students with excellence and increasing time for planning, collaboration, and on-the-job learning.

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

At-A-Glance: Urgent and Optimal State Policies for an Opportunity Culture

The table below lists state policies that are **urgent** for Opportunity Culture pilot and expansion efforts, and policies that **optimize** Opportunity Culture implementation over time. The “**Urgent Policies**” column lists the policy needs that are critical for pilot schools to design and implement Opportunity Culture models, and these should receive immediate attention from policy leaders. The “**Optimal Policies**” column lists policies that will increase the effectiveness and prevalence of Opportunity Culture models and make the best use of state funds. These should receive attention in any state ready to scale up an Opportunity Culture within and across multiple districts.

	ⓘ Urgent Policies	⊕ Optimal Policies
Identifying and Developing Teaching Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> All teachers receive an annual evaluation that includes student growth, or a proxy measure, and includes multiple measures correlated with student learning. <input type="checkbox"/> States can identify approximately the top quartile of teachers. <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluations match the responsibilities of each teacher, including the outcomes of students and subjects for which each teacher is responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers’ evaluations include behavioral competencies that correlate with student learning outcomes in tested subjects. <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluations include a “reach measure” of the number of students for whom each teacher is formally accountable compared with a standard, one-teacher-one-classroom teaching role. <input type="checkbox"/> State evaluations help teachers improve and advance as professionals in common Opportunity Culture career paths.
Flexibility to Staff Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> State funding is fungible across budget categories, allowing districts and schools to trade or combine positions, technology, and other funds at the budgeted level as needed to pay for and support advanced roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent out-of-state teachers are automatically eligible to teach. <input type="checkbox"/> Budget transfer administration costs and time are eliminated by funding schools in lump sums, based on the weighted costs of educating students with differing characteristics in each school.
Flexibility for Instructional Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> When a highly effective teacher is willingly accountable for each student’s learning, restrictions are waived or eliminated to prevent extended-reach teaching models from being hampered by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • class-size limits • “seat time” requirements that limit where or with whom a student learns • “line of sight” requirements. <input type="checkbox"/> Districts can reallocate categorical funds to implement blended and online learning, if a teacher is accountable for each student’s learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> State data systems provide sufficient detail on student learning progress to enable personalized instructional levels and interventions during the year. <input type="checkbox"/> State procurement policies are streamlined to help districts implement blended and online learning. <input type="checkbox"/> State supports temporary transition costs to provide universal wireless broadband access.
Accountability and Feedback for Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> State uses a student growth model, or proxy measures, for subjects in which teachers will extend their reach. <input type="checkbox"/> Formal accountability tracked by the state matches the students and subjects for which each teacher, team teacher, and team leader is responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The state formally tracks and reports behavioral competency ratings and other soft measures that correlate with success in new teaching roles. <input type="checkbox"/> The state tracks and reports the percentage of students in each core subject and grade, overall and by student subgroup, with excellent teachers accountable for student learning.
Rewarding and Retaining Excellent Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Statewide salary scales allow districts and schools to create new roles and pay excellent and effective teachers more for reaching more students. <input type="checkbox"/> The state funds or co-funds temporary transition costs for pilot districts and schools to establish new staffing models that reach at least 75 percent of students in core subjects with excellent teachers, for more pay, within budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The state funds or co-funds temporary transition costs for all districts and schools to establish new staffing models that reach at least 75 percent of students with excellent teachers in core subjects, for more pay, within budget. States taking the strongest approach will require all districts to implement and will include teachers of more subjects. <input type="checkbox"/> State funding allocation helps districts reward excellent teachers for taking hard-to-staff positions, such as STEM teaching in any school or positions in high-poverty schools, in addition to extending their reach. <input type="checkbox"/> State salary scales include default career paths and criteria that districts may adopt to pay more for roles that extend teachers’ reach, directly and by leading peers. <input type="checkbox"/> Consistently excellent teachers earn “elite tenure,” including protection during layoffs and the ability to help choose their peers.

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