If you are an excellent teacher, or one who aspires to excellence, you probably did not choose teaching for its pay or career advancement opportunities. You teach because you revel in helping students learn and grow—academically, socially, and emotionally—so they can achieve success and joy. Perhaps you had inspiring teachers who set you on this path. Or perhaps you want to improve things for a new generation of students.

Whatever brought you there, more schools and districts are considering ways to provide you with paid opportunities for leadership and expanded student impact. If your school or district leaders already offer you sustainably funded career opportunities that make the best use of your time, congratulations! You are at the leading edge of a growing movement that reveres excellent teachers’ time and talent. And with good reason: Students need great teachers for better learning. Research continues to confirm that today’s top 25 percent of teachers help students make over a year of student growth—or about three times as much growth as the bottom 25 percent of teachers produce. This is essential to help students who start behind catch up, and to help students who are on track leap forward like their peers in the highest-achieving nations. With just “good growth,” students cannot catch up or leap ahead. With “great growth,” they can. Moreover, all students need the higher-order thinking skills that great teachers develop so well in their students.

So, even if you did not become a teacher to pursue career advancement and higher pay, your school needs you to stay enthusiastic about teaching, reach more students, and lead your peers. How?

We call this an Opportunity Culture, because all teachers have career opportunities dependent upon their excellence, leadership, and student impact. Advancement allows more pay and greater reach. New school models make development toward excellence possible for all staff, in every role.

MORE PAY, MORE IMPACT IN NEW CAREER PATHS

Today, most advancement opportunities in education remove teachers from direct responsibility for students, increase workloads, confer little real authority to lead peers, and either pay no more or provide temporary pay increases from grants. Most do not make the best use of great teachers’ valuable time.

With input from teachers and other experts, Public Impact has published numerous school models that redesign teachers’ jobs and, in some cases, use age- and child-appropriate technology to put excellent teachers in charge of more students’ learning, for more pay. Multi-classroom leadership, elementary specialization teams, and blended-learning models that extend teachers’ reach and save teachers time are some examples. Most of these models also create teaching teams and provide time during the school day for collaboration and professional development, so that great teachers can help good ones pursue excellence, too. You can learn about all the possibilities—and share your ideas—here (http://opportunityculture.org/reach).