

# AN OPPORTUNITY CULTURE FOR ALL

## MAKING TEACHING A HIGHLY PAID, HIGH-IMPACT PROFESSION

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NOTE: An updated version of this publication can be found here:  
[https://opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/A\\_Complete\\_Opportunity\\_Culture\\_For\\_All\\_Summary-Public\\_Impact.pdf](https://opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/A_Complete_Opportunity_Culture_For_All_Summary-Public_Impact.pdf)

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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.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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 up-

dated in 2011 with *Opportunity at the Top*.<sup>4</sup> 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.