

# UNDERSTANDING THE OPPORTUNITY CULTURE PRINCIPLES

BY PUBLIC IMPACT

**S**chools and districts implementing Opportunity Culture can use this two-page guide as a **quick reference** to interpret the five **Opportunity Culture Principles**. The principles help schools ensure that roles extending the reach of excellent teachers and principals to far more students, and to their colleagues, are sustainable and effective. See more detailed help, based on the highest performing Opportunity Culture schools, at [opportunityculture.org/for-system-leaders/](http://opportunityculture.org/for-system-leaders/).

The principles for teachers and for principals are very similar; guidance for each type follows.

## OPPORTUNITY CULTURE PRINCIPLES:

### For Teachers Extending Their Reach

*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

## OPPORTUNITY CULTURE PRINCIPLES:

### For Principals Extending Their Reach as Multi-School Leaders

*Teams of principals and district/network leaders must choose and tailor models to:*

1. Reach more schools with excellent principals and their teams
2. Pay principals 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—within and across the schools each leader leads
5. Match authority and accountability to each person's responsibilities

To guarantee excellence for students, consistently and long-term, adhere to *each* principle. Ignore any of the five principles, and your effort will fall short—for students, teachers, and principals.

These principles were developed in response to decades of failed efforts to create high-quality advanced roles for teachers and principals, and refined based on early experiences of schools implementing Opportunity Culture roles. The principles call for teams of teachers and principals to choose and tailor **Opportunity Culture school models** to extend excellent teachers' and principals' reach at their schools.

The principles also support one another. New roles that allow educators to extend their reach—taking on far more responsibility—should pay more. Higher pay must be funded with regular budgets, not temporary sources, so that advanced roles last. Roles that require taking on responsibility for more students or teachers must include more time for planning, team collaboration, and on-the-job development. And greater responsibility should be formalized, so that evaluations match each advanced role, and colleagues know who has authority to lead.

Don't take shortcuts. Opportunity Culture schools' experiences have shown that following each and every principle, in letter and spirit, is the only way to achieve excellence consistently and sustainably. Delaying or compromising any principle reduces student learning, makes teachers' jobs harder, and creates problems that must be fixed later.

**If you are designing or implementing new school models and systems in an Opportunity Culture school or district, use the detailed guidance at [opportunityculture.org/for-system-leaders/](http://opportunityculture.org/for-system-leaders/).**

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## UNDERSTANDING THE OPPORTUNITY CULTURE PRINCIPLES

### Principle #1: Reach more students and schools with excellent teachers, principals, and their teams

#### For teachers:

- \* Excellent teachers reach more students directly or by leading teams *and* continue teaching, part or full time.
- \* “Reach” means being formally accountable for the outcomes of extra students (for example, 33–300 percent more) whom a teacher reaches via direct instruction or who are taught by the teachers (s)he leads— typically no more than 2–6 teachers, plus assistants.

#### For principals:

- \* Multi-school leaders spend time in every school and lead all principals to achieve excellence schoolwide.
- \* “Reach” means being formally accountable for the student outcomes and teacher effectiveness in all the schools a multi-school leader leads. Multi-school leaders should lead no more than 8 principals.

**Typical:** Districts and schools aim for 80–100 percent of students to have highly effective teachers of record in the four core subjects, at least. Teacher and principal roles are designed, then added, to meet this goal fast.

### Principle #2: Pay teachers and principals more for extending their reach

- \* Schools pay a *lot* more to *excellent* educators reaching more students.
- \* Schools pay somewhat more to *all* teachers who extend their reach.

**Typical:** Schools pay fixed-dollar supplements equating to 10–50 percent of average pay in roles reserved for top educators, with more pay as the number of students reached increases. Some districts pay smaller supplements to team teachers, rewarding the teamwork and collaboration that improve student learning.

### Principle #3: Fund pay within regular budgets

- \* Supplements for Opportunity Culture positions in schools are funded by recurring, *school*-level budgets, not grants or temporary budget line items—and not by district line items, which are easily cut later.
- \* Supplements are funded by trading positions or other costs for more pay for remaining positions, according to the pay plan (see Principle #2). In most cases this can happen through natural attrition.
- \* Pay is in fixed-dollar supplements (or is paid on a separate schedule for advanced roles), not percentage add-ons to base pay, to create budget certainty and equal opportunity for educators at all levels of experience.

**Typical:** All supplements are within school budgets and typically paid as fixed-dollar supplements. States generally allow schools trading positions to direct all funds toward pay increases (not so in North Carolina).

### Principle #4: Provide protected in-school time and clarity about how to use it for planning, collaboration, & development

- \* Teachers responsible for more students, and principals responsible for more schools, have more time to plan.
- \* Team leaders and team members (whether teachers or principals) have commonly scheduled time at several points weekly during school hours to plan, collaborate, observe, and provide feedback; paraprofessional support and scheduling allow this.
- \* Schools have clear roles, defined in part by district job descriptions, and processes for using time well.
- \* Scheduled teaching, planning, and collaboration time is strongly protected from interruptions and interfering duties.

**Typical:** Most Opportunity Culture schools redo schedules so that teachers on the same subject or grade team have several extra hours weekly for individual and team co-planning and other collaboration, with paraprofessional coverage where needed.

### Principle #5: Match authority and accountability to each person’s responsibilities

#### For teachers:

- \* Teachers are the formally accountable teachers of record in the district and state, matched to the students and subjects they reach through direct teaching or as a team leader.
- \* A person’s level and span of formal authority matches his/her role, responsibilities, and accountability.

#### For principals:

- \* Multi-school leaders are formally accountable for all of their schools’ student outcomes and teacher success and satisfaction, among other school-level measures of success.

**Typical:** Districts adapt district accountability system to match needs of roles in the short term; scaling up will require aligning state systems with team-based, teacher-led, extended-reach models.