

# OPPORTUNITY CULTURE NEWS

VOL. 1, WINTER 2017

PUBLIC IMPACT

## Where is Opportunity Culture?

You are part of a growing national movement! In a few short years, Opportunity Culture roles and career paths have been implemented or are in the design phase in more than 110 schools:



**Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and Project L.I.F.T.:** 32 schools implemented, 3 in design, using **Multi-Classroom Leadership, Time Swaps,** and **Subject Specialization.** The Project L.I.F.T. zone within Charlotte-Mecklenburg (CMS) was the first Opportunity Culture site, beginning implementation in 2013–14. CMS quickly decided to expand this initiative in the district.

**Syracuse City School District:** 13 schools implemented, using Multi-Classroom Leadership.

**Metro Nashville Public Schools:** 7 schools implemented, using Multi-Classroom Leadership.

**Cabarrus County Schools, N.C.:** 11 schools implemented, using Multi-Classroom Leadership, Time Swaps, and Subject Specialization.

**Indianapolis Public Schools:** 6 schools implemented, 9 in design, using Multi-Classroom Leadership and Time Swaps. First district in the country to include Opportunity Culture roles in its teacher contract.

**Fulton County Schools, Ga.:** 2 schools implemented, using Time Swaps.

**Edgecombe County Schools, N.C.:** 3 schools in design.

**Vance County Schools, N.C.:** 3 schools in design.

**Arizona:** Five Phoenix-area districts have just begun working with the Maricopa County Education Service Agency on design.

**Texas:** The Texas Education Agency made Texas the first state to support multiple districts in creating an Opportunity Culture:

- **Big Spring Independent School District:** 4 schools implemented, using Multi-Classroom Leadership.
- **Harlandale Independent School District:** 1 school implemented, using Multi-Classroom Leadership.
- **Mineral Wells Independent School District:** 2 schools in design.
- **Spring Branch Independent School District:** 12 schools in design.

## SPOTLIGHT:

### Bobby Miles, Project L.I.F.T.



Bobby Miles, Teacher of the Year in 2013 and part of the first Opportunity Culture Fellows cohort, is an MCL at Ranson IB Middle School, part of the Project L.I.F.T. zone of very high-need, historically low-performing schools. In 2014–15, Ranson, which uses Opportunity Culture roles schoolwide, achieved a student growth score in the **top 1 percent of schools in North Carolina. Miles's science team posted extremely high growth, and continued to exceed growth expectations in 2015–16.**

Reflecting on what's worked for him, what's his best advice for new MCLs? Focus on relationships and data:

"Never forget why you do this work! We are impacting lives on a daily basis, so it's extremely important that we are intentional about how we coach each of our teachers that we are leading, because they will be doing the 'heart-work' on the frontline everyday," Miles says. "Center everything that you do around authentic relationships—be intentional about building relationships with all of your kids, since when they know you care, they'll give you their best! And then, use every piece of data to help inform your next move instructionally—every minute counts!"

## Two Keys to Opportunity Culture Success

2016 data from teacher surveys, student growth results, and interviews with Opportunity Culture educators highlighted two critical factors in schoolwide high growth: **Fidelity to the Opportunity Culture Principles** and a strong focus on **instructional excellence—schoolwide**.

### Fidelity to Opportunity Culture Principles

Fidelity means an unwavering commitment by districts and schools to the principles, such as:

- \* Paying teachers *a lot more* for more responsibility and reach. The higher the top pay as a percent of average pay in the district, the bigger the results.
- \* Making higher pay sustainable from day 1 by funding supplements with school-level reallocations, not grants or district-level funds (districts can also shift district funds into school budgets permanently).
- \* Giving teachers in the same teams/grades/subjects time most days to collaborate and learn.
- \* Giving MCLs formal, public authority to lead, so that everyone knows it's their job to help colleagues excel.
- \* Matching accountability to the students for whom each teacher is responsible.

### Instructional Excellence

The Opportunity Culture Principles are the bedrock of reaching more students with excellent teaching. Instructional excellence and leadership are the house—where teachers and students should live every day.

Interviews with high-growth Opportunity Culture teachers reveal an instructional excellence pattern, one repeated by many experts. See the **Instructional Excellence Summary** for details. Later this year, watch for video clips of teachers describing these elements and companion discussion questions to use with your team.

Here's a summary: Opportunity Culture teachers who are getting high growth with student learning fast...

- \* **Raise Sights**—Pre-plan high standards for each grade/course—with schoolwide curriculum and lessons up to and beyond standards—to support achievement and growth.
- \* **Connect**—Establish strong relationships with students and families to cultivate a culture of learning and respect.
- \* **Lead the Classroom**—Lead with authority and compassion, setting and reinforcing norms for routines and behavior (in person, and virtually).
- \* **Execute Rigor and Personalization**—Execute rigorous lessons aligned with the curriculum, personalizing and differentiating instruction for highly engaging, high-growth learning.
- \* **Monitor with Data**—Assess students' learning achievement and growth, from the start and continuing through the year.
- \* **Adjust Instruction**—Change instruction when learning slows—and to help students advance faster—based on data.
- \* **Share**—Engage students and families by involving students in setting goals and providing data so they can track their growth.

Schoolwide results need a schoolwide approach. In top Opportunity Culture schools, the principal leads a team of multi-classroom leaders (MCLs) to help everyone excel. Multi-classroom leadership spreads excellence faster.

MCLs getting team-wide high growth the fastest dive in right away, rather than hanging back. They establish their leadership fast, build team collaboration, guide instruction with authority, and develop team members. They plan ahead—often during the summer—to help teachers grasp content and teach with rigor and personalization. See more in the **Action Planner for MCLs** and our **principal tools**.

### Meet Those in the Spotlight!

Many teachers in Opportunity Culture schools want to hear and learn from those in similar roles in other districts—so here's your chance! **On Tuesday, March 7, from 7 to 7:45 p.m. EST**, Public Impact will host a conference call featuring Bobby Miles, Kristin Cubbage, and Kali Ashman from, this issue's "Spotlights." No need to pre-register—just dial to join the call, ask questions, and share your experiences. To join the call, dial **919-295-9059**.

### SPOTLIGHT: Kristin Cubbage, Project L.I.F.T.



Kristin Cubbage was one of the first, pioneering multi-classrooms leaders in the country, at Ashley Park K–8, and part of the first cohort of Opportunity Culture Fellows. Now the MCL for grades K–2, Cubbage reports that she has a full team of effective teachers this year—and of her nine teachers, seven are returning teachers!

The teachers, who include five who were new last year, say they signed on for another year because of the intense coaching and support Cubbage provides—powerful testament to the power of multi-classroom leadership in a very high-needs school.

**SPOTLIGHT:****Opportunity Culture Convening, Syracuse**

Chief Human Resources Officer Christopher Miller has been working hard to spread the word about Opportunity Culture in his district, and recently worked with his educator effectiveness team to put on a convening for all Syracuse's 13 Opportunity Culture schools. Three panel discussions—teacher-leaders, principals, and district leaders—focused on how OC has affected the panelists' schools and students. Attendees included teacher-leaders, officials from the Syracuse Teachers Association, principals, assistant superintendents and other central office leaders, who heard an overview of each Opportunity Culture school, roles within the district, and lessons the schools have learned so far.

"As we have grown our Opportunity Culture model, we felt it was important to bring our teacher-leaders, school leaders, and district leaders together to celebrate and learn about OC across the district. We wanted to ensure that educators doing the same work could learn from each other and also see that they were part of a larger district strategy to extend the reach of excellent teachers and impact student achievement," Miller says.

**SPOTLIGHT:****Kali Ashman,  
Cabarrus County Schools**

For Kali Ashman, a Spanish teacher at Central Cabarrus High, Opportunity Culture's **Time-Technology Swap** model solves a problem—how to offer Spanish IV when there aren't enough students to justify hiring another teacher—but the benefits go much further, she says. Ashman swaps in-class days between her Spanish III and IV students; on their "off" days, students work in a computer lab or at home. Fridays are reserved for remediation, enrichment, language labs, and presentations to the other class to improve speaking skills.

"I absolutely love the structure of this class," Ashman says. "I believe it helps students prepare for the work force or university by learning time management and technology skills, using authentic resources online. And I get to work with smaller groups of students, which increases their achievement."

**SPOTLIGHT:****Coulwood Middle School, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools**

Thanks to a strong leadership team of multi-classroom leaders and careful data monitoring, Principal Janet Moss says, Coulwood Middle, a historically low-performing, high-poverty school, is continuing its steady climb in its state accountability rating—going from an F in 2013–14 to a D in 2014–15 to a C last year—and Moss believes the school can reach a B this year. The MCL team was crucial, Moss says, especially in keeping the school on its steady path when she had to take some time off.

"Fully embracing Opportunity Culture has positively impacted every aspect of my school's development, creating a culture of continuous improvement, professional coaching, and lifelong learning for staff, while creating innovative, collaborative, and challenging opportunities for students," says Moss, the West Learning Community Principal of the Year.

**Midyear Resources:** All available at [OpportunityCulture.org](http://OpportunityCulture.org)

- \* **Opportunity Culture Fellows' columns:** Fellows write columns (most with accompanying videos) about all aspects of their jobs as MCLs and blended-learning teachers in RealClearEducation.com and The74million.org.
- \* **Opportunity Culture Educators in the News:** Read news coverage about what's happening in OC schools across the country.

**Tools for MCLs:**

- \* **Through-the-year action planner,** with input from current MCLs
- \* **MCL training sessions:** Meant for school/district use during the summer and throughout the year, teachers can turn to these on their own as well.
- \* **MCL case studies:** Vignettes and videos take an in-depth look at the actions four MCLs took to lead their teams, mistakes they made, and how they recovered.

**Tools for Principals:** Through-the-year **action planners** and organizational materials that successful principals requested.

Check the [For Opportunity Culture Educators](http://For Opportunity Culture Educators) webpage regularly for new and updated tools and materials.