

# AN OPPORTUNITY CULTURE FOR ALL

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

\* SUMMARY \*

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NOTE: An updated version of this publication can be found here:  
[https://opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Career\\_Paths\\_and\\_Pay\\_in\\_an\\_Opportunity\\_Culture\\_A\\_Practical\\_Guide-Public\\_Impact.pdf](https://opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Career_Paths_and_Pay_in_an_Opportunity_Culture_A_Practical_Guide-Public_Impact.pdf)

In most locations, the relationship between organized teachers and reformers remains at best a tenuous truce and at worst a pitched battle. None of the reforms has resulted in substantial, sustainable rewards for their efforts. We see a way out of this cycle. We see a way out of this cycle that extend excellent teaching toward excellence and equity. Studies prove that excellent teachers improve children’s lifelong prospects, and bolster the classroom mode. Studies show that only about 25 percent of today’s teachers produce enough progress—well over a year’s worth of learning growth annually—to help students close achievement gaps and leap ahead. Students starting behind need multiple years of excellent teachers to catch up. Students in the middle need the same to advance to honors work. Even if schools dramatically improved recruiting, retention, and dismissal policies, most students still would not have enough excellent teachers.

In *3X for All: Extending the Reach of Education’s Best* (2009) and *Opportunity at the Top* (2011), we presented a vision for reaching every student with excellent teachers in charge of their learning. Schools can use job redesign and age-appropriate technology to extend excellent teachers’ reach, directly and by leading other teachers, in fully accountable roles, for more pay—within budget.

As schools and teachers have begun implementing this vision, we have seen potential for extended-reach models to start a virtuous cycle of teacher selectivity, opportunity, and higher pay—for all. We call this an “Opportunity Culture”:

- \* **Selectivity** about who enters and remains in teaching becomes easier when schools offer the engaging, developmental, financially rewarding jobs with outstanding peers that high performers want. When good teachers benefit developmentally and financially from having great peers, *everyone* has a reason to advocate for selectivity.
- \* **Opportunity** for **career advancement while teaching** and rigorous, **on-the-job learning** become possible when fully accountable, excellent teachers advance by leading, collaborating with, and developing peers in teams to reach more students. Co-teaching on teams where excellence is acknowledged provides authentic on-the-job learning and enables a team’s teaching to rise to the level of the most skilled teachers in each instructional area. Paraprofessionals scheduled correctly enable these teams to collaborate during school hours and reach far more students.

- \* **Pay** that is substantially higher—six figures on average, within budget—becomes possible, without forcing class-size increases, when teams reach more students than possible in today’s one-teacher-one-classroom mode. Less-costly paraprofessionals save teachers time for reach, and academic resource teachers shift into fully accountable teaching roles, making teacher pay increases of 20 to 130 percent possible. Reallocation of *other* spending to higher teacher pay is also crucial to achieve six-figure average pay.

**A little history helps to understand why schools are so far from this vision**, and why more current and new spending must return to teachers.

Between 1970 and 2010, real per-pupil spending increased 146 percent, but teacher pay per hour remained *flat*. Pay stagnated just as teaching became more challenging. New demands arose to meet individual students’ needs within economically, academically, and linguistically diverse classrooms, and results came to include thinking and problem-solving skills, not just basics. Some new funds were crucial to pay for special education and to help English language learners.

But if schools had proportionally invested just two-thirds of these spending increases in teacher pay, *average* pay today would exceed \$100,000. Instead, districts poured money into most everything *except* higher pay. Effectively, schools picked teachers’ pockets for decades.

Simultaneously, the job market changed. Other professions