

PUBLIC IMPACT



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cabarrus County, N.C., Schools Join National Initiative to Extend the Reach of Excellent Teachers

***Second N.C. District to Implement Opportunity Culture Models
to Reach More Students with Excellent Teachers and Pay Teachers More, Sustainably***

CHAPEL HILL, N.C.—Three elementary schools and seven high schools in Cabarrus County, N.C., will pilot new staffing models in 2014–15 to extend the reach of excellent teachers and their teams to more students, for more pay, within budget. In total, the new staffing models will affect approximately 1,000 students in the first year of implementation alone.

Public Impact, which designed the school model prototypes, will assist some of the school teams in redesigning their schools. These schools will each have a team of administrators and teachers to choose and adapt the “Opportunity Culture” models that fit their school best, following the Opportunity Culture Principles.

The district is beginning work without philanthropic support for the costs of making this transition, but hopes to obtain funding to support additional school-level design teams. Six of the high schools asked to be included after hearing a presentation about Opportunity Culture models from the first high school principal to opt in this spring and Jason Van Heukelum, deputy superintendent of curriculum and instruction for Cabarrus County.

Once schools make the transition to an Opportunity Culture, the higher pay is all funded within existing school budgets, not temporary grants.

The Cabarrus County district, which includes Concord, N.C., has 39 schools and 30,000 students, 43 percent of whom are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Its schools join neighboring Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) in implementing an Opportunity Culture. Four CMS schools piloted their new models this school year, and CMS announced plans in January to scale up its Opportunity Culture work to include nearly half of the district’s schools by 2017–18.

“We strive to provide all of our students access to excellent teachers, while at the same time we struggle to pay our teachers a competitive salary,” Van Heukelum said. “Opportunity Culture models address both of these areas, and we are excited to partner with Public Impact in this work.”

Opportunity Culture Principles

Teams of teachers and school leaders must choose and tailor models to:

1. Reach more students with excellent teachers
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

Public Impact launched the [Opportunity Culture](#) initiative in 2011. In its quest to reach all students with excellent teaching by 2025, the Public Impact team published [school model summaries](#) and [detailed models](#) that use job redesign and technology to extend the reach of excellent teachers and their teams to more students, for more pay, within budget—without forcing class-size increases. Most of the models add significant time for teaching teams to collaborate, plan, and improve during school hours and make paid career paths possible for all teachers, not just the best. In fall 2013, Public Impact Co-Directors Emily Ayscue Hassel and Bryan C. Hassel updated their Opportunity Culture vision in [An Opportunity Culture For All: Making Teaching a Highly Paid, High-Impact Profession](#).

Excellent teachers—those in the top 20 to 25 percent—are the ones who, on average, help students make a year and a half worth of learning growth annually and excel at developing students' higher-order thinking skills. Students who start out behind need this excellent teaching consistently to catch up, and students in the middle need the same to advance toward rising global standards.

In an Opportunity Culture, excellent teachers are accountable for every student's learning, and these teachers and their teams earn more for reaching more students. Good, solid teachers work side by side with outstanding peers, who can set a high standard for learning and help whole teams excel. Pilot schools in other districts in the Opportunity Culture initiative received about 30 applications for every open reach-extension position in the first year of recruiting. Schools may find these higher-paying models especially effective for recruiting and retaining excellent teachers and teams in hard-to-staff schools and positions, such as STEM teaching.

Design teams from the Cabarrus schools visited Ashley Park Elementary and Ranson IB Middle, two of the CMS schools implementing an Opportunity Culture this year. Design teams at the elementary schools are considering using some combination of Multi-Classroom Leadership, Time Swaps, and Subject Specialization.

- [Multi-Classroom Leadership](#): A multi-classroom leader is an excellent teacher who leads a team. The “MCL” stays in the classroom as a teacher; is accountable for the team’s teaching and the outcomes of all the team’s students; sets the methods and materials used; and collaborates with and develops the team.
- [Time Swaps](#): When a school uses Time Swaps, students work as little as an hour per day online, mastering basic skills, or offline on projects or individual work. This frees teachers’ time to reach more students and focus in-person instruction on personalized, higher-order learning. Teachers also gain planning and collaboration time.
- [Elementary Subject Specialization](#): In this model, a teacher who has demonstrated excellence in one subject or subject pair (for example, math and/or science, or language arts and/or social studies) teaches just those subjects, with support from other teachers and paraprofessionals.

“Cabarrus County first contemplated creating an Opportunity Culture when it applied for the Race to the Top district competition,” said Bryan C. Hassel, Public Impact’s co-director. “The district was one of 35 finalists across the country, but didn’t win. Regardless, the district’s leaders saw the benefits for its students and teachers and forged ahead, with enthusiasm from both participating principals and teachers.”

For more information, please visit www.OpportunityCulture.org. To arrange an interview with Public Impact’s co-director, Dr. Bryan C. Hassel, contact Anne Halstater at Anne_Halstater@publicimpact.com; 919.357.5519.

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About Public Impact

Public Impact is a national organization whose mission is to dramatically improve learning outcomes for all children in the U.S., with a special focus on students who are not served well. We are a team of professionals from many backgrounds, including former teachers. We are researchers, thought leaders, tool-builders, and on-the-ground consultants who work with leading education reformers.

Learn more about an Opportunity Culture on OpportunityCulture.org. The website also provides [tools](#) – all free—for school design teams, and related [publications](#).