



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Edgecombe County Public Schools Joins Other N.C. Districts in National Initiative to Extend Reach of Excellent Teaching

CHAPEL HILL, N.C.— To attract and retain great teachers, Edgecombe County Public Schools, located along the Tar River in flood-ravaged North Carolina, has joined the national [Opportunity Culture initiative](#) to extend the reach of excellent teachers and their teams to more students, for more pay, within recurring budgets. The initiative now includes 17 sites in seven states, including three others in North Carolina.

“We are thrilled about partnering with Public Impact to bring Opportunity Culture to Edgecombe County Public Schools,” said Superintendent John D. Farrelly. “We know that providing an excellent education for all of our students requires exceptional teaching in every classroom, every day. Opportunity Culture will enable us to attract and retain highly effective teacher-leaders, who will build the capacity of the teachers on their teams and help promote a culture of achievement and innovation throughout the district.”

According to the most recent state “report card” for the district, in prior years Edgecombe suffered a teacher turnover rate higher than the state averages in its middle and elementary schools. Edgecombe attributes much of that to heavy competition from nearby districts, which in previous years offered higher teacher pay supplements. In 2016, Edgecombe raised from 5 to 7 percent the supplement for teacher pay that it provides over the state’s funding, in addition to adding the Opportunity Culture roles for 2017-18.

In an Opportunity Culture, a team of teachers and administrators at each school chooses among models that use job redesign and age-appropriate technology to reach more students with personalized, high-standards instruction—one hallmark of great teachers. School teams redesign schedules to provide additional school-day time for teacher planning and collaboration, typically with accountable teacher-leaders called “multi-classroom leaders” leading teams and providing frequent, on-the-job development.

The school design teams reallocate school budgets to fund pay supplements permanently, in contrast to temporarily grant-funded programs. In other Opportunity Culture sites, pay supplements have been as high as 50 percent, and an average of about 20 percent, of base salaries.

The Edgecombe district, based in Tarboro, N.C., and about an hour east of Raleigh, serves more than 6,200 students, and has about 400 teachers. About 60 percent of its students are students of color and 40 percent white, and almost 70 percent of its students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch.

In 2017–18, Edgecombe will begin with three Opportunity Culture schools on the north side that form a feeder pattern and a new “innovation zone”: Coker-Wimberly Elementary, Phillips Middle, and North Edgecombe High. The district plans to begin in the Tarboro and Princeville feeder schools in 2018–19, and the south side feeder schools and Edgecombe Early College High School the following year.

“Most of the nation’s districts are in small towns and rural communities, which face huge challenges attracting and keeping enough great teachers,” said Public Impact Co-Director Bryan C. Hassel. “With its demonstrated track record of innovation and resilience, Edgecombe’s an ideal district to blaze a path for similar districts seeking to change this.”

At the meeting announcing the plans, school board members expressed enthusiasm about the district's Opportunity Culture plans.

"I see this as a win-win situation," said Evelyn Wilson, the board's chair. "I think it will impact student achievement and will be the ultimate recruitment tool we can use in attracting new teachers. This will make us stand out and lead to great gains."

Edgecombe schools are working to recover from damage from Hurricane Matthew, which hit Tarboro and Princeville and surrounding communities hard. The area had previously suffered extreme damage from Hurricane Floyd in 1999. EducationNC.org has run an extensive [series](#) on the damage and schools in Edgecombe County.

Edgecombe County joins three other established Opportunity Culture sites in North Carolina: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools; Project L.I.F.T., a learning community within the Charlotte district; and Cabarrus County Schools. In 2015–16, 59 percent of the Opportunity Culture schools in North Carolina exceeded student growth expectations, more than double the percentage of N.C. schools overall at just 28 percent, according to school performance data from the state.

Similarly, high-poverty Opportunity Culture schools exceeded growth expectations at much higher rates than in North Carolina overall: 56 percent versus 26 percent of high-poverty schools statewide. High-poverty schools have 40 percent or more students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. Two-thirds of Opportunity Culture schools were high-poverty schools. (For more details, see [this press release](#).)

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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 the [OpportunityCulture.org](#) website, which provides [tools](#)—all free—to build an Opportunity Culture, [videos of teachers and principals](#), and related [resources](#). Funding for development of resources to help schools design and implement Opportunity Culture models and support teachers taking on new roles has been provided by [national foundations](#).

Educators who have worked in Opportunity Culture schools are [publishing a series of columns](#) about their work on national news sites.

For more information, please visit [www.OpportunityCulture.org](#). To arrange an interview with Public Impact, contact Sharon Keschull Barrett at Sharon.Barrett@publicimpact.com; 919.929.4544.