



## News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### 366 Schools Awarded Certified Opportunity Culture School Designation

CHAPEL HILL, N.C.—Showing their commitment to reaching all students with excellent teaching, consistently, and all educators with excellent, paid career opportunities, 366 schools in eight states have been awarded the new [Certified Opportunity Culture School™](#) designation. Districts using Opportunity Culture® strategic staffing designs implement innovative models that extend the reach of excellent teachers and the small teams they lead to more students, for more pay, within regular school budgets.

[Third-party studies](#) have shown that Opportunity Culture models boost student learning an extra half-year annually, on average. They retain effective teachers and pay many team positions more, giving educators support, collaboration and career opportunities. The latest annual, anonymous survey of educators in all schools using Opportunity Culture models shows nearly unanimous support for their school’s implementation, with 99% of educators in the Multi-Classroom Leader™ role and 91% of educators in all Opportunity Culture roles agreeing that they want it to continue in their school.

With Opportunity Culture certification and validation, schools and districts can attract applicants looking for support and career paths, and reassure parents, their community, state and funders that they are using models that increase student learning. Certification levels convey strength of implementation in key areas, including selectivity of Opportunity Culture roles, student access to instruction led by Opportunity Culture teams, incorporation of small-group, high-dosage tutoring into staffing plans and financial sustainability of staffing plans.

The newly certified schools are all at the “provisional” level reflecting their 2023–24 school year, and they can attain higher certification levels for the current school year and beyond. Twenty-eight districts total in Arkansas, California, Louisiana, Maryland, New Mexico, North Carolina, Texas and Virginia now have certified schools.

“Terms like ‘strategic staffing’ and ‘innovative staffing’ are becoming more familiar in education circles as leaders recognize the need to rethink roles, schedules and use of funding in schools. We are pleased to celebrate the first set of certified schools, whose educators raised their hands to tackle redesign work and are now doubling down on staffing design *with results*. Design details matter for students!” said Stephanie Dean, strategic director and senior vice president of Opportunity Culture policy and outreach.

In North Carolina, the five largest school systems—Wake, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Guilford, Winston-Salem-Forsyth and Cumberland—are implementing Opportunity Culture models and have certified schools.

Newly released state data for the 2023–24 year shows that North Carolina Title I schools that have been using Opportunity Culture models for four or more years were 43% more likely to make high schoolwide growth (exceeding state growth expectations) than Title I schools not using the models. Even in early years of implementation, the models make an immediate difference: The data shows that all Title I schools using the models, including those in early years, were 33% more likely to make high schoolwide growth.

“Almost two years ago, the Public Impact team focused on two innovation goals: to drastically reduce the cost of boosting student learning and educator pay through data-driven staffing models and protect those results,” Co-President Emily Ayscue Hassel said.

Those goals are being met, Co-President Bryan C. Hassel said. “First, we’re meeting the goals with the new ‘design’ room in the Opportunity Culture online portal, which guides educators through a school or district’s staffing design process at a tiny fraction of the price just two years ago. And second, through this new certification system, which educators and families can count on when they choose schools.”

Through the Opportunity Culture portal, districts can now take advantage of the [Self-Driven Design™](#) process, the result of a two-year effort to reduce costs for schools and systems to create their own Opportunity Culture plans. The asynchronous process leads to a recommendation for a staffing design to fit each school’s context, based on research. The courses may also apply toward educators’ continuing education requirements.

## How Districts Use Opportunity Culture Models

Each school using Opportunity Culture models forms a design and implementation team of teachers and administrators that determines how to use Opportunity Culture roles to reach more students with excellent teaching. The design teams reallocate school budgets to permanently fund pay supplements for those in Opportunity Culture roles, in contrast to temporary grant-funded programs. In addition to these supplements, the Opportunity Culture initiative continues to support higher pay for all teachers, where budgets allow.

The [Multi-Classroom Leader](#) (MCL™) role is the cornerstone role, for a teacher with a track record of high-growth student learning who leads a small teaching team for a substantial pay supplement, averaging 23 percent of average teacher pay. These team leaders continue to teach part of the time in some way while leading the team in lesson planning, data analysis, instructional changes and the creation of a tutoring culture. They provide support through regular coaching and feedback, co-teaching and modeling of instruction.

Their team may include those in Team Reach Teacher™ roles, for teachers who—critically in schools with [teacher shortages](#)—directly teach more students, typically without raising instructional group sizes, for more pay. This avoids filling a portion of teacher vacancies with long-term substitutes. The team gets support and [MCL-guided tutoring](#) from advanced paraprofessionals in the Reach Associate™ role.

Since 2013, more than 75 sites with over 600 schools in 14 states have used the models, reaching nearly 200,000 students in 2024–25, and gaining strong educator support in annual surveys. More than 1,000 schools nationally are implementing or designing their plans or are signed up to begin design. From 2013 through the 2023–24 school year, Opportunity Culture educators earned an estimated \$78.8 million in extra pay.

See the latest figures on the [Opportunity Culture dashboard](#).

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## About Public Impact®

Public Impact’s mission is to improve education dramatically for all students, especially low-income students, students of color, and other students whose needs historically have not been well met. 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 the Opportunity Culture initiative on the [OpportunityCulture.org](#) website. To arrange an interview with Public Impact, contact Sharon Keschull Barrett at [OpportunityCultureInfo@publicimpact.com](mailto:OpportunityCultureInfo@publicimpact.com).