Research indicates that excellent teachers—those in the top 20 to 25 percent—produce average student learning gains that are approximately three times those of teachers in the bottom 20 to 25 percent. We call those excellent teachers “3x” teachers. Public Impact’s initiative aims to extend their reach to all students.

How does this “reach extension” work? It relies on two critical elements: redesigning teaching roles and using technology to free excellent teachers’ time so they may reach more students.

Excellent teachers can earn more—within current budgets—for the additional students they reach successfully, and through teacher-leader positions that keep them in the classroom. All teachers have opportunities to pursue excellence, usually through team-based work that allows them to earn more while collaborating with and learning from their high-performing peers, with increased planning and development time available during the school day. We call this an “Opportunity Culture.”

Here are some additional terms we use and what we mean by them:

**MODES OF REACH EXTENSION**

**“In-Person”** reach extension changes how instructional roles are organized and designed. The excellent teacher is at the school, providing instruction face to face, and may lead other on-site teachers and staff. When this is not combined with other modes, teachers may use digital instruction, but too little to free their time to teach more students.

**“Remote”** reach extension uses technology that enables the excellent teacher accountable for learning to engage directly, though not in person, with students. This could include webinars, webcams, and online whiteboards. Excellent, remotely located teachers may also lead other staff.

Teachers interact with and instruct students in both real time and “asynchronously,” at times convenient to both teacher and students. Remote reach extension always includes live interaction between the teacher and the student. It requires an in-person monitor.

**“Digital Instruction” (“Boundless”)** is delivered via technology, such as video and smart software, that offers students a personalized sequence of learning experiences, and does not include live interaction with a teacher. Digital instruction must be combined with an excellent in-person or remotely located teacher, who is personally accountable for students’ learning outcomes. It is “boundless” because, once recorded, great digital instruction can help a limitless number of students located anywhere.

**“Combinations”** of different modes, or of different models within each mode, allow schools to balance different objectives, including reaching more students with excellent teachers, maintaining or improving teacher effectiveness, saving money, paying excellent teachers more, teamwork, professional development, and providing roles in which all teachers and staff may contribute to excellent student outcomes.

**REACH EXTENSION MODEL CATEGORIES**

**“Specialization.”** Excellent teachers specialize in high-priority subjects and the most crucial, challenging roles, focusing on the subjects and instructional roles in which each excels. Teachers may use a portion of freed time for collaboration and planning.

**“Multi-Classroom Leadership.”** School-based or remote instructional teams report to excellent teachers with leadership skills. The teacher-leaders are fully accountable for multiple classrooms, and they both teach and lead other team members, who use the leader’s methods and tools in varying roles the leader assigns. The leader develops team members’ skills so that each may achieve excellence and work toward career advancement.

**“Time-Technology Swaps.”** Digital instruction replaces enough excellent in-person or remote teacher time that these teachers can teach more students. Students are likely to use digital instruction for 25 percent or more of learning time. The swap may be on a fixed schedule (“Rotation”) or a flexible one (“Flex”) determined by students’ changing needs. Teachers may use a portion of freed time for collaboration and planning.
“Rotation.” A type of time-technology swap that alternates digital and live-teacher learning time (with in-person or remote teachers) on a fixed schedule. Digital learning time will likely be 25 to 50 percent of in-school learning time. Teacher can be there in person or be remotely located.

“Flex.” A type of time-technology swap in which each student has individualized, frequently changing digital, small-group, and large-group learning time. Digital learning time may be 50 percent or more of in-school learning time. Teacher can be there in person or be remotely located.

“Class-Size Changes.” Excellent teachers choose to teach larger classes, within limits appropriate for each teacher, the students, and the school. Educationally high-performing nations have average class sizes of 19 to 35 students; OECD-reporting nations with graduation rates over 90 percent have average class sizes of 27 students. U.S. classrooms average 24 students. In these models, we limit class-size increases to 35 or smaller. Many schools would choose different limits, depending on the teachers and students involved. Note: Few pilot Opportunity Culture schools have chosen to use this model alone. Although it requires the least change in school processes, it maintains the one-teacher-one-classroom mode, and does not create a natural team of teachers who can help one another succeed.

OTHER TERMS

“Excellent teacher,” “great teacher,” “top teacher,” “best teacher,” and “3x teacher” refer to teachers who produce at least the student learning growth of today’s top-quartile teachers, compared to other teachers nationally or within a state. Today this growth is about 1.5 years per school year. We encourage model designers to focus on teachers who have produced high growth consistently, e.g., two out of the three most recent years. To identify excellent teachers in untested grades and subjects and in high school, schools will need measures correlated with student progress and achievement. Some teachers may need to be identified as excellent by outcomes in related subjects and nearby grades. Other measures of teacher effectiveness are important supplements to measured student learning growth. Schools will need to identify these additional measures based on the teachers’ contributions that they wish to magnify. For example, teacher contributions that schools may want to consider include: students’ higher-order thinking development (analytical, creative, and conceptual); students’ social, emotional, behavioral, and time-management development; teacher contributions to peer effectiveness and the school community; and parent relationships.

“Good teacher,” “solid teacher,” and “typical teacher” refer to teachers in the middle two quartiles of student growth, who on average produce about one year of learning progress. Some may be excellent in parts of the instructional process but, in today’s classrooms, do not consistently produce growth on par with the excellent teachers. Many of these teachers may be able to achieve excellence in new roles and when working closely with excellent peers in new school models.

“Ineffective teacher,” “least effective teacher,” and “low-performing teacher” mean those in the bottom quartile of teachers, who produce far less than a year of student learning growth, on average. Some of these teachers may have strengths that can be utilized in new roles in new school models.

“Personalized” refers to instruction tailored to the level and interests of each child. In-person teachers typically personalize by differentiating instruction for individual students and small groups by mastery level and learning preferences. Digital instruction personalizes by assessing and responding to the content mastery and preferences of each student. Personalization can also include choosing the quantity of digital and in-person instruction appropriate for each student in a subject.

“Higher-Order” and “Enriched” instruction refers to instruction that asks students to use and acquire skills and knowledge to solve problems (“analytical”), generate new ideas (“creative”), or grasp similarities and differences in how knowledge is applied in different contexts (“conceptual”). This can include individual or team work, and large projects or short-but-complex assignments.

“Knowledge and skills” refers to instruction focused on learning facts and rules, and grasping standard routines for using them.