



## REACHING STUDENTS WITH EXCELLENT TEACHERS IN SCHOOLS WHERE TOO FEW TEACHERS PRODUCE HIGH-GROWTH LEARNING

In the early sites for reach extension, some schools may have very few teachers who produce high-growth learning consistently or are otherwise rated very highly (e.g., 10 percent –3 to 6 teachers total— or fewer). Even doubling these teachers’ reach will not serve students well enough. What can we do to help these schools? There are several possible approaches, which may be used in combination. Below are some possibilities. Add your thoughts on OpportunityCulture.org.

### Plan for a future of excellence and opportunity:

- ❑ **Plan for reach the following school year.** If a school is in this situation and has a large population of low-achieving students, then it should consider a turnaround attempt. Research indicates that a summer of planning time is not enough for a successful turnaround. Instead of implementing reach poorly now as part of that strategy, plan to do it right in the future.
  - ✓ **Engage the principal and highest-performing current teachers**, even if small in number, in the planning effort over a summer plus fall semester. They can then help recruit a community of peers in the spring to share a potentially extraordinary experience.
  - ✓ **Choose models that will work with the teachers** the school is likely to be able to recruit in its locale. For example: If the school will most likely be able to get only new but very high-potential teachers, then a multi-class leadership model may need to be part of the design.
- ❑ **Focus recruiting on proven, excellent teachers and high-potential new teachers.** As soon as a school knows what model(s) of reach it will use, post job descriptions for reach roles that clearly communicate the opportunities of greater impact on students and enhanced pay (and the job’s sustainability, which will distinguish it from other jobs). Seek a combination of proven, excellent teachers in the needed grades and subjects, and new teachers who are excited by working in a school where they can learn from great teachers and where high performance will lead to additional responsibility and pay.
- ❑ **Extreme shortages call for extreme measures.** Multi-combination school models are likely to be the solution for schools with daunting shortages of qualified or excellent teachers. Multi-combination models can accomplish multiple goals at once: growing leadership skills among excellent teachers, incorporating the development of all teachers into weekly routines, and directly reaching more students with already-excellent teachers fast.

### Meanwhile, make some changes now, engaging your current teachers in the process:

- ❑ **Extend the reach of the excellent teachers you already have.** Even if wide-scale implementation needs to wait a year for planning and recruiting, some schools can make changes right away to help students. Some easier-to-implement changes include small class-size increases (by choice), elementary specialization in those grade-level teams ready to try it, and use of existing digital labs to allow some outstanding secondary teachers to try time-technology swaps.

- ❑ **Look for focused excellence, and extend it.** Identify whether some teachers who do not appear to be high-performing overall are producing excellent outcomes in one course (secondary) or core subject (e.g., elementary math or language arts). These teachers might be candidates for secondary time-technology swaps, elementary specialization, or other means of reach.
- ❑ **Consider sharing teachers with nearby schools.** Teachers can be remotely located, even if just across the district. These local-but-remote teachers may be able to “circuit ride,” engaging with students in person occasionally, in addition to teaching via webcams and similar technologies. Schools can pay teachers more by combining this with time-technology swaps, even if for just a small portion of learning time. Note: Not all great teachers would feel comfortable or be successful in this kind of role. Ask the individual teachers involved.
- ❑ **Look for great teachers who have left the classroom—but are still in schools.** Are there instructional coaches (or subject specialists, gifted education specialists, reading recovery specialists, etc.) who were excellent classroom teachers before they moved into specialist positions? If so, engage them in the school model planning process with the goal of moving them back into accountable roles that reach more students *and* earn more pay.
- ❑ **Use multi-classroom leadership.** If a school has only a small number of excellent teachers, and those teachers have some track record of leading or influencing other adults, use multi-classroom leadership. Each school will need to decide with its excellent teachers how big of a span each teacher-leader can manage successfully in the first year. By reorganizing team-teaching roles—and providing direction, materials, rubrics, observation and feedback, analysis of student progress, and teacher development—teacher-leaders may be able to put solid teachers into roles where they, too, can produce great learning outcomes as a team. In extreme shortages of excellent teachers, teacher-leaders may need to lead multiple grades or whole subjects in a school, perhaps first focusing on the grades/subject that are the targets of a turnaround effort’s first year. They can also model teaching techniques and do part of the teaching, if they have a smaller span.
- ❑ **Persistently low-performing teachers should be dismissed OR shifted into new roles** where they also can be successful—possibly noninstructional roles such as assistant teachers, learning coaches, or digital lab monitors.
- ❑ **Build professional development time into each week** for top teachers to spend with good ones. This is easily done when using time-technology swaps, or schools can use teaching assistants already employed at the school to build this time into classroom teachers’ schedules.

Any school leader can also make changes to do what great schools do:

- ❑ **Build time into every week for teachers to monitor student progress** and determine how to adjust instruction (incorporating professional development).
- ❑ **Let students who need it spend more time** on core subjects.
- ❑ **Implement behavior management routines** that let students focus on learning.
- ❑ **Address visible problems with the safety** of the building.
- ❑ **Engage teachers to make them part of the changes**, so everyone knows what to do differently.
- ❑ **Engage parents in their children’s learning**, so they know how to help their children succeed.
- ❑ **Above all, communicate a clear vision** that every child can learn extraordinarily well with hard work and the support of the adults in charge—teachers, leaders, and parents.

For more on school turnarounds, see [schoolturnarounds.org](http://schoolturnarounds.org) or *The Big U-Turn* for an overview.