

PUBLIC IMPACT



News Release

November 13, 2013

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HOW THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAN GIVE EVERY STUDENT ACCESS TO EXCELLENT TEACHERS

Public Impact Produces a Vision for Focusing Federal Investments in Education

CHAPEL HILL, N.C.—What is one potentially effective way for the federal government to catalyze a transformation of America’s public education system? In a new brief written for the [Center for American Progress](#), [Public Impact](#) explains why and how the federal government must focus states and districts on **giving every student access to excellent teachers**.

Excellent teachers—those in the top 20 to 25 percent—are the ones who produce the strong learning growth students need to catch up and pursue advanced work. These teachers, on average, help students make a year and a half worth of learning growth annually. Without excellent teachers consistently, students who start out behind rarely catch up, and students who meet today’s grade-level targets rarely leap ahead to meet rising global standards.

Giving all students access to excellent teachers, and the teams that they lead, could also transform teaching. The [new school models](#) required to achieve this goal allow sustainably funded higher pay for all, leadership roles that let great teachers lead teams, time for on-the-job collaboration and development, and enhanced authority and credit when helping more students. Public Impact calls this an “Opportunity Culture.” [Early Opportunity Culture implementers](#) have attracted large numbers of applicants, even in high-poverty schools.

“Excellent teachers in pilots are proving that they can help far more students, and teaching peers, succeed. Now that we know this is possible, settling for less sacrifices children’s lives unnecessarily,” said Bryan C. Hassel, co-director of Public Impact.

“Great teachers can’t do this by themselves. They need districts and states to make it possible,” said Cynthia G. Brown, vice president for education at the Center for American Progress. “Focusing federal investments on giving students access to great teachers, for more pay, is sensible and highly respectful of teachers.”

In [Giving Every Student Access to Excellent Teachers: A Vision for Focusing Federal Investments in Education](#), Public Impact suggests four ways the federal government can dramatically increase access to excellent teaching:

1. **Structure competitive grants to induce districts and states to shift to transformative school designs that reach more students with excellent teachers and the teams they lead.**

Incentivize innovation by awarding funds to districts and states with strong, sustainable plans to transform staffing models in ways that dramatically expand access to excellent teaching and make the teaching profession substantially more attractive. The report suggests a new grant as well as ways to refocus existing competitions, such as the Teacher Incentive Fund, to put excellent teachers in charge of all students' learning.

2. **Reorient existing formula grants to encourage transition to new classroom models that extend the reach of great teachers, both directly and through leading teaching teams.** The report shows how to turn the great majority of federal funding distributed to states and districts—Title I and Title II grants—into investments likely to pay off in educational and economic benefits, by reinventing such formula grants as targeted tools that extend excellent teachers' reach in financially sustainable ways, and more effectively direct funds to the students who need them most.
3. **Create a focal point for federal research and development efforts.** Spur rapid progress by gathering and disseminating evidence on policies and practices that extend the reach of excellent teachers, directly and through team leadership, and accelerate development of best-in-class digital tools aligned with college- and career-ready standards, through grant competitions for federal research funds designed to spur development of high-quality content. The long-term impact of extended-reach models hinges on research that continuously enhances the selection and development of teachers, as well as the content, diagnostic tools, and instructional roadmaps that support consistent differentiation and high standards for student learning advancement.
4. **Create and enforce a new civil right to excellent teachers,** fueling districts and states at scale—not just the winners of competitive grants—to make the changes needed to reach all students with excellent teachers and their teams. As the authors note, in the past half century, the right to a decent education has mostly involved enabling access through mandated busing, individualized education plan requirements for students with disabilities, and “adequate” funding levels. No civil right mandates the one thing that we know from research closes even the widest achievement gaps: excellent teachers for multiple, consecutive years. Legislating a new civil right to excellent teachers *obligates* the federal and state governments to enforce the right.

Excellence in teaching and learning for *all* students must become the new goal. The focal point that can align federal, state, and local policy priorities is expanding student access to excellent teaching. Federal resources can help schools transition to the new school models that allow excellent teachers to reach more students and lead peers. Using these four strategies, federal policy and programs can help state and local education agencies put excellent teachers in charge of student learning by implementing these transformative school models and accelerating development of the tools necessary to support them.

These models, which use job redesign and age-appropriate technology to extend the reach of great teachers and the teams they lead, create a fiscally sustainable [cycle of excellence](#). **Opportunity** for sustainably funded, well-paid career advancement paths allows schools to increase hiring **selectivity**, which allows the reallocation of other spending to **higher pay** for classroom teachers, and far higher pay for teacher-leaders.

[Watch](#) the panel discussion about this report at americanprogress.org with the Public Impact authors and John Bailey, executive director, Digital Learning Now!, Foundation for Excellence in Education; Tiffany McAfee, master teacher of humanities, Merit Preparatory Charter School; and Paul Toner, president, Massachusetts Teachers Association.

For more information, please visit www.OpportunityCulture.org. To arrange an interview with Public Impact's co-director, Dr. Bryan C. Hassel, contact Carol Williams at carol_williams@publicimpact.com; 919.240.7955.

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About Public Impact and the Opportunity Culture Initiative

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.

In 2011, Public Impact launched its Opportunity Culture initiative to help the U.S. close achievement gaps and meet rising global standards by extending the reach of excellent teachers to more students. In its quest to reach all students with excellent teachers by 2025, the Public Impact team published [school model summaries](#) and [detailed models](#) that use job redesign and technology to reach more students with excellent teachers and their teams, for more pay, within budget.

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](#).

Most models create new teaching roles, form collaborative teams able to meet during school hours, and enhance teacher development. All teachers and staff have the opportunity to develop to their full potential through collaboration with and leadership from excellent teachers. Career advancement allows more pay and greater reach. Public Impact calls this an Opportunity Culture, explained in detail on OpportunityCulture.org. The website also provides [tools](#) for school design teams and related [publications](#).