First, I’m going to share a little about the research that makes widespread, paid career paths—sometimes called continuums—compelling. And then we’ll share more about new models that make these opportunities and on-the-job development for more teachers possible.
So, why have career paths? Well, for most teachers, the profession remains a “solo practice.” Although some schools have implemented career paths, professional learning communities, or mentoring, few have teams with common responsibility for the same students—teams that plan, teach, and learn together. Few teams have the differentiated roles that let each person contribute to teaching excellence, and that allow career advancement and rigorous on-the-job learning.

The good news is that we can solve a lot of problems at once by focusing on career paths that give more students access to great teaching. And on transforming teaching into a highly paid, high-impact profession.

What do we know from research that supports this?

- There’s not a lot of research about which paths work, because there haven’t been enough implemented and sustained to study.
- We do know some things, though. We know what most teachers want: Recent surveys indicate that teachers want more collaboration and development. They want paid career advancement opportunities (MET Life Survey). Teachers who have already achieved excellence care even more about these opportunities (TNTP’s Irreplaceables).
- And two substantial bodies of research also point us toward the need for career paths: 1) First, teacher effectiveness with students does vary, and students need multiple years of great teaching to close achievement gaps and leap ahead. I’ll share some more about that in a moment.
- 2) Second, although teaching remains compelling for many talented people, it has become a less-attractive profession relative to other jobs. Teachers and would-be teachers have
voted with their feet. I’ll share some more of the numbers on that in a moment, too.
Consistent excellent teaching really does make a difference.

Here’s why.

From the students’ perspective, having excellent teachers changes everything. Excellent teachers—roughly today’s top 25 percent—already achieve results good enough to close achievement gaps. Their students make about three times the progress of students assigned to the bottom 25 percent of teachers and about half a year more than average teachers each year. That’s about 1.5 years of student learning growth on average in a single year.

But students who start behind need great teachers consistently. When they do, students who start behind can catch up. And students in the middle leap ahead.

Decades of research by multiple researchers indicate this (Eric Hanushek, Tom Kane, Bill Sanders, and Susannah Loeb among them). Although there is a healthy debate about the measures—whether today’s standardized tests are adequate—economists have found almost an identical distribution of performance in other professional jobs across all sectors, using a wide variety of outcome measures (Hunter, Schmidt and Judiesch, 1990).

So, students almost certainly would benefit if career paths enabled better teachers to help more students—and their teaching peers.

Note: Research also indicates that teachers who produce high-progress learning in math
and reading also develop students’ higher-order thinking skills.

Note:

• Measures in addition to student learning growth might include teachers’ behavioral competencies, contributions to the school community, contributions to peer performance, strength of parent relationships, parent and student ratings, development of students’ higher-order thinking skills, and development of students’ supporting behaviors: social, emotional, and behavioral skills, and time management.

• Many of these measures can be correlated with student learning growth in tested grades and subjects—and then used reliably to identify and determine paths for teachers in untested grades and subjects.
On that note, good, solid teachers are also very important, because they have the potential to contribute to excellent team outcomes for far more students.

But when they work alone in a one-teacher-one-classroom model, they are not closing achievement gaps. The many teachers in the middle today produce about a year of learning progress on average. For a typical teacher, getting a year of growth takes hard work.

But even a full year of progress every year leaves achievement gaps intact.

Students who start behind stay behind. And students in the middle do not advance to honors-level work that is becoming the “new basic” internationally.
So, great teaching is very important. But schools really aren’t paying for it, developing it, or making the best use of great teachers.

Here are some facts. Between 1970 and 2010, U.S. public education spending per student increased almost 150 percent in real terms. But average teacher pay increased only 11 percent, as did teachers’ work hours—effectively leaving pay flat.

If pay had increased in proportion to overall per-pupil spending, teachers today would earn six figures, on average.

Where did the money go? To pretty much everything except higher teacher pay. Schools added a lot of jobs, most of them not classroom teachers, and spent far more on fancier facilities. But not on teacher pay.

Meanwhile, as you know, the job got much harder. We now expect teachers to deliver results, for all students. To do that, teachers must meet individual students’ needs within diverse classrooms. And “results” include thinking and problem-solving skills, not just basic knowledge.

All of these trends require much stronger teaching.
At the same time, the job market changed. Other professions opened to women, and began offering greater pay and career advancement opportunities.

Other professions also began letting the best professionals lead teams and develop people on the job. Teaching, in contrast, still *pulls its leaders out* of direct service to students.

Those who wish to teach cannot lead, and those who wish to lead cannot teach, in most cases.

The result? Fewer top students become teachers now. And that’s why you see these unfortunate statistics on the slide.

Of course, *many* outstanding professionals enter and remain in teaching today—consider the strong performance of those in the top quartile—and being a great student is certainly not the only qualification for being a great teacher.

But these trends are indicators of the profession’s growing challenges.
If these are the challenges, could career paths help? We think yes. If the conditions that you see here are met.

These are what we call the five Opportunity Culture Principles, and they are the foundation of all the school models in what we call an “Opportunity Culture.”

Today, school design teams with teachers on them are choosing and honing models within these parameters in our pilot sites: extended reach; higher pay, sustainably funded; new roles that promote on-the-job learning; and clear authority and accountability that match each person’s responsibilities.
So, what do these new school models look like?

All of the new models use a combination of job design and age-appropriate technology to extend excellent teachers’ reach, directly and by leading other teachers, in fully accountable roles, for more pay—but within budget. In most models, class size remains the same, although we do think that teachers who take on larger classes should be paid for it.

When crafted correctly:

• Good teachers learn on the job from great ones, while contributing to excellent outcomes on teaching teams.
• In most models, teachers work in teams—teams that have time set aside to meet during the school day.
• Great teachers can take responsibility for far more students’ learning—anywhere from 10% to 400% more than they reach today.

So now we’ll tick through a bit about these models, focusing on the ones that use teams, which you see highlighted here.

As you listen, you might be thinking that you have seen other roles out there that look like these. In most cases, though, they aren’t really “extended reach” within the principles we think will lead to the best careers. Some schools already do class-size shifting, but teachers are not paid for it. Some schools already have computers in the classroom, but schedules
and roles are *not* changed to increase teachers’ reach, pay, or team collaboration time. Some schools have coaching and mentoring roles, but they are often unpaid, and do not give teacher-leaders formal authority or credit for helping more students.
So let’s look at these models. First, Multi-Classroom Leadership. In Multi-Classroom Leadership, teacher-leaders lead teams of teachers and paraprofessionals.

With full accountability for all students in multiple classrooms and explicit authority to lead teams, multi-classroom leaders have an enormous incentive to develop other teachers and help them discover and use their strengths.

Team teachers have an incentive to want great new teachers on their teams, because when teams are high-performing in a school, fewer supplemental instructional positions are necessary. Those resource teachers can return to classrooms, with higher pay. Paraprofessional support on teams also saves money for higher teacher pay, and saves time for teacher collaboration.

Schools can increase multi-classroom leaders’ pay by 50 percent or more, within budget. When schools implement this schoolwide, all teachers can earn more, even when the multi-classroom leaders earn far more.

In this model, many more students experience great teaching. If a district or school wants to ensure that all students truly have access to excellent teachers, Multi-Classroom Leadership, alone or in combination with other models, is crucial.
In Elementary Specialization, teachers specialize in their best subjects or subject pairs—math and science, for example, or language arts and social studies.

Meanwhile, paraprofessionals take care of students during lunch, recess, and transitions—developing their social and behavioral skills, and completing noninstructional paperwork.

Research indicates that, even in traditionally organized schools, having teachers specialize in their best core subjects would likely produce a significant increase in student learning.

This model just uses paraprofessional support to also increase reach, teacher pay, and time for collaboration.

Specializing teachers can earn about 20 to 40 percent more, within budget.

Two to four times the number of students have excellent teachers.

This model alone reaches far more students with excellence, but it must be combined with Multi-Classroom Leadership to ensure that all students are reached in all core subjects.
In Time-Technology Swaps, students spend a portion of time learning digitally—as little as an hour daily. This lets teachers teach more students without needing to increase class sizes, for higher pay, without reducing higher-order instructional time. If scheduled correctly, teachers can gain planning and collaboration time, too. Teachers can earn about 20 to 40 percent more, within budget.

Students actually do not have to spend all of their “digital learning” time online. They also can engage in offline skill practice, project work, and “homework” in a conducive learning environment.

An important note here is that schools can manage secondary teachers’ student loads by limiting the number of reach-extended classes each teacher has. For example, a secondary teacher can reach 50 percent more students and gain 7 or 8 hours weekly of new planning time, if students learn in a lab every other day in core subjects.

This model alone reaches far more students with excellence, but it must be combined with Multi-Classroom Leadership to ensure that all students are reached in all core subjects. When making this combination, teacher-leaders and team teachers can earn more, and all students can experience excellent teaching.

Again, proper scheduling is crucial.
This summary shows the roles from these team-based models, as well as support teacher roles and less-common hybrid roles funded by the district.
What do career paths look like in these new roles? The text here is small, but you can get the idea: Reaching more students—directly or by leading peers—allows advancement and higher pay.

Great teachers can help more students, and in the team models, they can lead and collaborate with peers.

Higher pay is possible, primarily for two reasons: First, paraprofessionals on the teams earn less than teachers but can do much of the work teachers do today, as I described earlier. Second, when great teachers and their teams reach more students, some instructional support staff—excluding ELL and special needs—can return to classrooms, for higher pay.

The reallocated funds from those positions then support higher pay for all classroom teachers, and even more for ones in leadership roles.

Other savings are possible: New facilities can have fewer walls for digital/homework labs and flexible classrooms. And spending on things like professional development can refocus on higher pay for accountable classroom teachers and teacher-leaders who extend their reach to more students.
Implementation of these models is very new. But it’s happening in districts and charter schools. Most are starting in high-poverty schools where the need for great teaching is keenly felt. However, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, our first district to scale up, includes a range of schools.

• Pilot sites include Charlotte, Nashville, Cabarrus County, NC, and Syracuse, NY, with more coming [add new sites to your list when speaking], and several charter networks: Rocketship Education, Carpe Diem, KIPP Empower in Los Angeles, and many newer charter organizations just getting started.
• Multi-Classroom Leadership has been the “it” model among teachers on the school design teams: It extends reach the most, develops all teachers, and creates the collaborative teams that teachers crave.
• None have chosen class-size changes alone—perhaps because they maintain the one-teacher-one-classroom mode.
• This is a mix of technology and low-tech solutions: We expect an increase in digital as it improves.

Recruiting results have been outstanding—roughly 30 applications per open position in Charlotte and Nashville, in some schools where jobs used to go unfilled. Many applicants were former star teachers who had left teaching for administration.

We’re looking forward to seeing what these teachers achieve with these opportunities.
In addition to giving more students access to excellent teaching right away, we expect that these models will have other effects that create a virtuous cycle enabling increased teacher opportunity, pay, and selectivity:

✱ Opportunity for career advancement and rigorous, on-the-job learning for all becomes possible when great teachers advance by collaborating with, leading, and developing other teachers in teams to reach more students (without forcing class-size increases). Teachers increase their impact and earn more, so they stay in teaching. Co-teaching on teams where excellence is acknowledged provides authentic on-the-job learning and enables a team’s teaching to rise to the level of the most skilled teachers in each instructional area. Paraprofessionals scheduled correctly enable in-school collaboration time and greater reach.

✱ Pay that is far higher—potentially six figures on average, within budget—becomes possible when teams reach more students than possible in a one-teacher-one-classroom mode, and with additional reallocation of spending to teacher pay. Reach funds higher pay, because less-costly paraprofessionals save teachers time for reach, and shifting academic resource teachers into fully accountable, higher-paid teaching roles saves more for higher pay.

✱ Selectivity about who enters and stays in teaching becomes far easier when schools offer the engaging, developmental, financially rewarding jobs with outstanding peers that surveys indicate high-performers want. We expect retention to go up in line with the recruiting effect.

You can start to see the power of jointly accountable teams: When good, solid teachers
benefit developmentally and financially from having great peers, everyone has a reason to advocate for selectivity. This is what we call an Opportunity Culture for ALL. One that is focused on superior learning. One that rewards teachers generously. And one that is financially sustainable for schools.
Additional Resources

For more information on school models that extend the reach of excellent teachers and teaching teams, please visit www.opportunityculture.org

- **Two-pager for teachers** — just imagine a profession like this
- **Redesigning Schools** — summarizes reach extension model options
- **School Models** — model details and schedules
- **How to Pay Teachers More** — 20 to 130 percent more — within budget by making the best use of great teachers’ time
- **New Career Paths** — sustainable, paid career advancement using reach school models
- **Tools for School Design Teams** — regularly updated list of all OC materials
- **Selection, Development, & Evaluation Tools**

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