

PUBLIC IMPACT



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Texas Joins National Initiative to Extend Excellent Teachers' Reach State Supports Districts in Creating Opportunity Culture Models that Pay Teachers More, Sustainably

CHAPEL HILL, N.C.— The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has made Texas the first state to support multiple districts in creating an Opportunity Culture, joining a national initiative designed to extend the reach of excellent teachers and their teams to more students, for more pay, within recurring budgets. The Big Spring Independent School District, an eight-campus district in west Texas, is recruiting for its first year of implementation in the 2015–16 school year, and the TEA is identifying at least two other districts to support in this work.

Opportunity Culture models use job redesign and age-appropriate technology to extend the reach of excellent teachers and their teams to many more students, for more pay, within budget.

Opportunity Culture teachers typically work in collaborative teams led by excellent teachers. Teams have in-school planning and collaboration time together and are formally accountable for all of the students they reach. Teachers in Opportunity Culture districts in Tennessee, North Carolina, and New York are earning pay supplements as high as 50 percent of their state's average teacher pay.

Opportunity Culture Principles

Teams of teachers and school leaders must choose and tailor models to:

1. Reach more students with excellent teachers
2. Pay teachers more for extending their reach
3. Fund pay within regular budgets
4. Provide protected in-school time and clarity about how to use it for planning, collaboration, and development
5. Match authority and accountability to each person's responsibilities

"Texas is committed to providing pathways for advancement and recognition for our best teachers," said Texas Commissioner of Education Michael Williams. "Through our support of Opportunity Culture at the state level, our goal is to quantify success in districts by working collaboratively with teachers and principals to support greater student achievement for all students."

Public Impact, which designed the Opportunity Culture model prototypes, and Education First, which has extensive experience facilitating collaborative change in district schools, will assist the state's 20 Education Service Centers (ESCs) and the TEA in identifying and supporting the districts.

Four Big Spring ISD elementary schools—Goliad, Marcy, Moss, and Washington—will select [multi-classroom leaders](#) to lead teams of teachers, which are supported by paraprofessional "reach associates," at their schools. Multi-classroom leaders continue to teach while leading a team, taking formal accountability for the learning results of all the students the team serves. Each school has a design team of administrators

and teachers that chooses and adapts the multi-classroom model and plans implementation details to fit their needs, following the five Opportunity Culture Principles. Information about their initiative and job postings are at <http://www.bigspringisd.net/MP.cfm?P=12384>. [Update, May 28, 2015: Marcy Elementary will not be implementing an Opportunity Culture at this time.]

“We see Opportunity Culture as a way a small West Texas district like ours can make great strides,” Big Spring Superintendent Chris Wigington said. “By supporting great educators with on the job training and leadership opportunities, we can create teams and grow our teachers’ practice to make a difference for all of our students.”

This work comes in the second year of the TEA’s Creating Turnaround Educator Pipelines (CTEP) project. CTEP is focused on identifying and supporting turnaround efforts across the state. In the first year, the state’s ESCs trained principals and teacher-leaders at schools identified as low-performing. This year’s grant will support the selected Opportunity Culture districts in redesigning schools with a focus on teacher-leadership. CTEP dollars will support the transition, but higher teacher pay will be funded within existing school budgets, not by temporary grants.

Districts and charter schools with at least one campus designated as “priority” or “improvement required” were eligible to apply.

“We’re excited to see a large state catalyzing this work for so many schools, teachers, and kids at once,” said Bryan C. Hassel, Public Impact’s co-director. “State leader support is crucial to taking pilot schools to scale. We expect many teachers and students here to reap the benefits, because of the strong commitment of the state education agency to their success. It’s really been refreshing to work with this team.”

Texas joins school districts in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, N.C., Nashville, Tenn., Syracuse, N.Y., Cabarrus County, N.C., and Indianapolis, Ind., in the [Opportunity Culture](#) initiative, which Public Impact launched in 2011.

“Districts such as Big Spring ISD are intentionally designing the future of teaching and learning in rural America,” said Susan Bodary, partner at Education First. “By building teacher-leader models focused on excellence, leadership and teaming reach within existing budgets, they are not only supporting students, but creating sustainable ways to grow teaching talent. Education First is pleased to be the Opportunity Culture implementation partner for the Texas effort—providing strategy, coaching and policy support to the teachers, principals, and district and state leaders who are doing this important work. Change and innovation are challenging, but the commitment to both are evident in Texas.”

The Opportunity Culture Initiative

In its quest to reach all students with excellent teaching by 2025, the Public Impact team published [school model summaries](#) and [detailed models](#) that use job redesign and technology to extend the reach of excellent teachers and their teams to more students, for more pay, within budget—without forcing class-size increases. Most of the models add significant time for teaching teams to collaborate, plan, and improve during school hours and make paid career paths possible for all teachers, not just the best. 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](#).

Excellent teachers—those in the top 20 to 25 percent—are the ones who, on average, help students make a year and a half worth of learning growth annually and excel at developing students’ higher-order thinking skills. Students who start out behind need this excellent teaching consistently to catch up, and students in the middle need the same to advance toward rising global standards. Good, solid teachers need to work with and learn from these teachers to advance their practice.

In an Opportunity Culture, excellent teachers are accountable for every student’s learning. These teachers and their teams earn more for reaching more students. In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, multi-classroom leaders are earning pay supplements of up to \$23,000—50 percent more than the average teacher salary in North Carolina. Good, solid teachers work side by side with outstanding peers, who can set a high standard for learning and help whole teams excel.

Early-implementing districts have received striking numbers of high-quality applicants, allowing some schools to hire very selectively for positions that formerly went unfilled. Schools may find these higher-paying models especially effective for recruiting and retaining excellent teachers and teams in hard-to-staff schools and positions, such as STEM teaching.

Most school design teams use some combination of the Multi-Classroom Leadership, Time Swaps, and Subject Specialization models.

- [Multi-Classroom Leadership](#): A multi-classroom leader is an excellent teacher who leads a team. The “MCL” stays in the classroom as a teacher; is accountable for the team’s teaching and the outcomes of all the team’s students; sets the methods and materials used; and collaborates with and develops the team.
- [Time Swaps](#): When a school uses Time Swaps, students work as little as an hour per day online, mastering basic skills, or offline on projects or individual work. This frees teachers’ time to reach more students and focus in-person instruction on personalized, higher-order learning. Teachers also gain planning and collaboration time.
- [Elementary Subject Specialization](#): In this model, a teacher who has demonstrated excellence in one subject or subject pair (for example, math and/or science, or language arts and/or social studies) teaches just those subjects, with support from other teachers and paraprofessionals.

For more information, please visit www.OpportunityCulture.org. To arrange an interview with Public Impact’s co-director, Dr. Bryan C. Hassel, contact Anne Halstater at Anne_Halstater@publicimpact.com; 919.357.5519.

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About Public Impact

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. 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 an Opportunity Culture on OpportunityCulture.org. The website also provides [tools](#)—all free—for school design teams, and related [publications](#).

About Education First

Education First is a national, mission-driven strategy and policy consulting firm with unique and deep expertise in education improvement and reform issues. We work closely with policymakers, advocates, and practitioners to design and accelerate ambitious plans in college and career readiness, college completion, STEM strategies, and effective teaching, and we specialize in developing bold policies, planning for implementation, and building widespread, bipartisan support and understanding for change. Learn more at education-first.com.