

# PUBLIC IMPACT



## News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Syracuse Schools Expand Initiative to Extend the Reach of Excellent Teachers**

#### ***Syracuse Builds on First Year of Opportunity Culture Models That Reach More Students with Excellent Teaching and Pay Teachers More, Sustainably***

CHAPEL HILL, N.C.—After a year of piloting new staffing models that extend the reach of excellent teachers and their teams to more students, for more pay, the Syracuse City School District, in partnership with the Syracuse Teachers Association, has expanded this “Opportunity Culture” initiative in 2015–16 to four more schools. The initiative began in 2014–15 in four of the highest-need schools in Syracuse, which is New York’s fifth-largest school district.

“In the SCSD, we are committed to providing leadership pathways for excellent teachers who want to remain in the classroom,” Superintendent Sharon Contreras said. “Opportunity Culture allows us to explore innovative ways for our most experienced and best educators to share their knowledge and expertise with their colleagues.”

Opportunity Culture models use job redesign and age-appropriate technology to reach many more students with excellent teaching, without forcing class-size increases. Opportunity Culture teachers typically work in collaborative teams led by excellent teachers—those who consistently make well more than a year’s worth of growth with their students, which enables students who start out behind to close gaps and helps all students leap ahead.

At Opportunity Culture schools, outside funding assists with transition costs and training for the new models, but pay supplements are funded within regular, recurring budgets so that they are financially sustainable and will not disappear when outside funding ends.

Research and consulting firm Public Impact created the core models, with substantial teacher input, and launched the national Opportunity Culture initiative in 2011. Each school has a team that includes teachers to tailor the models and determine critical design details—such as scheduling and role responsibilities—that fit the school’s needs. Public Impact works in collaboration with lead schools partner Education First and the Syracuse Teachers Association to help the Syracuse schools implement and evaluate their models. Education First, an education policy and strategy firm, has extensive experience facilitating collaborative change in district schools.

#### **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

“We look forward to expanding our partnership with Syracuse schools, a district that has embraced Opportunity Culture as a key reform strategy,” said John Luczak, partner at Education First.

All Syracuse Opportunity Culture schools have chosen to use the [Multi-Classroom Leadership](#) model, which lets excellent teachers advance in their careers without leaving the classroom and develop peers on the job. The multi-classroom leader leads a team of teachers, co-teaching, co-planning and collaborating with them during set-aside time within the school day. Multi-classroom leaders in Syracuse schools are earning pay supplements roughly 20 percent higher than the average teacher salary.

Some schools will use the [Time-Technology Swap](#) model, in which teachers use digital instruction for limited, age-appropriate periods (as little as an hour daily), freeing time while some students learn online to teach more students, plan, and collaborate with a teaching team.

The schools joining the Opportunity Culture initiative in 2015–16 are Franklin Elementary, Huntington K-8, Meachem Elementary, and Lincoln Middle.

These four schools are joining the original four schools—Seymour Dual Language Academy, Bellevue Elementary, Grant Middle, and Clary Middle—in hiring for Opportunity Culture positions; job postings are at [OpportunityCulture.org/jobs](#).

They join school districts in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, N.C., Nashville, Tenn., Cabarrus County, N.C., Big Spring, Texas, and Indianapolis, Ind., in the [Opportunity Culture](#) initiative, which educators have [praised](#).

Syracuse is in the midst of its five-year “[Great Expectations](#)” strategic plan, part of its mission to become the most improved urban district in America. More than three-quarters of Syracuse students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches; about one-quarter of Syracuse families live in poverty, compared with the state average of about 10 percent—and more than 44 percent of children under 18 live in poverty. System leaders know great teachers are the key to changing the odds for these students, and paying them more and letting them lead and learn on the job while teaching is essential to attract and keep them in Syracuse.

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](mailto: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 the revamped [OpportunityCulture.org](#) website, which provides [tools](#)—all free—to build an Opportunity Culture, [videos](#), and related [resources](#).

### **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](#).