

# AN EXCELLENT PRINCIPAL FOR EVERY SCHOOL

## TRANSFORMING SCHOOLS INTO LEADERSHIP MACHINES

AN IDEA PAPER

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### FOREWORD FROM THE AUTHORS

Ask great teachers what sustains their energy at work, and the first thing they mention is their students. The second thing is their principal. Ask a worn-out teacher what has brought her down, and the principal often moves into the #1 slot. The importance of a boss who helps you be a better you—supportively—is timeless, transcending politics, sectors, and jobs.

Great teachers often get the job done without the support of a great principal. But **to sustain and spread their excellence throughout a school, even the best teachers need a great leader.** As one teacher put it, “Everybody needs a little support.”

But *how* to put a great principal in every school: That’s a decades-old question reformers of all ilk have fallen short in answering.

Here, we are delighted to present a vision that we’ve been developing for a decade: how new school models can allow the best principals to reach, lead, and support more teachers and students. And how those school models can attract and develop more great leaders, too. All for more pay, but without busting budgets. This vision builds off the work of Opportunity Culture schools and teachers, who are producing more high growth among students and less low growth even in the bumpy pilot years in several states.

We were fortunate to have some very helpful reviewers for the first draft of this paper. Their overall headline: “We like this vision...please give us detailed tools to make it happen!” Reviewers asked for job descriptions, financial analyses, multi-school leadership staffing model options, principal schedules, a full-blown policy agenda, and the like. We feel the same sense of urgency to turn this vision into reality, and we promise to do our best with our great Public Impact team, our top-notch partner organizations, and the educators who advise us and help us do our best work.

We originally conceived of this paper as a brief—as in five to seven pages—and budgeted accordingly. So, while we could not roll the equivalent of a half-decade of work on teacher staffing models into one brief on principal staffing models, we hope this provides a good starting point. We’ll look forward to sharing more detail in the coming months and years—and to developing that work in collaboration with great educators—so that more districts can move toward what every teacher wants and needs: a little support, and a lot of great leadership to teach with excellence for the long haul.

—Emily and Bryan

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**G**reat principals matter: Only teacher quality affects student outcomes more than principal quality, among the factors within schools.<sup>1</sup> Each principal affects dozens of teachers and hundreds, even thousands, of students annually.

Finding enough outstanding principals to lead whole-school turnarounds, targeted improvements, or sustained excellence has proved difficult, even after decades of principal recruitment and training efforts. Schools with many students starting behind, in particular, need great instruction and leadership every year to provide equitable learning opportunities. Most principals find leading a school to excellence while managing 20 to 50 or more teachers elusive.<sup>2</sup> But some fare better than others, producing significantly better student outcomes than comparable schools.

Yet with current structures, the very best principals reach no more students and teachers than the least effective principals,

limiting their positive impact on staff working conditions, instructional improvement, and student learning.

**We approach the great-principal shortage from a different perspective: What if districts\* reached dramatically more students and schools with the great principals they already have? What if changes to make “Multi-School Leadership” possible also built a larger pipeline of leaders, developed on the job?**

Mirroring our earlier work on extending the reach of excellent teachers and their teams, now called “Opportunity Culture,”<sup>3</sup> this idea paper explores how schools and districts could change roles to reach all schools with excellent principals, while also building a “leadership machine” to produce more of them. It outlines a set of ideas that districts could carry out **within their recurring budgets**, boosting leadership without adding ongoing costs.<sup>4</sup>

\* Here we use the term “district” to include all school providers: public school districts, public charter school organizations, and private providers.

## OPPORTUNITY CULTURE

In an Opportunity Culture, new models extend the reach of excellent teachers and their teams to more students, for more pay, within recurring budgets. Schools provide additional school-day time for planning and collaboration, often with teacher-leaders leading teams and providing frequent, on-the-job development. Teachers are accountable for the learning of all students they serve and colleagues they lead.

A team of teachers and administrators at each school decides how to redo schedules and reallocate money to fund pay supplements permanently, in contrast to temporarily grant-funded programs.

The most popular model used in Opportunity Culture schools so far is Multi-Classroom Leadership, in which great teachers continue to teach while leading a team, coaching, co-teaching,

co-planning, and collaborating with their team teachers, while taking accountability for the learning outcomes of all the students the team serves.

Schools adhering to the Opportunity Culture Principles for teachers are spreading throughout several districts and states, with more each year, including in collective bargaining districts and charter schools.\*

[OpportunityCulture.org](http://opportunityculture.org) is continually updated with new sites, case studies, and videos about Opportunity Culture teachers, principals, and schools. Look also for forthcoming cases about Multi-School Leadership in Opportunity Culture schools and similar contexts.

\* For details, see “Where is this happening?” at <http://opportunityculture.org/our-initiative/participating-sites/>.

**We envision four essential ingredients that can provide far more schools with excellent principals:**

- 1. Commitment.** Districts commit to reaching all students with great teaching and all teachers with great leadership. Pursuit of these goals drives school staffing and design decisions.
- 2. Multi-Classroom Leaders.** Great teachers lead small teams covering one or more grades or subjects, and are accountable for teaching excellence, student outcomes, and teacher development.
- 3. Schoolwide Team of Leaders.** Principals lead their multi-classroom leaders as a team of leaders to improve instruction and implement a culture of excellence schoolwide.
- 4. Multi-School Leadership.**<sup>5</sup> Great principals extend their reach to small numbers of schools as “multi-school leaders” (MSLs) while developing principals, or principals-in-training, on the job.

We begin with brief explanations of some of the changes, within and across schools, that support this vision. In future publications, we will explore more detail about changes needed for successful Multi-School Leadership, with substantial input from excellent educators.

First, as with teaching roles in an Opportunity Culture, multi-school leader roles must adhere to a set of principles that ensure they are high-impact, high-opportunity roles that are financially and politically sustainable. (See “Opportunity Culture Principles for Multi-School Leaders,” at right.)

Second, aligned with those principles, we envision that multi-school leader roles must differ from most principal supervisor roles in at least three important ways:

- \* **Span.** Multi-school leaders must lead fewer schools than is typical for executive principals or assistant superintendents overseeing schools, perhaps four on average.

- \* **Instructional Focus.** MSLs must be primarily instructional excellence leaders, not administrative compliance managers. Their accountability and authority to lead principals as a team and share interim data openly must create a bias toward the actions that improve teaching and student outcomes during each school year.
- \* **Schoolwide Team of Leaders.** MSLs must be supported by principals who lead, and are supported by, multi-classroom leaders accountable for the success of all teachers and students on their team.

## OPPORTUNITY CULTURE PRINCIPLES FOR MULTI-SCHOOL LEADERS

*Teams of principals and district/network leaders must choose and tailor models to:*

- 1. Reach more schools with excellent principals and their teams**
- 2. Pay principals 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 —within and across the schools each leader leads**
- 5. Match authority and accountability to each person’s responsibilities**

Third, these changes affect other roles. Some assistant principal roles must be swapped for operations managers, as teacher-leaders take over instructional leadership with the principal. In addition, principal supervisors in large districts (also called executive principals or assistant superintendents) should reduce their spans, acting as “executive multi-school leaders” for only a handful of multi-school leaders, instead of numerous principals.

Fourth, technology must provide timely data about school and teaching-team performance in every school each leader leads, so that MSLS have the fodder for identifying problems and helping principals solve them fast. Finally, flexible school budgets are essential to reallocate spending to fund that technology—and much higher pay.

**This can create many benefits:**

- \* **Higher Pay:** Changing roles allow multi-school leaders to earn far more, within school budgets. Pay of at least 10 percent above principal pay, with perhaps 20 percent being the norm, could be common for multi-school leaders, with far more possible in some circumstances. Future reallocation of district funding to teaching and school leadership could enhance pay further.
- \* **Stronger Pipeline:** These changes would magnify the leadership already in schools, while attracting more potential leaders who want a lifetime of opportunity—without losing their responsibility for great teaching and student learning. The cascade of leadership development on the job—for principals, principals-in-training, and teacher-leaders—can help an unprecedented number of educators develop organizational and instructional leadership skills.

\* **Better Implementation:** Ensuring that more schools have principals and teachers who together pursue high-standards, personalized instruction—hallmarks of great teaching and leading in schools—can enable better implementation of new curricula and instructional approaches. As digital instruction continues to reshape learning, the role of principals may change, yet strong leadership for a variety of school configurations will remain essential to achieve strong outcomes.

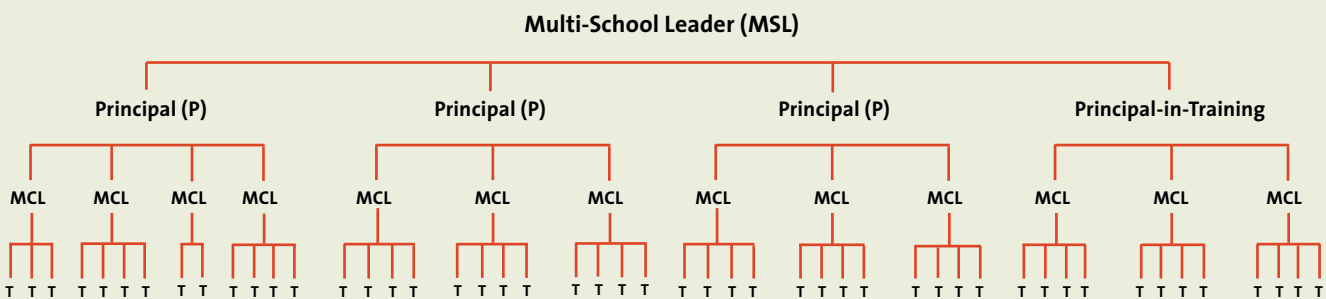
Ultimately, better leadership will pay off in higher levels of student growth and achievement. Early outcomes<sup>6</sup> of similar approaches to teacher roles in Opportunity Culture schools indicate a positive impact on student learning, recruitment, and pay.<sup>7</sup> Although policy changes are ideal for scale, as we have documented extensively,<sup>8</sup> Opportunity Culture pilot schools began changing teacher roles in several states without policy change. A lack of will to reach all students with excellent teaching and a lack of transition support for financially sustainable changes are the primary barriers thus far.

We want this idea paper to prompt further thinking and action to **provide every school with an excellent principal, and to turn schools into leadership machines that produce far more and far better leaders, creating a culture of excellence and opportunity for all.**

Educators, superintendents, charter school leaders, school boards, and state-level leaders: With new school and staffing models, you really can reach all schools with great teaching and leading. Now is the time.

**TEAMS OF LEADERS: TURNING SCHOOLS INTO LEADERSHIP MACHINES**

**Multi-classroom leaders (MCLs)** continue to teach while leading a team of 2 to 8 teachers (**T**)—a grade-level or subject team—developing their own instructional leadership on the job. **Principals** each lead a team of 3 to 8 MCLs. **Multi-school leaders (MSLs)** lead a team of 2 to 8 principals and principals-in-training, developing the team’s ability to implement a strong vision within each school by leading their team of multi-classroom leaders.



## AN EXCELLENT PRINCIPAL FOR EVERY SCHOOL: TRANSFORMING SCHOOLS INTO LEADERSHIP MACHINES

### The Problem

**W**ithin a school, a principal's effectiveness has the second-largest impact on student learning (after a teacher's impact).<sup>9</sup> Students need excellent school leadership, and the great teaching it supports, consistently.

Economically disadvantaged students typically enter school behind<sup>10</sup> and they must make well more than the typical "year's worth of growth" consistently just to catch up.<sup>11</sup> Yet few principals of high-poverty schools are able to lead that kind of growth schoolwide. Even in schools with less poverty, large portions of students—those starting far behind or ahead, and those grappling with learning challenges or language barriers—have learning needs unmet when they do not have excellent teachers supported by great, not just good, leaders. Students of all kinds who could leap further ahead, learn better thinking and social-emotional skills, and become more deeply engaged in the subjects that most interest them have far fewer opportunities without great teachers *and* leaders.

Principals are in a unique position to set high standards and adopt systems to significantly improve learning, whole-child development, and personalization schoolwide.

### HOW IS THIS NEW?

Making a commitment to reach all schools with excellent leaders and all students with excellent teachers is different from such strategies as: just having principal supervisors oversee large numbers of principals; technology-based learning; differentiation in the classroom; typical coaching positions; and other alterations of instructional and leadership delivery.

These roles, methods, and tools are pale shadows that usually lack formal accountability for high standards and outcomes. Schools making a commitment to excellence for all, in contrast, do not separate "responsibility" from "accountability." They extend the reach of their own teachers and principals, or tap talent from across the state or nation, in high-accountability roles charged with helping students beat the odds—and with higher pay to match.

The number of additional students successfully reached by instruction that induces students' high-growth learning and development becomes the major metric by which education providers can judge the success of every change.

That is the essence of a commitment to excellence and opportunity *for all*.

Yet most principals have fallen short while the pressure has increased. Achievement gaps persist, within and across schools and compared with top international peers, despite decades of reform efforts. Few persistently low-performing schools have achieved and sustained turnarounds, and gaps remain stubborn in schools with far fewer disadvantaged students. At the same time, more students in other nations are leaping ahead to even higher standards, and advanced students in the U.S. need even more advanced instruction, too. Digital learning has not closed these gaps.<sup>12</sup>

These challenges coupled with complex student learning needs create a tough environment in which to shine as a principal. Shortfalls in schools are illuminated further when academic standards rise and when districts add standards, such as students' social and emotional skills and other "soft" competencies. Clearer, greater gaps—and more of them in the broad range of skills students need—add to the implementation challenge principals face.

At the same time, principals in most schools must directly manage 20 to 50 individual teachers, a span far outside what research shows is effective.<sup>13</sup> New teacher evaluation systems that require more administrative work have added to principals' workloads, too.<sup>14</sup> How can principals excel in this model?

Few can, but some do better than others. Across all sectors and using a variety of measures, research indicates that approximately the top quarter of managers typically produce nearly 50 percent better outcomes than average.<sup>15</sup> These findings transcend sectors, specific jobs, and circumstances. The principalship is likely no exception.

However, the supply of these "excellent principals"—those who help teachers excel, induce high levels of student learning growth, develop a broad range of student skills, and incorporate personalization schoolwide—is limited. Excellent principals reach no more teachers and students than the least effective principals. Their opportunities to influence students and teachers, help peer principals succeed, and earn more are no better than those of the least effective principals. For a great leader who wants to advance in K–12 education today, the only choice is to leave the school and that direct responsibility for students and teachers.

Meanwhile, other principals struggle largely alone, with lesser outcomes and inadequate support to improve substantially.

### Current Solutions Fall Short

New and enhanced school leadership programs that train current and potential principals have not changed this picture at scale, despite a growing supply of well-designed efforts.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, even the strongest efforts to recruit a new breed of leader into K–12 schools have not substantially changed student outcomes at scale.<sup>17</sup>

These efforts have been bold. But even if the most successful programs were scaled up, in the current design of most schools and districts, they would not provide enough leaders who achieve excellent outcomes in most schools. Another generation of students will pass through U.S. schools, and only a small portion will have access to teachers who are supported by truly great principals. Most of the U.S. teaching force will spend their careers without principals who are able to help teachers substantially improve student outcomes, despite the principals' best efforts.

The shortfall of past reforms is not surprising. Our earlier work, *Opportunity at the Top*, modeled the likely impact of dramatic, unprecedented improvements in the recruitment, retention, and warranted dismissal of teachers. Even if districts dramatically increased the hiring of excellent teachers, cut turnover of the best in half, and tripled the dismissal of the very worst teachers, the majority of U.S. students still would not have excellent teachers after half a decade of consistent effort.<sup>18</sup> Were districts to apply the same dramatic improvements in recruitment, retention, and dismissal of principals, they still would not be able to put a great principal in charge of every school. Only extending the reach of great educators through job redesign changes this picture dramatically.

### **The Opportunity: Teacher Leadership and Technology**

The rise of new teaching roles—specifically teacher-leader positions that let great teachers lead subject and grade teams *with real authority and full accountability for student outcomes and teacher development*—and new technologies provide a new opportunity to extend the reach of excellent teachers and principals. Early outcomes are promising in “Opportunity Culture” schools that use a combination of accountable teacher-leaders and technology, with far more high growth and far less low growth among students.<sup>19</sup>

### **New Roles for Teachers: Team Leadership**

When we say “teacher leadership,” we mean a certain kind: fully accountable teaching-team leaders with real authority to lead while teaching, not just coach from the sidelines. “Multi-classroom leaders,” or “MCLs,” continue to teach while leading a team of teachers, sharing their strategies for success through modeling, co-teaching, coaching, co-planning, and providing feedback.<sup>20</sup> Responsible for achieving high growth for all students served by the team, the MCL determines how students spend time and tailors teachers' roles, including their own, according to their strengths. On some teams, teachers specialize by subject, too.<sup>21</sup>

MCLs help the whole teaching team improve together, leading frequent analysis of data about student progress—problem-solving to find instructional strategies that meet students' changing needs. Successful MCLs typically spend one-third to two-thirds of their time teaching (and co-teaching) students, and the rest of the time planning instruction and supporting their team members.

Paraprofessionals support MCL-led teams by freeing teachers' time for planning, collaboration, and reaching more students without increasing instructional group sizes. They can supervise portions of instruction in many cases—skills practice, project work time, and age-appropriate digital instruction. Paraprofessionals—advanced teaching assistants and teachers-in-training—help teachers extend their reach and also save the school money that it can use to pay advanced roles, and in some cases all teachers, more. This position is described in detail in prior publications and has been honed in practice by dozens of schools in the Opportunity Culture network.<sup>22</sup>

Most schools trade some of their less-accountable, lower-paid coaching positions for higher-accountability, higher-authority MCL positions. This swap reduces the diffusion of responsibility and saves more money to pay MCLs, and sometimes team teachers, more.

### **Technology Helps: Interim Data and Digital Instruction**

Ever-improving digital platforms are making extended-reach teaching and team management easier by giving teachers, teaching-team leaders, and principals access to interim student learning data sorted by student, teacher, team, and student subgroups. While these data, and districts' use of reports, have far to go, schools achieve better outcomes when using student data very frequently—weekly in many cases, and sometimes daily—to improve instruction for students during the year.

In schools where the best teachers manage and lead larger spans of students and colleagues, digital data reports save substantial time and reduce the complexity of analysis required of teachers and team leaders. This, in turn, makes high-standards, personalized instruction easier to spread within schools.

Digital reports are not essential, of course, especially in traditional schools: Great teachers have for many years kept track of students' progress and adjusted instruction accordingly. This, though, is labor-intensive and requires complex analysis by many individuals. After decades of emphasis on this approach, it is still not common practice.<sup>23</sup> But most Opportunity Culture schools, and schools using similar designs, digitally track interim data.

Digital instruction can also play an important role by freeing time for teachers to collaborate at school while personalizing the level of instruction and, in some cases, increasing student agency over the pace and place of learning. Many Opportunity Culture schools use “Time Swaps” that allow paraprofessionals to oversee students engaged in digital instruction, or while doing off-line projects and skills practice.<sup>24</sup> Even very small amounts—an hour each day, for example—of this sort of time scheduled back-to-back with lunch, recess, and other subjects (art, music, or world languages, for example) allows grade or subject teams to plan and improve collaboratively at school. Teachers direct the work of paraprofessionals in these settings.

Digital instruction still needs work: Some programs personalize learning levels, but they can't tell why a student stalls, and some programs aren't adaptive enough. Some research also indicates there are limits on the time young students can spend learning online before results diminish.<sup>25</sup> We expect that the growing use of digital learning in schools of all kinds, and competition among digital providers, will produce increasingly adaptive and connective digital instruction, however.

### Teacher-Leaders + Technology = Changes in Principal Role

The role of the principal changes in schools using this combination of accountable teacher-leaders and technology. High-performing schools that employ multi-classroom leaders schoolwide have already emerged and are among the highest-performing schools in the Opportunity Culture network. They have most of these characteristics:

- \* **Role:** The principal and/or an assistant principal who is explicitly an instructional leader manages and coaches a team of multi-classroom leaders, who each lead one or more subjects or grades while also teaching part of the time.
- \* **Process:** That “team of leaders”—the MCLs and principal and/or an assistant principal—meets weekly, at least, to review student progress collaboratively, identify problems, brainstorm solutions and, determine what changes are needed to improve instruction. The team also acts as a study group, reading and learning about leadership and—just as important—instructional excellence, which MCLs can then spread to their teams. Successful teams of leaders focus their collaboration time on improving teaching to improve student learning, not on administrative tasks. These team leaders, in turn, lead and develop their team teachers on the job, using the insights of their teacher-leader teammates and principal.
- \* **Data:** The combination of a team of leaders and regularly updated student data allows the driven principal to become a data hound, alone and with the team. He or she can identify and solve problems with the team, whether common across the school or unique to a single team, teacher, student subgroup, or even a handful of student outliers.
- \* **Time:** The team of leaders frees time for the principal to lead the school. Rather than fighting fires solo in 20 to 50 classrooms, the principal gains time to think and strategize about how to really meet the school's goals, working with and through the school's team of teacher-leaders.

### The Next Step: Extend the Reach of the Best Principals

Pioneering principals and MCLs are showing how to get exceptional results using this “team of leaders” approach to reaching far more students with excellent teaching. These school teams also

create two important opportunities: further personalizing and enhancing student learning, and providing paid, advanced career paths for outstanding principals.

As principals consider how to better meet the needs of students using the “team of leaders” approach, we expect they will begin to include using some of that time to plan and enhance “whole child” social-emotional learning and increase student agency and personalization of learning modes, without lowering standards in core academic content. Both may contribute to positive, long-term student outcomes. This opportunity merits further exploration.

Here, though, we focus on the second opportunity presented by a great principal leading a “team of leaders” to achieve instructional excellence throughout a school: **What if districts and other school providers chose to reach more schools with these great principals?**

Such “multi-school leader” roles can be designed with guardrails to ensure quality and sustainability, much like the Opportunity Culture Principles for teaching roles that extend great teachers' reach, which call for teams of teachers and school leaders to choose and tailor models that:

1. Reach more students with excellent teachers and their teams
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.

Applying those principles to principals, we get the **Opportunity Culture Principles for Multi-School Leaders (MSLs)**, in which *teams of principals and district/network leaders choose and tailor models to:*

1. **Reach more schools with excellent principals and their teams**
2. **Pay principals 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—within and across the schools each leader leads**
5. **Match authority and accountability to each person's responsibilities.**

Extending the reach of the best principals to more schools can significantly reduce shortages of excellent principals. While implementation and research will reveal optimal ratios and reach, common-sense spans would reach far more teachers and students with these principals' leadership. For example, each principal can reach four schools, on average—with a range of two to six schools—effectively quadrupling the direct impact of the top quartile of principals.

If every great principal led four schools, on average, as a multi-school leader, then every school could have an excellent, proven principal in charge of student learning, teacher leadership, and development of other principals on the job.

Multi-school leaders can develop leadership and management skills in others on the job, by developing their principals or principals-in-training, both directly and indirectly, and each school's team of teacher-leaders, each of whom leads an instructional team.<sup>26</sup> More of these people can develop the skills to lead multiple schools, because they will have worked closely with a cascade of leadership focused on excellent teaching and learning.

Meanwhile, a large number of teachers, perhaps four to eight in most schools, develop their leadership on the job—both as multi-classroom leaders of grade and subject teams and as members of each school's team of leaders.<sup>27</sup> This model is already achieving positive results in numerous Opportunity Culture schools.

This opportunity to lead and learn on the job, as multi-classroom leaders, principals-in-training and principals serving on multi-school leadership teams, and multi-school leaders, will develop leadership in far more educators far earlier in their careers. These leaders stay directly accountable for students and teachers. In this leadership machine, it is far more likely that every school can have an excellent principal (see “Teams of Leaders: Turning Schools into Leadership Machines,” page 3).

Both practically and politically, this will require changes.

### A Great Principal for Every School: Four Ingredients

We anticipate that having a great principal for every school requires at least four ingredients:

1. **Commitment.** Districts commit to reaching all students with great teaching and all teachers with great leadership. Pursuit of these goals drives school staffing and design decisions.
2. **Multi-Classroom Leaders.** Great teachers lead small teams covering one or more grades or subjects, and are accountable for teaching excellence, student outcomes, and teacher development.
3. **Schoolwide Team of Leaders.** Principals lead their multi-classroom leaders as a team of leaders to improve instruction and implement a culture of excellence schoolwide.
4. **Multi-School Leadership.** Great principals extend their reach to small numbers of schools as “multi-school leaders” (MSLs) while developing principals, or principals-in-training, on the job.

Here we describe each of these elements in brief, reserving details for later publications.

If every great principal led four schools, on average, as a multi-school leader, then every school could have an excellent, proven principal in charge of student learning, teacher leadership, and development of other principals on the job.

#### Commitment

First, districts must **commit** to reaching all students with great teaching and all teachers with great leadership. The pursuit of these goals is paramount and provides the major parameter for changes in roles and technology.

Reaching all students with great teaching and all teachers with great leadership requires changing the one-teacher-one-classroom and one-leader-one-school paradigm.

#### Multi-Classroom Leaders

Second, schools must adopt school models that put **multi-classroom leaders**—great teachers with leadership competencies—in charge of grade and subject teams.<sup>28</sup> These school models must also let both great and solid teachers on teaching teams extend their reach directly to more students, using Subject Specialization and Time Swaps, with enhanced paraprofessional support.<sup>29</sup> That support plus strategic scheduling allow grade and subject teaching teams to plan and improve collaboratively during school hours; redesigning jobs this way also saves money to pay teachers more.

#### Schoolwide Team of Leaders

Third, multi-classroom leaders of grade and subject teams must act as a **schoolwide team of leaders** to support the principal (and, in larger schools, an assistant principal focused on instruction) in improving instruction and implementing a culture of excellence schoolwide. This team of leaders has been a critical missing ingredient in school improvement and turnaround efforts of past decades. Small teams of leaders are universal in successful medium to large organizations in other professions and organizations, but absent or powerless in most schools. The most successful Opportunity Culture schoolwide improvements have occurred when principals have led multi-classroom leaders as a team.<sup>30</sup>



## Multi-School Leadership

Fourth, great principals must extend their reach to small numbers of schools—two to six, perhaps—as “**multi-school leaders.**” Most will need to start with limited spans and learn to build and develop strong principals (or principals-in-training) and their team of teacher-leaders in each school. Some multi-school leaders, those leading just two schools, might still play the role of principal in one of the schools, leading the team of teacher-leaders directly. Principals and teacher-leaders working under these multi-school leaders develop their leadership skills on the job, while helping multi-school leaders increase their impact. Principal supervisors, or assistant superintendents who oversee schools (typically in medium to large districts), can then have much smaller spans, as well, acting as “**executive multi-school leaders**” of a handful of MSLs instead of an unfeasible number of principals. Multi-school leaders likely need skills and competencies similar to those of principals leading a team of teacher-leaders.

## Mechanics of Multi-School Leadership

Various mechanisms within a district and school need to be used to realize successful multi-school leadership and successful principals leading teams of multi-classroom leaders. We will explore these in forthcoming publications on OpportunityCulture.org. We anticipate that the following key overarching mechanics will be essential to making a leadership machine work, and we invite further thinking from others.

### Multi-School Leader Role and Time

Details of the MSL role will be determined in collaboration with early implementers, but as a starting point, MSLs should be responsible for leading a team of principals of related schools to achieve strong student outcomes and teacher engagement. “Related schools” might mean schools within a feeder pattern, schools covering the same grades, or schools with similar student populations. The MSL’s leadership might include:

- \* **Establishing a common vision and major communications and steps to achieve it.** MSLs must help all the principals they lead crystallize, adopt, and communicate an ambitious “what is possible” vision of teaching and learning in all of their schools. They must establish key goals and major steps to achieve it. This allows consistent communication of a high bar for learning standards and personalization. School needs may vary, based in part on the students they serve, but principals are free to focus primarily on executing the vision—actually changing instruction and school culture, while communicating the vision together with the MSL.
- \* **Leading frequent team meetings of the principals** to assess interim outcomes and opportunities and how well implementation is achieving the common vision. These meetings include openly sharing and analyzing each school’s interim outcome

data, identifying improvement needs, and determining what changes to make and how to lead those through the multi-classroom leaders. Data might include not only student learning progress, but also other measures of student development and school culture and conditions. These meetings should also provide a forum for studying the critical elements of leadership; principals can then use the readings and study guides to develop their multi-classroom leaders.

- \* **Analyzing data for each of the schools and teaching teams.** MSLs should analyze data both before meeting with their team of principals and then further with that team. Basing changes on problems and successes identified with data analysis creates a clear connection for principals between new actions and different results.
- \* **Observing and coaching principals on team and individual leadership.** A critical tool for MSLs is attending occasional meetings between each principal and his or her team of leaders, and between the principal and individual MCLs. Each principal must rely on that leadership team for school improvement. Most principals will need observation, coaching, and feedback on their leadership of the team and its individuals. Some will need the multi-school leader to model identifying problems, affirming successes, and providing both developmental and directive feedback.
- \* **Observing classrooms and schoolwide behavior.** Principal team meetings may rotate among the schools, or be held in a central location. Either way, multi-school leaders will need time to observe both leadership and teaching in each school.
- \* **Meeting with each principal individually to provide timely, honest feedback and coaching.** Multi-school leaders will need time to coach and develop each principal in private.
- \* **Establishing a presence that reinforces the common vision and steps** to achieve that vision. Most of the MSL’s impact is indirect, working through the team of principals. But MSLs will need to be present for select, critical communications in each school, including some all-parent, all-student, and all-staff events. They must reinforce the vision, the key steps individuals must take to achieve the vision, and their support for each principal’s leadership.

Multi-school leaders should be responsible for leading a team of principals of related schools to achieve strong student outcomes and teacher engagement.



A large portion of the MSL's time should be spent in the schools led, versus a central office. MSLs may have a primary office in one of the schools, or they may have a virtual office via laptop and briefcase. The optimal mix of time on each campus and in varying activities will be determined as schools implement the new models that create this cascade of leadership, and may vary according to each MSL's portfolio of schools and school-level leaders.

These changes also treat multi-school leaders' time as the precious asset it is, allowing them to focus on leading a team of principals across a handful of schools. Careful scheduling of the MSL's calendar is essential to ensure attention to each school and its staff and students. All MSLs must be protected from administrative demands that do not affect teaching excellence or student outcomes—and that would prevent the essential activities listed above.

The mere title “multi-school leader” will not ensure great outcomes. The role must have authority to lead principals fully and accountability for student outcomes and teacher engagement. Only principals who excel in team leadership and developing others should rise into the MSL role.

### Principals' Time and a Team of Multi-Classroom Leaders

Principals within each school must free some of their time by working intensively with a team of multi-classroom leaders, typically four to eight in Opportunity Culture schools today, rather than continuing drive-by management of 20 to 50 or more teachers. Each multi-classroom leader is responsible for teaching and learning in one or more grades or subjects, including teacher development and student outcomes.<sup>31</sup> These teacher-leaders must have time built into their roles to co-teach and/or observe and give feedback many times monthly, ideally weekly—then they know their teachers' strengths and next-step development opportunities. Most need training to lead and improve others' instruction, time to lead as well as teach, and help from their MCL team when problems arise—a key part of the weekly team-of-leaders meeting.

For principals, having fewer teachers to manage directly frees their time to examine student data, plan, lead their teams of leaders, and connect personally with staff, students, and parents.

Just as important, the principal can use new free time to think strategically about how to really meet the school's current goals—and about how to expand them to prepare students for the world they will face as adults. Setting, renewing, and communicating this vision clearly are essential elements of strong school leadership. Now, principals do not have to figure this out alone; they have a multi-school leader and team of peer principals to help.

### Technology

Technology already plays an important role in extending some teachers' reach and will be even more critical for multi-school leadership.<sup>32</sup>

Teacher-leaders support principals and make multi-school leadership possible.

Even very limited, age-appropriate digital instruction frees significant time for teachers and teaching teams to help more students—while keeping instructional group sizes down—and to plan and improve collaboratively at school. Multi-classroom leaders have more time to examine student progress data and develop their teams on the job, co-planning, co-teaching, and providing frequent coaching and feedback—far better than a few limited observations by an overstretched principal.<sup>33</sup>

While digital instruction is critical in some schools, digital tools to track, sort, and report student learning on a variety of measures, not just digital learning, is potentially even more important. Digital management systems that track and sort student learning progress in key measures during the year make managing a team or larger number of students far easier. These systems can also track, sort, and report measures of additional developmental dimensions and school conditions, not just academic progress. It's not impossible to analyze data without digital systems—they just make it less labor-intensive to see clusters of students, or teachers, who are struggling or excelling.

Tools to track and sort student progress in **multiple schools** by team, teacher, and student group will make a cascade of leadership teams more feasible than ever at the multi-school, school, and teaching-team levels. Multi-school leaders will need data that show student progress very frequently—preferably weekly—sorted by school and cuts within each: by grade and subject, team leader, teacher, student subgroup, and student outliers. School-level data are the fodder for managing the team of principals of multiple schools. Open-air sharing of interim progress data against goals enables honest discussions about how to address problems of leadership, management, and instructional practice. Data-sharing reveals principals and principals-in-training who need help on helping their multi-classroom leaders improve instruction, or who are not supporting teacher-leaders despite that help.<sup>34</sup>

Digital instruction may also play an increasing role, even though it is not essential for multi-school leadership. Because it can free time for teacher-leaders to collaborate with their teams, however, and because its prevalence will continue to increase, the quality of digital instruction is likely an important underpinning of the leadership machine.

While digital tools may change aspects of classroom and school management, the need for excellent leadership within schools and districts will not decline. Indeed, in the digital age, strong leadership for a wide variety of school configurations will be essential for strong outcomes at large scale—as it is now.

## Operations Manager Role

A new operations manager role is a critical part of the multi-school leader model. Principals delegate noninstructional operational tasks to new administrative operations managers, a position replacing an assistant-principal job in each school. Noninstructional tasks might include anything related to facilities, buses, materials, equipment, websites, noninstructional communication with parents, and administrative compliance tasks, such as filing attendance reports.

This position serves multiple purposes. It frees funds to pay multi-school leaders more than principals, and it clarifies that accountability for instructional leadership rests in the hands of the principal and multi-classroom leader team. Just as important, it protects principals from engaging in too many noninstructional management duties, so they can focus primarily on ensuring great teaching, learning, and a school culture focused on excellence for all.

This new role also creates a career path for paraprofessionals with strong organizational and management competencies. The role is smaller than that of assistant principal, because it does not include instructional support responsibility nor require the content knowledge that comes with it. Thus, the operational manager role provides a well-paid option for non-teachers experienced in office or school operations. Highly organized paraprofessionals, who do not have teaching credentials but excel in logistics, administration, student behavior management, and other noninstructional work, can advance without leaving schools. Lateral entry into this role should also be possible for people who have experience in logistical organizing and personal service in other sectors, such as nonprofit or social service office supervisors. The role would not require a bachelor's degree; several years of relevant work experience would provide the necessary skills for those with the underlying competencies.

Larger schools with several assistant principals have more options. In some larger schools, primarily middle and high schools, only one assistant-principal position might be converted to this new operational role. One or more others can assist the multi-school leader in leading the multi-classroom leader team, effectively creating a principal-in-training position highly focused on instructional leadership – without adding costs.<sup>35</sup>

## Pay

The changes described here not only reach more students with excellent teaching, and more schools with excellent leadership; they also save substantial money. Schools are already using this money to pay more to teachers who extend their reach, with supplements of up to 50 percent more than average teacher pay and an average of 20 percent more.<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, multi-school leaders can earn more, within their schools' budgets. Replacing one assistant principal position with an operations manager position is the primary way to free funds for paying multi-school leaders more. This change alone would save tens of thousands of dollars in most schools. Having a principal-in-training lead a school under the direction of an MSL, paid like an assistant principal for one year, can save more money in some schools—while providing a paid residency for the principal-in-training.

In some small to medium districts, the role of principal supervisor (also called executive principal or assistant superintendent) may give way to multi-school leadership entirely, saving even more to pay remaining leaders and teachers more. In larger districts, principal supervisors can become “executive multi-school leaders,” significantly reducing how many people they supervise; they can supervise a handful of multi-school leaders, perhaps three to eight, without a reduction in pay.

Schools and districts will likely find other sources of funds once they commit to reaching every school with an excellent principal accountable for school success—and paying those multi-school leaders more within budget. Future reallocation of district funding to teaching and school leadership can enhance pay further.

A forthcoming financial analysis will reveal the likely minimums and maximums for multi-school leader pay, and these will vary among districts. But even basic role changes like those described here allow most multi-school leaders to earn substantial supplements above their regular principal pay.

**Multi-school leader pay supplements that are 20 percent or more of average principal pay could easily become the norm, with even larger supplements for those who can successfully lead larger teams of principals.** Mean principal pay was just under \$90,000 in 2014.<sup>37</sup> Adding supplements for multi-school leadership shifts average pay into six figures—without forcing great leaders out of direct contact with teachers and students. Multi-school leader pay can be just under that of assistant superintendents—perhaps now renamed executive multi-school leaders—in large

Multi-school leader pay supplements that are 20 percent or more of average principal pay could easily become the norm, with even larger supplements for those who can successfully lead larger teams of principals.

districts, in many cases, and much higher for very experienced principals who lead a larger handful of schools with excellence (here we suggest no more than eight schools). Robust multi-school leader pay can reduce incentives to leave the principalship altogether.

As with the multi-classroom leader position, **districts can place a higher premium on roles that stay fully accountable for student learning** and teacher success than on primarily administrative roles.

Districts can choose to pay all principals more for leading schools with a team of accountable teacher-leaders and an operations manager in lieu of an instructionally focused assistant principal. Districts could still pay principals who extend their reach as multi-school leaders *even* more. Or, districts can concentrate all of the financial benefit on multi-school leaders, to encourage principals to excel and extend their reach.

Each district, working with its teachers and principals, can decide exactly what role changes to make to fund higher pay while also sharpening the focus on instructional and leadership excellence.

### The Benefits

Excellent principals, solid principals, principals-in-training, and the teams of teacher-leaders that they lead and support—and the students and other teachers who today lack access to great leadership—will be the primary beneficiaries of these new school leadership models.

**Great principals:** Roles that extend a principal’s reach can address three factors critical to attracting and retaining excellent leaders: on-the-job development, career advancement opportunity, and better pay for better leadership.<sup>38</sup> Great principals who extend their reach will be able to advance their achievement, impact, and pay—within school budgets—while remaining directly responsible for students and teachers. They won’t have to “leave the kids and teachers” to lead at higher levels.

**All principals:** Solid principals and those in training can improve by working closely with excellent MSLs who lead a small number of schools. They can learn on the job how to lead a team of teacher-leaders accountable for the instructional success of each grade or subject team.

**Teachers:** Multi-classroom leaders leading instructional teams will also learn from the best principals, developing leadership and management skills earlier in their careers, without leaving teaching. MCLs also become better teachers when the principal leads a team of teacher-leaders who monitor one another’s interim outcomes and help one another improve during the year. Staff teachers will benefit from the strong support of these teacher-leaders, who are responsible for the success of the team’s students and teachers, and the teachers’ development.

### Example Educational Leadership Career Path

Level	Role*
13	Superintendent
12	Assistant Superintendent/Executive Multi-School Leader
11	Multi-School Leader IV
10	Multi-School Leader III
9	Multi-School Leader II
8	Multi-School Leader I
7	Principal
6	Multi-Classroom Leader III/Assistant Principal
5	Multi-Classroom Leader II
4	Multi-Classroom Leader I
3	Direct-Reach Teacher (who mentors peers)
2	Classroom Teacher
1	Pre-Service Teachers/Aspiring Teachers

\*Multi-school and multi-classroom leader levels are just examples; higher levels represent an increasing number of schools or teachers led. Operations managers, not listed here, manage noninstructional functions in schools and do not require instructional education or experience.

**Students:** Better principals achieve better-than-average outcomes throughout a school, whatever the outcomes a school chooses to pursue. If more schools have excellent principals, more students will advance their learning further and faster.

Changes in a course’s content, driven by new academic standards or by adding social and emotional growth goals, and changes in instructional methods, such as moving to more student choice, also must be led and supported by a school’s top leader. Setting high or different standards is not enough. Teachers need help figuring out how to incorporate changes to positively affect students’ daily experiences and learning outcomes. Principals who set high standards for content and practice, and who help teachers change their instructional practices, help more students achieve at higher levels. Giving more teachers access to principals and principals-in-training who have weekly guidance and support to lead like that—directly and through their teams of teacher-leaders—will help more students succeed.

If more schools have excellent principals, more students will advance their learning further and faster.

**Districts and other school providers:** Districts implementing these new roles district-wide for both teachers and principals may find that overall recruitment and retention improve. Benefits will stem from offering higher-paid roles for top principals that let them remain responsible for teachers and students. New and solid principals will be more likely to succeed and excel with greater support, which may in turn improve working conditions to increase teacher retention and success. More teachers will develop leadership skills earlier in their careers, and these pre-principal roles will serve as a training ground and vetting system for future principals. Some great teacher-leaders will decide to remain in these roles, which let them continue teaching. Others will pursue the principalship much better prepared.

**Teacher prep providers:** Districts and other school providers can collaborate with teacher-preparation programs to provide paid residencies for aspiring teachers and principals, as some early Opportunity Culture sites have done for aspiring teachers. These residencies can be funded within budget, paying trainees more than they otherwise earn, costing schools less than permanent staff, and letting schools vet candidates thoroughly before hiring. Residents benefit from the leadership and coaching structures these schools have established, in addition to immediate pay that can be used for tuition and living expenses. Prep programs can compete for the best candidates by offering them these paid, high-support residencies. (See forthcoming work from Public Impact for more about fully funded, within-budget residencies.)

Secondary benefits are also likely to be numerous. Over time, the need to fill vacant slots with ineffective leaders will decline, reducing the worst work environments for teachers and the least-effective schools for students. College students and early-career teachers who identify themselves as “leaders” may find long-term careers in education more appealing with abundant, sustainably funded advancement, rather than a hodgepodge of temporary, special programs. The public will benefit from a stronger teacher and principal workforce, and from the enhanced student outcomes that increase public revenues and decrease social costs later. Policymakers can be more certain that additional school funding will flow to the people with the biggest impact on school outcomes—teachers and principals.

District commitment to reaching all students with great teaching and all teachers with great leadership is the on button for a leadership machine.

## How Do Multi-School Leaders Differ from Typical Principal Supervisors?

Multi-school leaders differ from most executive principals, principal supervisors, assistant superintendents, and the like in a few key ways.

**First, multi-school leaders lead fewer schools than is typical for executive principals or assistant superintendents overseeing schools. Here, we envision an average of four schools,** quadrupling the number of schools with proven, excellent leaders accountable for instruction and outcomes.

**Second, MSLs must be primarily *instructional excellence* leaders, and avoid administrative duties that steal time from improving instruction.** Their accountability and authority must create a bias toward action that improves teaching and student outcomes during each school year.

**Third, MSLs must be supported by principals who themselves are supported by multi-classroom leaders who are each accountable for their team’s teacher and student success.** Changes in the structure of schools themselves, to streamline and clarify accountability and authority, are critical. Principals must have a clear way to reach every teacher with guidance, monitoring, feedback, and development for weaker areas, and affirmation and building of strengths. Few can provide this level of support for dozens of teachers, and very few can sustain that level of high-intensity support. But with a team of multi-classroom leaders who are each in turn responsible for leading and supporting a small team of teachers, more principals will be able to sustain the level of intensity needed to ensure stronger student outcomes.

## Implementation Issues

Multiple systems need to change to achieve “an excellent principal for every school.” Districts implementing similar changes for teachers have started by making exceptions for pilot schools, eventually building new systems, policies, and routines as more schools extend the reach of the best teachers. A similar process can support reaching all schools with excellent principals. Those systems include, among others:

- \* **Public policy.** States differ in the extent to which laws and other policies enable or inhibit reaching all schools with excellent leadership and all students with excellent teachers. *Seizing Opportunity at the Top II* provides a view of the policies needed for teachers to extend their reach, and some of these will affect principals. Piloting, and even scaling up, of extended-reach teaching models has managed to move forward in six states as of the writing of this paper, despite some barriers. Often pilots can obtain waivers but, in some locations, the district will require permanent changes to scale up.<sup>39</sup> Some of the policies that affect teachers, though, such as seat time and line-of-site

rules, will not affect principals directly, and most schools have avoided these barriers even for teachers. For very large scale, policy changes will be ideal, so that schools do not waste time working around laws in order to reach all students with proven, excellent teachers and principals. Future work will continue to address policy needs as scale warrants.

- \* **Budget and staffing flexibility.** Schools need autonomy to change roles and change how budgets are used to fund these new, advanced roles, without reducing pay for any teachers or staff. Multi-school leaders need control of the budgets for each school they lead. Districts must decide if budget neutrality is determined at the school level, across schools led by the same leader, or another way.
- \* **Human resources.** Recruiting for new roles, selecting among a larger pool of applicants, matching evaluation and development to new roles, and changing pay and career paths to add new role progressions within recurring budgets are all critical.<sup>40</sup> Professional development for leaders changes as more learning occurs on the job. Principals learn leadership early in their careers as multi-classroom leaders, then as principals working under multi-school leaders; multi-school leaders learn before assuming the role, and continue to be coached by executive MSLs who have smaller spans than similar roles today.
- \* **Evaluation and accountability.** Evaluation criteria must fit the new roles, and accurately match teachers and principals with the students and other professionals for whom they are responsible. In addition, those working most closely with the multi-school leaders must provide input. Multi-school leaders will need input from the principals and principals-in-training they lead and, if they still lead one school directly as the principal, the multi-classroom leaders in that school.
- \* **Scheduling.** Three levels of teams must have several hours each week to meet and collaborate: Grade and/or subject teaching teams and their multi-classroom leader; each school's team of teacher-leaders and the principal; and the multi-school leader and principals (or principals-in-training) he or she leads. In addition, multi-school leaders need frequent chances to observe each principal with that person's team of teacher-leaders and to see the classroom impact; multi-school leaders also need subsequent one-one-one time with each principal for confidential feedback and coaching. Schedules must ensure attention to every school that an MSL leads.
- \* **Technology and data.** Student data must be provided at the team level within and across schools so that teacher-leaders and their principals and MSLs can compare and learn from successes and challenges to help everyone improve. Data about student learning growth—during the year and at the end—must be readily available and sortable by school, student groups, and

by each team and its members. This is a critical foundation of team problem solving and planning.

- \* **Principal preparation and training.** Principals leading teacher-leader teams and/or multiple schools will need preparation for these roles and support while in them. Most will learn the role on the job, first as multi-classroom leaders and then as principals-in-training. Pre-service training in leadership and management becomes critical to university and other preparation programs, but must be tailored to the specific position. Districts will need to determine which aspects of learning that cannot be done on the job should be part of pre-service preparation, and which parts can be accomplished through more focused training just before or during principals' and multi-school leaders' assumption of their new roles. Peer communities—virtual or in-person—with guided discussion questions might also play a role. Operations manager leadership and management may become part of education schools or affiliated programs to align with excellence-focused, team-based schools.
- \* **Execution.** Even the best plans do not help teachers nor their students unless they are implemented well. Districts and other school providers must monitor school plans and how they are carried out, and management and instructional practice indicators to up the odds that the changes help students.

## CONCLUSION

The potential to reach every school with an excellent principal is unprecedented, given the rise of teacher-led instructional teams and emerging digital learning and data tools.

Just think ...

What if schools could double or even quadruple the number of students taught by the best teachers and do the same with the number of teachers led by great principals—in many cases increasing the personalization of learning and leadership in schools? What if those teachers and principals earn more and learn more, earlier in their careers, and stay accountable for student learning? What if all of this can happen within the recurring budgets schools have, so pay and roles are permanent, not fleeting?

This is no longer a “what if”—schools in several districts are already moving in this direction for teachers. Opportunity Culture schools exist in multiple states already, including in collective bargaining public school districts.<sup>41</sup>

Now it is time to extend these opportunities to principals, the people who shape the working conditions and learning culture of our nation's schools. Every student and teacher really could have an excellent principal. It's not a question of whether this is possible, only whether schools and policymakers will seize the opportunity to make it happen. Educators, superintendents, charter school leaders, school boards, and state-level legislative and executive leaders: Now is the time.

## Endnotes

1. Leithwood, K. Louis, K. S., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning*. Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement/University of Minnesota, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto. Retrieved from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/key-research/documents/how-leadership-influences-student-learning.pdf>

2. See the National SAM Innovation Project for more about helping principals make time for instructional leadership in traditional school structures, available at <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/Pages/SAM.aspx>

3. This work began with the publication of *3X for All* and continued as the original idea was refined and put into practice through the schools and districts that joined, and continue to join, the Opportunity Culture initiative. Hassel, E. A., & Hassel, B. C. (2009). *3X for all: Extending the reach of education's best*. Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact. Retrieved from [http://opportunityculture.org/images/stories/3x\\_for\\_all-public\\_impact.pdf](http://opportunityculture.org/images/stories/3x_for_all-public_impact.pdf). The vision was refined and updated in: Hassel, E. A., & Hassel, B. C. (2013). *An Opportunity Culture for all: Making teaching a highly paid, high-impact profession*. Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact. Retrieved from [http://opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/An\\_Opportunity\\_Culture\\_for\\_All-Public\\_Impact.pdf](http://opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/An_Opportunity_Culture_for_All-Public_Impact.pdf)

4. For a significant library and emerging thinking about school leadership, see The Wallace Foundation's resources at <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership>. See also an OECD report from 2008 discussing distributed leadership models. For example, some Norway schools have three-person school leadership teams, and the Netherlands allows distribution of tasks across several leaders. Pont, B., Nusche, D., & Moorman, H. (2008). *Improving school leadership: Volume 1, policy and practice*. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/44374889.pdf>

5. Future work will delve into the competencies and skills that multi-school leaders may need beyond those that great principals need.

6. See the Opportunity Culture Dashboard at <http://opportunityculture.org/dashboard/>. Students in Opportunity Culture schools in the second year of implementation were 45 percent more likely to make high growth and 46 percent less likely to make low growth than students in other schools in the same states.

7. For more information, see: the Opportunity Culture Dashboard at <http://opportunityculture.org/dashboard/>; published compensation and career path considerations and examples in schools that extend teachers' reach at <http://opportunityculture.org/reach/pay-teachers-more/> and <http://opportunityculture.org/reach/career-paths/>. Similar pay and paths for principals are forthcoming.

8. For the policies needed to extend the reach of excellent teachers and their teams, see: Public Impact. (2014). *Seizing opportunity at the top II: State policies to reach every student with excellent teaching*. Chapel Hill, NC: Author. Retrieved from [http://opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Seizing\\_Opportunity\\_at\\_the\\_Top\\_II-Public\\_Impact.pdf](http://opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Seizing_Opportunity_at_the_Top_II-Public_Impact.pdf). Parallel, additional policy changes may be needed for principals in some states.

9. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning*.

10. Lee, V. E., & Burkam, D. T. (2002). *Inequality at the starting gate: Social background differences in achievement as children begin school*, Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute. Retrieved from [http://www.epi.org/publication/books\\_starting\\_gate/](http://www.epi.org/publication/books_starting_gate/)

11. For a full description of student starting points and effects of teaching and staffing changes on student growth, see: Hassel, B. C., & Hassel, E. A. (2010). *Opportunity at the top: How America's best teachers could close the gaps, raise the bar, and keep our nation great*. Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact. Retrieved from <http://opportunityculture.org/opportunity-at-the-top/>

12. There is no clear research evidence to date in public K–12 settings of the effectiveness of blended learning as an instructional model. See page 1 of: Mohammed, S. (2015, May). *The blended learning research clearinghouse 1.0*. The Learning Accelerator. Retrieved from [http://learningaccelerator.org/media/12132951/BL%20Research%20Clearinghouse%201.0-050715%20\(1\).pdf](http://learningaccelerator.org/media/12132951/BL%20Research%20Clearinghouse%201.0-050715%20(1).pdf)

13. For nearly a century, spans of six have been identified as optimal. Larger spans are possible for routine work and may be possible when one or two team members act as sub-team leaders. A 2016 study on U.S. schools finds the typical principal's span is much too large for the complex work of leading schools, or even for more routine work. Bierly, C., Doyle, B., & Smith, A. (2016, January). *Transforming schools: How distributed leadership can create more high-performing schools*. Bain & Company. Retrieved from <http://www.bain.com/publications/articles/transforming-schools.aspx>

14. For example, see: Kraft, M.A., & Gilmour, A.F. (2016, February). *Revisiting the widget effect: Teacher evaluation reforms and the distribution of teacher effectiveness* [Working paper]. Providence, RI: Brown University. Retrieved from [http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/mkraft/files/kraft\\_gilmour\\_2016\\_revisiting\\_the\\_widget\\_effect\\_wp.pdf?m=1456772152](http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/mkraft/files/kraft_gilmour_2016_revisiting_the_widget_effect_wp.pdf?m=1456772152). This paper includes data comparing the percent of teachers who receive below-proficient evaluation ratings with the percent that principals deemed were actually below proficient. Survey data captures the reasoning from some principals, such as the fact that if they give a below-proficient or needs-improvement rating, they trigger an additional, undesirable monitoring workload. Some limit low ratings to the most urgent cases, rather than triggering more monitoring and development for a larger number of teachers.

15. Hunter, J. E., Schmidt, F. L., & Judiesch, M. K. (1990, February). Individual differences in output variability as a function of job complexity. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. 75(1), 28–42. For research on the substantial size of the principal's effect on student learning, see: Branch, C. F., Hanushek, E. A., & Rivkin S. G. (2012, January). Estimating the effect of leaders on public sector productivity: The case of school principals [Working paper]. Washington DC: CALDER. Retrieved from [http://www.caldercenter.org/sites/default/files/CALDER-Working-Paper-32\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.caldercenter.org/sites/default/files/CALDER-Working-Paper-32_FINAL.pdf). Here we are agnostic on the specific elements of a principal evaluation system, although we include without exception the impact on how much students learn while attending a school led by a given principal. Learning may be measured in student growth shown on both standardized tests and qualitative assessments of student work portfolios. See Step 3 of Public Impact's *Evaluation, Accountability, and Professional Development in an Opportunity Culture: A Practical Guide* for more about Public Impact's thinking on measures of student learning that impact educators' evaluation, available at <http://opportunityculture.org/evaluation-guide/step-3/>. For other perspectives on principal evaluation, see, for example: Educators4Excellence. (2012, March). *Principals matter: Principal evaluations from a teacher perspective*. Retrieved from [http://educators4excellence.s3.amazonaws.com/8/13/1/349/E4E\\_Principals\\_Matter.pdf](http://educators4excellence.s3.amazonaws.com/8/13/1/349/E4E_Principals_Matter.pdf). We do not attempt here to catalogue the many perspectives on this topic.

16. Efforts are too numerous to list them all. For example, see well-designed and funded programs at the national level, such as New Leaders, NYC Leadership Academy, Relay Graduate School of Education, and the University of Virginia's Partners for Leadership in Education. State and local efforts include North Carolina's Northwest Leadership Academy, Gwinnett County, Georgia's leadership pipeline, and others.

17. See the programs in endnote 16.

18. Hassel & Hassel. (2010). *Opportunity at the top*.

19. See the Opportunity Culture Dashboard at <http://opportunityculture.org/dashboard/>. As of December 2015, students in Opportunity Culture schools using such models were 45 percent more likely to make high growth and 46 percent less likely to make low growth than students in other schools in the same states.

20. Public Impact. (2012). *Redesigning schools: Models to reach every student with excellent teachers—Multi-classroom leadership*. Chapel Hill, NC: Author. Retrieved from [http://opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Multi-Classroom\\_Leadership\\_School\\_Model-Public\\_Impact.pdf](http://opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Multi-Classroom_Leadership_School_Model-Public_Impact.pdf)

21. Public Impact. (2012). *Redesigning schools: Models to reach every student with excellent teachers—Subject specialization (elementary)*. Chapel Hill, NC: Author. Retrieved from [http://opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Subject\\_Specialization\\_Elementary\\_School\\_Model-Public\\_Impact.pdf](http://opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Subject_Specialization_Elementary_School_Model-Public_Impact.pdf)

22. See the Introduction to Job Descriptions & Competencies for Teacher and Staff Evaluation & Development in Step 3 of Public Impact's *Evaluation, Accountability, and Professional Development in an Opportunity Culture: A Practical Guide*, available at <http://opportunityculture.org/evaluation-guide/step-3/>. It includes detailed job descriptions and evaluation materials for both teaching and paraprofessional roles.

23. Montessori, progressive, and open schools are among the examples of schools using individual student progress to change instructional levels and approaches during the year; the differentiated instruction movement and now the personalized learning movement seek to replicate this practice in more schools.

24. For more on this model, see <http://opportunityculture.org/reach/time-tech-swaps/>

25. OECD. (2015). *Students, computers, and learning: Making the connection*. OECD Publishing. Retrieved from [http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/students-computers-and-learning\\_9789264239555-en#page1](http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/students-computers-and-learning_9789264239555-en#page1). Note that the report studies digital learning added on to traditional classroom structures.

26. Forthcoming work will describe the teacher-in-training and principal-in-training roles in more detail, as well as the way they can be paid for full-year residencies within schools' regular budgets.

27. Multi-school leaders leading just two schools might continue to lead one school directly, perhaps one with a stable, well-functioning teacher-leader team. Only experience and research will determine the optimal staffing designs for each span of multi-school leadership, considering both the impact on students and teachers and financial sustainability.

28. Public Impact: Steiner, L., Losoponkul, N., Hassel, E. A., & Han, J. G. (2015). *Teacher and staff selection toolkit*. Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact. Retrieved from <http://opportunityculture.org/selection-toolkit/>

29. Public Impact. (2012). *Redesigning schools: Models to reach every student with excellent teachers—Subject specialization (elementary)*.

30. Public Impact. (2015). *Opportunity Culture implementation: Early lessons from the field*. Chapel Hill, NC: Author. Retrieved from

[http://opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Opportunity\\_Culture\\_Implementation\\_Early\\_Lessons\\_from\\_the\\_Field-Public\\_Impact.pdf](http://opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Opportunity_Culture_Implementation_Early_Lessons_from_the_Field-Public_Impact.pdf); for examples, see: Public Impact: Barrett, S.

K. (2016). *How principals use multi-classroom leadership in school turnarounds: An Opportunity Culture vignette series*. Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact. Retrieved from <http://opportunityculture.org/how-principals-use-multi-classroom-leadership-in-school-turnarounds/>

31. MCLs' role in teacher evaluation varies currently. Many at least provide input to the principal about teachers' instructional strengths and development needs. Others have a larger role.

32. Hassel, B. C., & Hassel, E. A. (2012). Teachers in the age of digital instruction. In Chester E. Finn Jr. (Ed). *Education reform for the digital era* (pp. 11–33). Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.edexcellencemedia.net/publications/2012/20120425-education-reform-for-the-digital-era/20120425-Education-Reform-for-the-Digital-Era-FINAL-Chapter-1.pdf>

33. Some schools have accomplished the same collaborative, high-reach environment without digital instruction, often by having students work on non-digital projects and skills practice under paraprofessional supervision.

34. For an example of data use to lead a turnaround in a nonprofit service setting, see Kim, W. C., & Mauborgne, R. (2003, April). Tipping point leadership. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2003/04/tipping-point-leadership/ar/1>

35. The staffing level and assistant principal roles might be affected by the span of leadership.

36. For the school models that are allowing this higher teacher and teacher-leader pay within budget in Opportunity Culture schools, see: <http://opportunityculture.org/reach/school-models/>. For more on the financial modeling, see: <http://opportunityculture.org/reach/pay-teachers-more/>. Addition modeling will be forthcoming for principal pay. In brief: The pay of a noninstructional operations manager is lower than that of an assistant principal. This saving is realized in every school that a multi-school leader (MSL) leads. With smaller spans, for example two schools, the MSL can continue to lead one school directly and lead the other through another principal. At larger spans, the MSL should lead a principal or principal-in-training in every school; savings from the operations manager fund not only the MSL base pay at a principal rate but also substantial MSL pay supplements that increase as MSLs lead more schools. In addition, some schools may have principals-in-training who are paid like assistant principals temporarily, rather than as full principals, but this is not necessary to pay MSLs more.

37. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. (2016). *Occupational outlook handbook: Elementary, middle, and high school principals*. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/management/elementary-middle-and-high-school-principals.htm>

38. Cross-sector research indicates that the highest performers across sectors and jobs are most likely to leave for lack of career and pay advancement opportunity, while more typical performers are more likely to leave due to working conditions. HayGroup. (2004). *Bridging the pay-for-performance gap: Establishing truly differentiated rewards*. Philadelphia, PA: Author. Retrieved from <https://chca.memberclicks.net/assets/documents/CCA%20Resources%20%20Bridging%20the%20pay%20for%20performance%20gap.pdf>

39. For the policies needed to extend the reach of excellent teachers and their teams, see Public Impact. (2014). *Seizing opportunity at the top II*. Parallel, additional policy changes may be needed for principals in some states.

40. See <http://opportunityculture.org/> for materials explaining teacher selection, career paths, pay, and evaluation in team-based, teacher-led, extended reach teaching models. Similar materials for principals are forthcoming. Meanwhile, on principal evaluation, see for example this report on teachers' view of principal evaluation in traditional school contexts: Educators4Excellence. (2012, March). *Principals matter*; and see these reports calling for sustainable career paths for more teachers: Natale, C. F., Bassett, K., Gaddis, L., & McKnight, K. (2013). *Creating sustainable teacher career pathways: A 21st century imperative*. Pearson & National Network of State

Teachers of the Year. Retrieved from [http://www.nnstoy.org/download/career\\_pathways/Final%20updated%20Research%20Report.pdf](http://www.nnstoy.org/download/career_pathways/Final%20updated%20Research%20Report.pdf); Natale, C., Gaddis, L., Bassett, K., & McKnight, K. (2016). *Teacher career advancement initiatives: Lessons learned from eight case studies*. Pearson and the National Network of State Teachers of the Year. Retrieved from <http://www.nnstoy.org/publications/teacher-career-advancement-initiatives-lessons-learned-from-eight-case-studies/>

41. For a list of participating Opportunity Culture sites, see <http://opportunityculture.org/our-initiative/participating-sites/>

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