



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fulton County Schools Joins National Initiative Offering Highly Paid, Accountable Teacher-Leader Roles

CHAPEL HILL, N.C.— Georgia's Fulton County Schools district has joined the national [Opportunity Culture initiative](#) to extend the reach of excellent teachers and their teams to more students, for more pay, within recurring budgets. In 2015–16, Benjamin E. Banneker High School and Woodland Middle School, on the south side of Atlanta, are the district's first to design Opportunity Culture plans for 2016–17 implementation. Both schools are part of Fulton County's achievement zone, created in 2015 to focus on the traditionally struggling high school and its feeder schools. The zone aims to rapidly improve academic outcomes for its students.

In an Opportunity Culture, a team of teachers and administrators at each school chooses among [models](#) that use job redesign and age-appropriate technology to reach more students with personalized, high-standards instruction—one hallmark of great teachers. School teams redesign schedules to provide additional school-day time for teacher planning and collaboration, typically with teacher-leaders leading teams and providing frequent, on-the-job development.

The school design teams reallocate school budgets to fund pay supplements permanently, in contrast to temporarily grant-funded programs. Schools in eight districts in six states nationwide are designing or implementing Opportunity Culture models. Pay supplements are as high as 50 percent, and an average of about 20 percent, of average teacher salaries.

Fulton County Schools, which sandwiches the separate school district for the city of Atlanta, includes the cities of Alpharetta, Roswell, and Sandy Springs on Atlanta's north side, and Chattahoochee Hills, College Park, and Union City to the south.

"To dramatically change outcomes for students, we need to put our most effective teachers in front of the students who need them the most, and build opportunities for our most effective teachers to be leaders among their peers," said Dara Jones-Wilson, executive director of the South Learning Community, in which the schools are located. "Teachers want leaders and coaches who are in the trenches with them and understand this work firsthand."

The district serves more than 95,000 students in 57 elementary schools, 19 middle schools, 17 high schools, and eight charter organizations. In 2015–16, 45 percent of its students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch; in 2014–15, 43 percent identified as black/African-American, 29 percent white, 15 percent Hispanic, and 10 percent Asian.

"Schools often struggle with leveraging talent in a way that leads to maximum impact for students. We believe that the mechanism for making this happen for our most proven and effective teachers is Opportunity Culture," Banneker Principal Duke Bradley III said.

"Too often we fail to grow our teacher-leaders, and our students and staff never fully benefit from their full potential. The Opportunity Culture initiative not only allows us to retain these quality educators but extend their reach to realize an even greater student impact," Woodland Principal Jason Stamper said. "This initiative

also excites me because of the support and modeling that these teacher-leaders will be able to provide for our staff, thus making us all more effective. The end result: Our students win!"

Public Impact, which designed the Opportunity Culture model prototypes, is assisting Fulton County in planning its school designs and implementation, supported by a grant from the [Dobbs Foundation](#), based in Atlanta. The grant supports only the transition work; higher teacher pay will be funded within existing school budgets.

For more information, please visit www.OpportunityCulture.org. To arrange an interview with Public Impact, contact Sharon Keschull Barrett at Sharon.Barrett@publicimpact.com; 919.929.4544.

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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 OpportunityCulture.org website, which provides [tools](#)—all free—to build an Opportunity Culture, [videos of teachers and principals](#), and related [resources](#). Funding for development of resources to help schools design and implement Opportunity Culture models and support teachers taking on new roles has been provided by [national foundations](#).

Educators who have worked in Opportunity Culture schools are [publishing a series of columns](#) about their work on RealClearEducation.com.