



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Arkansas Department of Education Expands Opportunity Culture to Statewide Pilot; North Little Rock Grows From Two Opportunity Culture Campuses to 10

CHAPEL HILL, N.C.— After a pilot year at North Little Rock Middle School, the Arkansas Department of Education has expanded its [Opportunity Culture](#) pilot to three more districts. Opportunity Culture schools use new roles—based on the cornerstone role of Multi-Classroom Leadership—to reach many more students with excellent, personalized instruction. These roles, which have produced outstanding student growth elsewhere, provide intensive support to all teachers, paid career advancement and a stronger teacher pipeline.

The school districts of Forrest City, Lead Hill and Lincoln are joining the Opportunity Culture initiative—to which the state committed in its Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan—with plans to begin using Opportunity Culture roles in the 2019–20 school year. North Little Rock, now in its second year of Opportunity Culture at the middle school’s two campuses, will expand to six elementary schools and two high schools in the 2019–20 school year.

The national [Opportunity Culture initiative](#), founded by Public Impact and now in more than 25 districts in nine states, extends the reach of excellent teachers and their teams to more students, for more pay, within schools’ recurring budgets. Each school’s design and implementation team, which includes teachers, determines how to use [Multi-Classroom Leadership](#) and other roles to reach more of their students with high-standards, personalized instruction—one hallmark of great teachers. Public Impact assists the design teams in making their plans; design teams from each district will meet jointly with Public Impact to provide a cost-effective transition to the new model.

Multi-classroom leaders (MCLs) lead a small teaching team, providing instructional guidance and [frequent, on-the-job development](#), while continuing to teach part of the time. The schools redesign schedules to provide additional school-day time for teacher planning, coaching and collaboration. MCLs typically lead the introduction of more effective curricula, instructional methods, classroom management and schoolwide culture-building.

Accountable for the results of all students in the team, multi-classroom leaders earn substantially higher supplements averaging 20 percent (and up to 50 percent) of teacher pay, within the regular school budget. With help from Public Impact, the school design teams reallocate school budgets to fund pay supplements permanently, in contrast to temporarily grant-funded programs. Grant funding from the state will not be used for pay supplements, but for planning and implementing Opportunity Culture and associated professional development.

In early 2018, [researchers](#) at the Brookings Institution and American Institutes for Research released a study showing the effect Opportunity Culture multi-classroom leaders can have: Teachers who were on average at the 50th percentile in student learning gains, and who then joined teams led by multi-classroom leaders, produced learning gains equivalent to those of teachers from the 75th to 85th percentile in math and from the 66th to 72nd percentile in reading in six of seven statistical models. Nearly three-fourths of the schools in the AIR-Brookings study were Title I.

And in the 2017–18 school year, Opportunity Culture schools in North Carolina—the largest implementation state so far, with about 80 schools—outpaced the state results in student growth. While only 27 percent of non-Opportunity Culture schools in North Carolina exceeded student learning growth targets, nearly double that—53 percent—of Opportunity Culture schools exceeded growth.

Quotes about the Arkansas Opportunity Culture Expansion

“We feel that the Opportunity Culture program is an amazing opportunity for our district to provide greater reach and a larger impact on the students in our district,” said Tiffany Hardrick, superintendent of the Forrest City School District, which will begin using Opportunity Culture in three schools. The district overall has about 2,600 students and 170 teachers. “The program will allow our best and brightest teachers an opportunity to lead and become our future district leaders without leaving the classroom.”

“Every student in the state of Arkansas deserves an opportunity to reach their potential. The partnership with Opportunity Culture will assist our district in extending the reach of our excellent teachers,” said Wanda Van Dyke, superintendent of the Lead Hill School District, which will use Opportunity Culture in its two schools, which have about 365 students and 35 teachers.

“We are excited to implement Opportunity Culture in our district this fall,” said Mary Ann Spears, superintendent of the Lincoln Consolidated School District, which will begin using Opportunity Culture at Lincoln Middle School. The district’s 91 teachers serve 1,140 students. “Opportunity Culture will allow us to transform our teaching and learning in our middle school and ultimately the entire district. The development of future teacher-leaders and the impact on teacher retention is certainly a bonus! “

“We have experienced growth in student achievement as a result of the implementation of Opportunity Culture. Students are engaged in their learning environment, and there are more opportunities for our best teachers to share their expertise with other teachers. It’s a great model for student-focused learning,” said Bobby Acklin, North Little Rock School District’s superintendent. North Little Rock will expand its Opportunity Culture to eight more of its 13 schools in 2019–20.

“We are on a mission in our state to recruit and retain effective teachers. We believe the implementation of Opportunity Culture schools can provide our districts with an innovative approach to extend the reach of excellent teachers to more students,” said Sandra Hurst, director of educator support and development in the Arkansas Department of Education’s educator effectiveness division.

“North Little Rock’s continued hard work, reflection on lessons learned, and willingness to try something new for its students and teachers has set the stage for others in Arkansas who can learn from the district’s early experiences,” said Troy Smith of Public Impact, who provides guidance to these districts’ design teams.

“Through its statewide Opportunity Culture pilot, the Arkansas Department of Education is paving the way for every Arkansas teacher and student to benefit from high-quality teacher leadership,” said Stephanie Dean, who as vice president of strategic policy advising at Public Impact provides guidance to the Arkansas Department of Education.

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About Public Impact

Public Impact’s mission is to improve education dramatically for all students, especially low-income students, students of color, and other students whose needs historically have not been well met. 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](https://www.opportunityculture.org) website, which provides free Opportunity Culture tools, educator [videos](#) and [columns](#), and [instructional leadership and excellence 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](#).

For more information, please visit <https://www.opportunityculture.org/>. To arrange an interview with Public Impact, contact Sharon Keschull Barrett at Sharon.Barrett@publicimpact.com; 919.590.4154.