

EXCELLENT TEACHING FOR EVERY YOUNG CHILD: OPPORTUNITY CULTURE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

A VISION BRIEF

BY PUBLIC IMPACT

OVERVIEW

What if far more children ages 0–5 who are in early childhood education and care settings had consistent access to excellent teaching? This brief summarizes a vision for making this possible through new staffing models emerging in K–12. These staffing models, using Opportunity Culture’s Multi-Classroom Leadership, would also provide early childhood teachers and caregivers with on-the-job development and sustainably funded career paths.

In Opportunity Culture K–12 schools, teachers with a record of achieving high-growth student learning, called multi-classroom leaders (“MCLs”), lead small, collaborative teaching teams for more pay, within schools’ regular budgets. In addition, on some Multi-Classroom Leadership teams, “team reach teachers” teach more students than usual, though not all at one time; support from paraprofessionals allows them to use small-group and one-on-one instruction.

Research indicates that team teachers with a typical range of prior student learning growth, who then join MCL teams, produced significantly higher learning growth among students, equaling that of top-quartile teachers in math and approaching that in reading, on average.²

When students make more than a typical year’s worth of learning growth year after year, those who started out behind catch up, those in the middle leap ahead to advanced learning, and those already excelling match their top international peers.

Meanwhile, teachers on these teams can learn on the job and advance their careers, for more pay, without leaving teaching. Schools can more easily attract, develop, and keep the talent they need to succeed. Opportunity Culture schools help break the vicious cycle of stagnant teaching careers and stagnant student learning outcomes, providing more opportunities for success and joy in school and beyond.

Opportunity Culture Multi-Classroom Leadership holds promise for improving learning and careers in early childhood education, too. These settings—both publicly funded schools and centers and privately run, market-based ones funded mostly by parents³—face many of the same barriers as K–12 schools in achieving strong outcomes, most importantly for children who lack exposure to rich early-learning environments outside of school. In addition, education and care professionals serving children from birth until kindergarten typically face the same limited career options and low support on the job as in K–12. With high turnover and workforce demand that is growing as advocacy for increased early childhood slots succeeds, early childhood education providers face an ongoing challenge staffing their classrooms with excellent educators.

Designing these teaching and care roles to produce strong learning in critical developmental areas for students—language, early math, cognitive, social-emotional, and physical skills—and to create attractive educator careers is essential. Early childhood education settings and the policies that govern them vary by children’s ages and whether settings are public or private. Yet the basic premise, design, and benefits of Multi-Classroom Leadership apply well to most places where young children receive care and education (very small settings and home-based care excepted).

Increasing the number of affordable slots available to children before kindergarten is a corollary topic that we do not address here. This brief focuses on access to excellent teaching and development in existing settings and in new ones arising from others’ efforts to expand access to early childhood education. Achieving the vision of excellent teaching in far more early childhood education and care settings and better careers for early childhood educators would radically improve economic and social outcomes both for individuals and society, and increasingly so as more slots become available. This brief is one step toward the vision.

IN THIS BRIEF:

- * The Problem
- * Opportunity Culture in K–12
- * A Vision: Reach All Children with Excellent Early Childhood Teaching Via Opportunity Culture Models
- * Potential Benefits and Next Steps

Figure 1. Early Childhood Care and Education Settings: A Brief Overview⁴

Typical Age Groupings	Early Childhood Settings	
	Public	Private
Ages 3-4	Typically located in a public elementary school or a Head Start program; free or subsidized prices; curriculum aligned with public kindergarten; number of slots limited based on public investment	Wide variety of settings, sizes, prices, and curriculum focuses; number of slots may rise with demand by parents who can pay fully or with help from public subsidies
Ages 0-2	[Rare outside of Early Head Start]	Wide variety of settings, sizes, prices, and educational focuses; number of slots may rise with demand by parents who can pay fully or with help from public subsidies

Children’s typical developmental needs differ by age; providers group students differently. Even within a state, public policies may vary widely by program type, child age, and program size. Prices and curricula differ by age and setting. Despite these differences, all settings except very small providers and home-based care could benefit from Multi-Classroom Leadership.

THE PROBLEM

In K–12 education, research shows that teachers’ effectiveness has the largest impact on student learning of any school-based factor, and the learning gains that top teachers produce can close achievement gaps if students have these teachers year after year.

But most students do not get top teachers year after year. In the nearly ubiquitous model for schools, students have just one teacher per class or subject, limiting their access to the excellent teachers who can help them make enough growth to catch up and leap ahead. And teachers who help students make the most growth see their impact limited as well, affecting the same number of students each year as teachers who help students make the least growth.

On average, teachers help students make about one year of learning growth each year, keeping them at the same achievement level relative to their peers throughout their K–12 years.⁵ So students who start behind stay behind, and “average” students do not leap ahead to advanced work—even though most could with consistently excellent teaching.⁶

Meanwhile, teachers have little support on the job to advance their instructional skills and help more students achieve high-growth learning and strong thinking. School leaders are stretched too thin to develop the instructional prowess of 20 to 50 teachers, and instructional coaching by specialists within schools has not achieved learning results at scale, despite several decades of effort.⁷

Finally, teachers who do consistently produce high-growth student learning have few options to advance and earn more without leaving teaching entirely; they are a vastly underused resource in schools.⁸

Early childhood education is subject to the same challenges.

Young children—especially those who have fewer educational and developmental advantages outside of formal settings—need *excellent teaching every year* to fulfill their potential. Yet too few have access to it, even though ages 0–5 are critical years for development, cognitive and otherwise.

Increased access to early childhood education and care from ages 0–5 is one solution. Children who lack access to high-quality early childhood development fall further behind their peers with each passing year before entering kindergarten.⁹ This deficit leaves wide gaps for K–12 educators to close, and it starts a vicious cycle of negative and inaccurate perceptions about students’ actual potential to learn and achieve, in school and life. With increased access, some children who otherwise would continue to fall behind more advantaged peers in the years before kindergarten can hold their ground.¹⁰

But even if all U.S. children had access to publicly or privately funded early childhood care and education programs, a substantial majority in any given year would still lack access to teachers who help them make *high-growth* learning and overall development, just as in most K–12 schools. In the one-teacher-one-classroom model, top early childhood teachers, like their K–12 counterparts, reach no more children than the least effective ones.

Meanwhile, early childhood education is a modest-wage, low-support field with few career options for instructional leadership or on-the-job development. In 2018, childcare workers earned median pay of \$22,290 or \$10.72 per hour; preschool teachers earned a median of \$28,990 per year, or \$13.94 per hour.¹¹ In fact, childcare workers rank nearly at the bottom—the second percentile—in an

nual earnings of all occupations.¹² The turnover rate among early educators is about 30 percent. As a result, early childhood education providers face a relentless challenge staffing their classrooms with excellent educators and caregivers.¹³

The field is in the midst of many efforts to boost early childhood providers' education credentials and pay.¹⁴ If these efforts to increase pay are successful, they present more opportunities to fund new staffing models, as long as staffing flexibility described in this vision brief remains.

Even if all children gain access to publicly or privately funded early childhood education, the quality of student outcomes remains at risk using the standard school model, and the public's investment in early childhood education will not realize its potential.¹⁵

OPPORTUNITY CULTURE IN K-12

The Opportunity Culture initiative has already grown to disrupt this pattern in K-12. Schools follow strict design principles (see "Opportunity Culture Principles," below) and allow teachers who have produced high-growth learning to lead small teams—an average of six teachers—as "multi-classroom leaders," or MCLs.

MCLs fully lead their teaching teams. They ensure that team teachers are prepared to connect with students and deliver high-standards, differentiated lessons. They also oversee a rapid cycle of adjusting and improving instruction based on student learning growth. MCLs provide intensive coaching to the whole team and each member to help them improve throughout the year. Teams are highly collaborative, sharing responsibility for the students each team serves.

OPPORTUNITY CULTURE PRINCIPLES, APPLIED TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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

- 1. Reach more students with excellent teachers and their teams.** Early childhood schools or centers should measure student growth in language, early math, cognitive, social-emotional, and physical skills and formulate ways to identify teachers who more often help students make the most growth.¹⁶ Schools should select multi-classroom leaders for leadership competencies, too.
- 2. Pay teachers more for extending their reach.** As in other professions, teachers who take advanced roles to help colleagues excel and who reach more students with excellence should earn more—substantially more, not just token amounts.
- 3. Fund pay within regular budgets.** Any increases to budgets are welcome, including money to fund access to early care and education for more children and higher overall base pay, but pay supplements should always be funded out of permanent streams, not temporary grants or line items. Depending on the setting, funding sources for MCL and team pay supplements may include: Trading vacant specialist positions for pay supplements; trading a vacant teaching position per team for an additional paraprofessional assistant; using Title I and other federal funds; reallocating other costs that school teams—which include teachers—select; and raising class sizes slightly, but *always* within legal limits and when smaller classes have not boosted learning as hoped.¹⁷ See "Quick Example: Opportunity Culture Pay Supplement Funding," on page 7 for an example of how to pay supplements within budget.
- 4. Provide protected in-school time and clarity about how to use it for planning, collaboration, and development.** Early childhood multi-classroom leaders need substantial time to plan with their teams, review students' developmental growth, and coach and develop teams and individuals, based on students' needs. Schedule changes and rotating or allocating staff to cover classrooms during school-hour planning are both essential actions. Scheduling needs may vary significantly, depending on how much MCLs are delivering instruction directly to the team's students versus guiding other teachers to do so.
- 5. Match authority and accountability to each person's responsibilities.** Multi-classroom leaders should be accountable for the academic and developmental growth of all students served by their teams, and team teachers and assistants should be accountable for the students they affect directly. The MCL's authority to lead instruction and team development should be formal and unhampered by additional duties, other than teaching part of the time.

In exchange for their team leadership and accountability for more students, MCLs earn a substantial pay supplement—about 20 percent of base pay, on average, and up to 50 percent—which school leaders fund sustainably by reallocating regular per-pupil dollars. Schools also design their schedules so that teams can collaborate frequently during school hours. Teams meet up to five times weekly, and MCLs typically coach individual teachers at least weekly. Multi-classroom leaders serve on each school’s leadership team, working closely with the principal to lead strong instruction and a schoolwide culture of excellence.

Some MCLs’ teams also reach more students than the same number of teachers typically would, without raising class sizes, by adding extra paraprofessional support that frees the teachers’ time to work with more students. Some schools pay these teachers a smaller supplement, too. This is called “Team Reach” and the teachers are “team reach teachers.”⁸

In early 2018, **researchers** at the Brookings Institution and American Institutes for Research released a study showing the effect of Opportunity Culture multi-classroom leaders: 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.

When surveyed anonymously in spring 2019, 99 percent of MCLs and 88 percent of all staff in Opportunity Culture roles wanted the initiative to continue in their schools.

A VISION: REACH ALL CHILDREN WITH EXCELLENT EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHING VIA OPPORTUNITY CULTURE MODELS

When tailored for early childhood education, Opportunity Culture’s Multi-Classroom Leadership could help far more young children gain access to excellent teaching and strong development across critical areas. More early childhood teachers could experience on-the-job development and paid leadership opportunities that magnify their positive impact and teaching joy.

Fortunately, Multi-Classroom Leadership models used in K–12 also apply well to early childhood settings, especially those schools or centers large enough to create small teaching teams with team leaders. **Here we briefly describe the two basic Multi-Classroom Leadership models.** The model most fitting for each early childhood setting and implementation details will depend on the school’s, center’s, or program’s budget; current staffing levels; hiring challenges; pay differentials among current staff; desire to pay teachers and staff more; and focus on professional learning.

Multi-Classroom Leadership could help far more young children gain access to excellent teaching and strong development.

In all cases, to achieve higher growth among students, schools must **select multi-classroom leaders who have a record of helping children make higher-growth** learning and development. Ideally, during selection, child developmental scales in multiple areas critical for lifelong success and joy are measured and considered—most essentially, language, cognitive, early math, social-emotional, and physical skills.¹⁹ Having MCLs who are selected for their strong student outcomes lead small teams in using their methods and materials may help address the field’s ongoing debate about appropriate degrees and credentials as well. When organized by these teams, teaching staffs may encompass a broader range of experience and education without sacrificing student development.

In using these models, schools will create career paths for early childhood educators that avoid drawing the best teachers out of the classroom full-time to become coaches, while providing high-quality, job-embedded coaching and development for all teachers, sustainably.

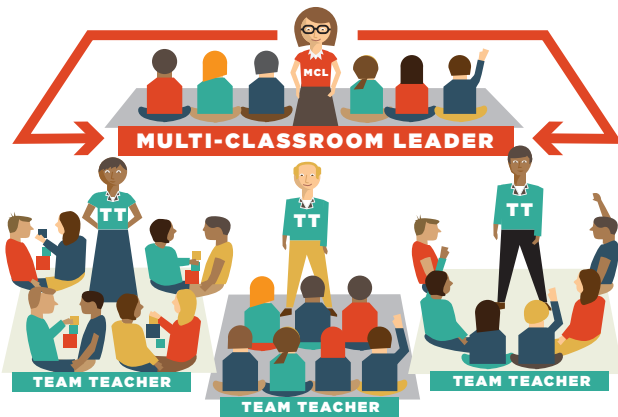
The first option for early childhood programs is basic Multi-Classroom Leadership (see Figure 2, page 5). Multi-classroom leaders who produced high-growth student academic learning and whole-child development as teachers fully lead small teams of three to eight teachers. They determine roles, select developmental materials for learning stations, lead lesson creation, improve instruction with ongoing assessment of student growth, and coach their team’s teachers on the job—while continuing to teach part of the time. MCLs earn a substantial pay supplement, funded within school budgets. Teachers collaborate on MCL teams, and everyone learns to teach and develop young children more effectively, together.

MCLs are accountable for achieving high-growth learning and development with all of the team’s students, regardless of whether they teach all of the students directly.

Teachers on an MCL’s team are **team teachers**; they collaborate to provide outstanding teaching and development to the team’s students with the MCL’s guidance. They do not extend their reach directly to more students, and thus do not typically earn a pay supplement. Classrooms keep pre-existing teaching assistants.

Pay supplements for early-childhood MCLs can be similar to K–12, where they average 20 percent of teachers’ average base pay, funded by reallocating school’s regular budgets. This model is financially sustainable when an early childhood school, center, or program has vacant non-classroom instructional support staff positions (or academic deans or assistant directors, etc.) intended to help teachers with instruction, or other extra sources of funding, such as Title I, that would best be used to extend high-growth

Fig. 2. Basic Multi-Classroom Leadership for Early Childhood Education



A **multi-classroom leader (MCL)** is a teacher with leadership skills and a record of high-growth student learning and development who both teaches part of the time and leads a small, collaborative team of teachers for a group of classrooms (typically three to eight) teaching the same age. In early childhood programs, the MCL may routinely teach content by rotating through the team's classrooms or may spend more time guiding and coaching the team's teachers in academic instruction and whole-child development. MCLs share and collaboratively improve strategies on instruction, child development, and classroom leadership. Teaching teams collaborate and plan together through careful scheduling. Accountable for achieving high-growth academic learning and child development for all the team's classrooms, the MCL determines how students spend time and tailors team roles to the adults' strengths. MCLs earn a pay supplement, funded within the school's regular budget. Classrooms keep existing teacher assistants.

teachers' reach as MCLs. Schools must reallocate those costs to fund supplements for MCLs and, if the MCL does not keep a classroom ("full release"), to fund the entire position and supplement.

This model requires the most pre-existing funding; but early childhood settings with a wide range of prior staff roles may find that the transition can be made within budget over time, even if funding levels are not among the highest. Each situation will vary and require careful budgeting and staff planning.

Schools also must change schedules to allow more time for MCL planning and more team collaboration—such as lesson and materials preparation and student growth data review—during school hours. For example, in settings where teachers may delegate lunch, nap, and recess supervision to paraprofessionals or other staff, staggering times for these activities by age level would allow MCLs to plan alone and with their teacher teams in a consolidated, daily block (made easier with Team Reach, below, which adds a new paraprofessional to each team).

WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT MULTI-CLASSROOM LEADERSHIP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD VS. K-12?

In early childhood settings, MCLs guide academic learning and materials selection, whole-child development strategies, and materials, and strategies for teaching young children behavioral skills in a group—before children have much experience in group settings. Whole-child and behavioral skills development are part of the core curriculum in early childhood education. In contrast, most K-12 schools focus primarily on academic learning, with whole-child and behavioral skills development used as a means of boosting academic success.

As a result, compared with K-12, early childhood academic learning—literacy, early math, and cognitive skill development—takes a smaller proportion of the school day. Part of an MCL's role, in coordination with schoolwide leaders, is to determine how much time is spent on each area of learning and development, and who instructs and supervises students' group and individual play and work.

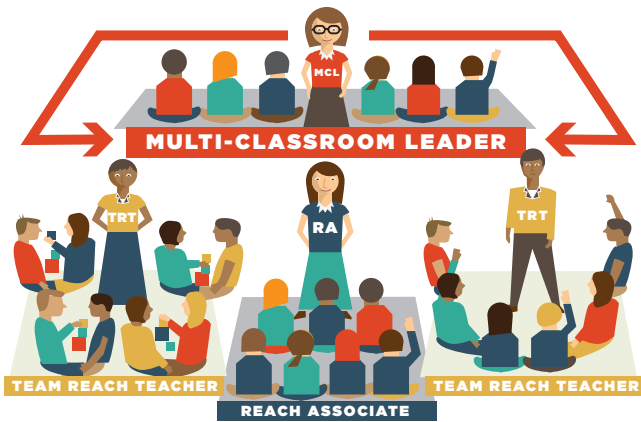
Options abound for the early-childhood MCL role and will depend in part on the strengths of colleagues and the program's curricular focus. Some MCLs may deliver most of the academic instruction to the team's students. For example, an MCL leading five classrooms in a six-and-a-half-hour school day could rotate through each class for one hour daily, providing small-group instruction in 10- to 15-minute segments per small group, leaving an hour daily for planning. Selecting materials for stations, where children work alone or in small groups with other adults' supervision, lets the MCL ensure both academic learning and whole-child development.

Alternatively, some MCLs may spend more time guiding, coaching and developing the instructional prowess of the team's teachers, while observing the team's students, too, and less time (but still some) teaching students directly.

In all cases, the MCL guides team members on how to develop the whole child, through engaging directly with students and coaching teachers on materials use and how to supervise free play for optimal child development. MCLs may select materials and activities collaboratively with a schoolwide MCL team working with the school's director or principal, which enhances the sharing of educational and developmental material across age groups to differentiate learning opportunities.

This model **reaches 200 to 700 percent more students with excellent teachers in charge** of learning and development, while propelling the teaching skill of many team teachers upward fast.

Fig. 3. Multi-Classroom Leadership + Team Reach



A **multi-classroom leader** (MCL) is a teacher with leadership skills and a record of high-growth student learning and development who both teaches part of the time and leads a small, collaborative team of teachers for a group of classrooms (typically three to eight) of students in the same age group/grade. In early childhood programs, the MCL may routinely teach content by rotating through the team's classrooms or may spend more time guiding and coaching the team's teachers in academic instruction and whole-child development. MCLs share and collaboratively improve instructional, child-development, and classroom leadership strategies. **Team reach teachers** on a multi-classroom leader's team directly teach more students than usual, but without raising instructional group sizes. Teachers and advanced paraprofessional "reach associates" rotate among students, supervising individual and small-group work in centers. Team reach may include a career path, including master reach teachers who help MCLs lead a team of six to eight teachers. Teaching teams collaborate and plan together through careful scheduling. Accountable for achieving high-growth academic learning and child development for all the team's classrooms, the MCL determines how students spend time and tailors team roles to the adults' strengths. MCLs, team reach teachers, and sometimes paraprofessionals earn a pay supplement, funded within the school's regular budget. Classrooms keep existing teacher assistants.

The second option for early childhood programs is **Multi-Classroom Leadership + Team Reach**. (See Figure 3 and, to compare Multi-Classroom Leadership with and without Team Reach, see page 7.)

The distinguishing design difference for Multi-Classroom Leadership + Team Reach is that teams swap one vacant teaching position per team for an advanced paraprofessional, called a reach associate. Classrooms also keep any pre-existing teaching assistants. MCLs otherwise perform all of the same duties as in Multi-Classroom

WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT MCL + TEAM REACH IN EARLY CHILDHOOD VS. K-12?

The pay difference between teachers and assistants in early childhood settings is sometimes smaller than K-12; thus, when a school trades in a vacant teaching position to add a lower-paid paraprofessional, the savings may be less than in K-12. Typically, savings would be enough to fund a standard MCL pay supplement, and they often may be enough to fund supplements for all teachers, and perhaps all staff. More early childhood schools or centers may need to reallocate funds from multiple sources—reallocating specialist positions *and* making teaching position trades—to optimize pay, planning time, educator work satisfaction, and child development.

Additionally, in some early childhood settings where adult:child ratio regulations require a certain number of adults but without specifying teachers' qualifications, teams may decide to swap more than one vacant teacher position for yet another reach associate. For example, when the MCL is providing a hefty chunk of academic instruction directly to the team's students and can guide adults without special qualifications to supervise whole-child development at learning stations, this option would allow higher pay supplements for all.

Like the basic MCL model, Multi-Classroom Leadership + Team Reach **also reaches 200 to 700 percent more students with excellent teachers** in charge of learning and propels the teaching skills of team members upward fast.

Leadership, but they typically have more planning and team collaboration time available, because they and their team members have an extra assistant to engage with and supervise students.

Team teachers are now called team reach teachers. They reach more students directly than the same number of teachers typically would. How? The new reach associate rotates through the team's classrooms, freeing teachers to work with other students served by the team. RAs, along with pre-existing teaching assistants, supervise and assist students during individual and small-group work, using the MCL's methods and materials. With the RA's help, the team reaches an extra class of students (or the same number of classes, but with one fewer teachers), without raising class sizes, and using the methods of the MCL who has achieved high-growth student learning. With proper scheduling, RAs also help assistants cover classrooms for teaching team planning during school hours.

This model allows students to have a greater number of meaningful adults in their lives; despite early concerns, Opportunity Culture K-12 and similar schools have found that even young students

enjoy the chance to connect with a handful of adults, not just one or two.²⁰ Having a few more adults increases the odds of each child truly “clicking” with at least one teacher and forming a positive, engaging relationship. How adults rotate through classrooms can vary, though many use this opportunity to specialize in content.²¹

The MCL’s core role, possible variations, accountability, and authority are the same as those using Multi-Classroom Leadership alone.

Comparing MCL Alone to MCL + Team Reach

Generally speaking, Multi-Classroom Leadership + Team Reach frees more funding for pay supplements, particularly helpful when a school cannot reallocate pre-existing instructional support positions. Total savings from staffing changes can be enough to fund higher pay for both MCLs and team teachers and paraprofessionals. This model also provides coverage for more team planning and collaboration time, if scheduled correctly. Finally, Team Reach requires fewer teachers, even though just as many adults are in classrooms—helpful in locations with acute shortages of qualified teachers.

Team Reach within Multi-Classroom Leadership also provides more of a **career path** for both paraprofessionals and teachers. “**Master team reach teachers**” are team reach teachers who achieve high-growth student learning and development consistently, and who also help an MCL lead a larger team and/or reach more students directly for a sustained period. Providers may have a career path within Team Reach and the master level to reward continued success and commitment to team roles.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

With either Multi-Classroom Leadership model, more **students** can have access to excellent teaching consistently, significantly upping their odds of making more than a year’s worth of growth annually, on average. Those who start behind or who have continuing disadvantages may especially benefit.

Teachers who excel with young children can **earn more** and help their colleagues and more children, as multi-classroom leaders or team reach teachers. All teachers and assistants can **learn more on the job** about how to help young children develop strong academic, social, emotional, physical and other skills. Coaching for teachers becomes routine, job-embedded, and financially sustainable, without pulling the best teachers out of the classroom.

Aspiring teachers who are earning bachelor’s degrees, associate degrees, and/or certification can learn while earning a salary in paid residencies, working as teachers or reach associates under a multi-classroom leader. Providing an affordable path to enter the field and receive high-quality training would be especially attractive for a field that consistently struggles with low pay.

QUICK EXAMPLE: OPPORTUNITY CULTURE PAY SUPPLEMENT FUNDING

This shows one example of how supplement funding could work in a leanly funded early childhood setting, using Multi-Classroom Leadership + Team Reach.

Before: Age cluster has four classrooms, each with a teacher (T) and a teaching assistant (TA). Teachers may be teaching one age of students or combined ages, depending on the school size. Teachers may meet together sometimes, but they generally work alone with their TAs.

T + TA

T + TA

T + TA

T + TA

After: Age cluster still has four classrooms, but now one teacher is the multi-classroom leader and one teacher vacancy has been swapped for an advanced paraprofessional called a reach associate (RA). RAs may not have the same qualifications as teachers, but they have experience as effective early childhood caregivers or educators. Teachers may be teaching one age of students or combined ages, depending on the school size. The MCL guides all instructional and developmental practices across the whole team.

MCL + TA

T + TA

T + TA

RA + TA

The swapping of one vacant teacher position for one reach associate saves about 20 to 50 percent of a teacher salary, depending on pay differentials.* This savings can then be paid as varying supplements to the MCL—and, depending on each program’s priorities, to other teachers, as well as paraprofessionals. For example, if the savings is a lean 20 percent, the MCL can still earn a 10 percent supplement and the other two teachers can earn a 4 percent supplement, with leftover for enhanced RA pay, too. If the savings is 50 percent, the MCL can earn a 20 percent supplement; the other two teachers can earn a 10 percent supplement, with leftover funds for enhanced RA and TA pay.

Programs with more funded positions that are vacant, such as specialists and coaches, can pay MCLs and other educators more by trading those roles and using the savings for higher pay. MCLs assume the duties of those coaches and specialists, but are fully leading their teams, not just coaching. This second funding method can be used to fund MCL supplements whether or not the program is using Team Reach.

See model descriptions above for more detail about roles and schedules.

**In K–12, the differential between teacher and teaching assistant pay is approximately 50 percent, on average. In all cases, each provider must set pay supplements according to actual financial conditions.*

Figure 4. Comparison of Two Multi-Classroom Leadership Options

	Multi-Classroom Leadership Only	Multi-Classroom Leadership + Team Reach
Impact on Student Learning		
Proven to increase learning growth significantly, on average	✓	✓
Time to Plan & Collaborate		
Time—encourages <i>consolidating</i> team time to plan & collaborate	✓	✓
Time—frees <i>new</i> team & individual time to plan & collaborate	No	✓
Pay Impact		
Pay—funds MCL supplement	✓	✓
Pay—funds team reach teacher & paraprofessional supplement	No	✓
Potential Funding Methods		
Trade in vacant non-classroom roles	✓	✓
Trade in vacant teaching roles	No	
Use Title I funds	✓	✓
Other school-level cost reallocation	✓	✓
District funds; grants; line items	No	No
Staff Impact		
Develops teachers on the job	✓	✓
Lets teachers lead while teaching	✓	✓
Matches accountability with students served by each adult	✓	✓
Addresses acute teacher shortages	No	✓
Provides extra assistants help with teaching	No	✓

Early childhood programs can help more students learn and develop further, while providing a supportive workplace and higher pay and career opportunities, within regular budgets. They can attract and keep a larger number of high-potential and already excellent educators.

The economy would blossom as more students achieve their full developmental potential, providing a highly capable workforce for organizations and economic self-sufficiency for more citizens.

NEXT STEPS

How can policymakers, education leaders, funders, businesses, and communities do their part to reach all children with excellent early childhood teaching? This vision brief is just a start. More exploration of policy and practical issues is warranted.

The first, crucial step is to support implementation of multi-classroom leadership in early childhood education programs, and then to support research about the models and conditions that work best.

Second, leaders and policymakers must ensure that high-quality school and role design match what research shows works. Given the research about Opportunity Culture multi-classroom leader-

ship in K–12, pre-K programs should follow the same principles and base their practices on emerging data. Schools must, at least:

- * select MCLs who have previously produced high-growth learning and social, emotional, and physical development among young students;
- * pay MCLs, and others, enough more than current base salaries to make new roles attractive;
- * pay supplements from regular, recurring school budgets, not from temporary grants or line items;
- * change schedules for additional planning, collaboration, and development;
- * hold MCLs accountable for the learning growth and development of the team’s students, so they are encouraged to help all teachers and staff excel with children;
- * keep MCL spans small, leading an average of five to six classrooms and ideally no more than eight; and
- * empower MCLs to choose and/or edit high-quality curricula, activities, and materials to ensure that they meet MCLs’ high bar for student growth.

Third, policymakers and education leaders should identify early childhood policies that may be barriers to scaling up successful Multi-Classroom Leadership.²² The policies needed may vary by type of provider—public vs. private—and the ages of children concerned. In K–12, many anticipated policy challenges were not barriers in practice; those that have been addressed through waivers, as long as a proven, excellent teacher is accountable for each student’s learning.

Fourth, if research indicates positive effects of Multi-Classroom Leadership in early childhood settings as in K–12, policymakers and philanthropists should pursue scale urgently. Small programs do not change prospects for all our nation’s children, and there is no excuse for allowing another generation to slip by.

Finally, as others have written, increased access to high-quality early childhood education is essential.²³ Combining increased public funding for access to early childhood education with Opportunity Culture Multi-Classroom Leadership could reach vastly more students with the early developmental advantages now reserved for the privileged.

CONCLUSION

Experience and research with alternative staffing models will help the field understand the best ways to ensure that every child receives excellent teaching and development in the pre-kindergarten years. Education leaders should embrace the potential that Opportunity Culture staffing models have to radically improve learning and development of students from all backgrounds, and to fundamentally improve economic and social outcomes for future generations.

THE SPECIAL CHALLENGE OF READING— AND THE IMPORTANCE OF PRE-K YEARS

As with many interventions,²⁴ researchers found that the positive effect of Multi-Classroom Leadership on K–12 math growth was greater than on reading growth. Early-childhood development of vocabulary and exposure to a wide range of contexts—directly through varied experiences and through early storytelling and read-aloud by adults—occur over long periods of time. That means students need excellent teaching and care, consistently, from the very first years. Providing more students with access to excellent teaching—including vocabulary development and a variety of positive, engaging direct experiences—in the early childhood years is one approach to enhancing students’ long-term literacy success.²⁵

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Notes

1. Here we use the term “teacher,” “educator” and “caregiver” to refer to all professionals providing educationally and developmentally focused care to children from birth until kindergarten.
2. Hansen, M., & Backes, B. (2018, January 25). New teaching model yields learning improvement for students in math [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2018/01/25/new-teaching-model-yields-learning-improvement-for-students-in-math/>
3. In addition to direct payment, some parents can pay for child care using vouchers from the federal Child Care and Development Fund; these subsidies are based on income and other family factors. For an overview, see: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/child-care-subsidies-ccdf-program-overview-policy-differences-across-states-territories-october-1-2016>
4. See <https://usa.childcareaware.org/advocacy-public-policy/resources/research/statefactsheets/> for one advocacy group’s annual presentation of statistics on early childhood care and preschool.
5. Hassel, B. C., & Hassel, E. A. (2011). *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://www.opportunityculture.org/images/stories/opportunity_at_the_top-public_impact.pdf. Note that the performance distribution among teachers using student growth as the measure is similar to the performance distribution of nearly all professions, regardless of the measure used for performance. See: 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.
6. Hassel & Hassel. (2011). *Opportunity at the top*.
7. Hassel & Hassel. (2011). *Opportunity at the top*.
8. For more analysis, see: Hassel & Hassel. (2011). *Opportunity at the top*.
9. Burkam, D. T., & Lee, V. E. (2002). *Inequality at the starting gate: social background differences in achievement as children begin school*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan; Halle, T., Forry, N., Hair, E., Perper, K., Wandner, L., Wessel, J., & Vick, J. (2009). *Disparities in early learning and development: Lessons from the early childhood longitudinal study—birth cohort (ECLS-B)*. Executive summary. Washington,

DC: Child Trends. Retrieved from <https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/2009-52DisparitiesELExecSumm.pdf>

10. For thorough analysis of the current status of pre-K education, see the work of Sara Mead, including: LiBetti, A., & Mead, S. (2019, March). *Leading by exemplar: Lessons from Head Start programs*. Sudbury, MA: Bellwether Education Partners. Retrieved from https://bellwethereducation.org/sites/default/files/Leading%20by%20Exemplar%20Lessons%20from%20Head%20Start%20Programs_Bellwether.pdf

11. In 2018, childcare workers earned median pay of \$22,290 or \$10.72 per hour and typically needed only high school diplomas. Most childcare positions received no formal training prior to work nor on the job. Preschool teachers earned a median of \$28,990 per year, or \$13.94 per hour. The typical preschool teacher had an associate degree and received no on-the-job training. See <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/Education-Training-and-Library/Preschool-teachers.htm>—data from April 13, 2018, retrieved February 19, 2019; and <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/personal-care-and-service/childcare-workers.htm>—data from June 11, 2018, retrieved February 19, 2019. Elementary teachers earned an average of \$56,900 and must have bachelor's degrees. See <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/kindergarten-and-elementary-school-teachers.htm>—data from April 13, 2018, retrieved on February 19, 2019. Elementary assistants earned an average of \$26,260. See <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/teacher-assistants.htm>—data from August 14, 2018, retrieved February 19, 2019. Policies about teacher qualifications vary by state and type of program. Staff roles and pay levels vary, especially among private early education providers, and may vary within provider programs for early childhood education classrooms versus child care classrooms for younger children.

12. Whitebook, M., McLean, C., Austin, L. J. E., & Edwards, B. (2018). *Early childhood workforce index—2018*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from <http://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/2018/06/Early-Childhood-Workforce-Index-2018.pdf>

13. Whitebook, M., & Sakai, L. (2003). Turnover begets turnover: An examination of job and occupational instability among child care center staff. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 18(3), 273–293. Retrieved from <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/2003/turnoverchildcare.pdf>

14. For example, see Power to the Profession, a national collaboration by NAEYC (the National Association for the Education of Young Children). Retrieved from <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/initiatives/profession>

15. For example, see: LiBetti, A., & Mead, S. (2019, March). *Leading by exemplar: Lessons from Head Start programs*. Sudbury, MA: Bellwether Education Partners. Retrieved from https://bellwethereducation.org/sites/default/files/Leading%20by%20Exemplar%20Lessons%20from%20Head%20Start%20Programs_Bellwether.pdf; Ounce of Prevention Fund, & Illinois Association of School Boards. (2017, March). *Early learning user's guide for Illinois School Boards*. Chicago, IL: Ounce of Prevention Fund. Retrieved from <https://www.theounce.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/IASB-Ounce-EL-Users-Guide-full.pdf>; Children's Defense Fund. (2018). *Investing in early childhood development and learning is key to the success of our children and our nation's long-term economic growth*. Washington, D.C.: Children's Defense Fund. Retrieved from <https://www.childrensdefense.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/early-childhood-short.pdf>; Garcia, J. L., Heckman, J. J., Leaf, D. E., & Prados, M. J. (2016). *The life-cycle benefits of an influential early childhood program*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. Retrieved from <https://www.nber.org/papers/w22993.pdf>; National Head Start Association. (2017, June). *The Head Start advantage: A research compendium*. National Head Start Association. Retrieved from https://www.nhsa.org/files/resources/hsa_compendium.pdf

16. Many publicly funded programs use Teaching Strategies' GOLD; strong programs will use multiple indicators of learning, classroom practice, and other data, and compare them to spot meaningful trends. See: Teaching Strategies. (n.d.) Gold. Retrieved from <https://teachingstrategies.com/solutions/assess/gold/>

17. Very few K–12 Opportunity Culture schools have raised class sizes and typically only when even much smaller classes (before trying Multi-Classroom Leadership) did not improve student learning.

18. See OpportunityCulture.org for more detail; <http://opportunityculture.org>

19. In the rest of this brief, we will use the term “academic learning” to describe early literacy, mathematics, science and similar subject content; and “whole-child development” to include social, emotional, fine and gross motor skills, and other areas of development a setting may include. Artistic, musical, and other development would also typically be included in an early childhood curriculum, even though schools may not select MCLs for exceptional strength in them.

20. Public Impact & Clayton Christensen Institute. (2018). *Innovative staffing to personalize learning: How new teaching roles and digital tools help students succeed*. Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact; and Lexington, MA: Christensen Institute. Retrieved from <http://publicimpact.com/innovative-staffing-to-personalize-learning>

21. Alone, such specialization has shown little benefit in early grades, but in combination with Multi-Classroom Leadership, produced a positive effect on learning growth. See: Hansen, M., & Backes, B. (2018, January 25). New teaching model yields learning improvement for students in math [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2018/01/25/new-teaching-model-yields-learning-improvement-for-students-in-math/>; Fryer Jr., R. G. (2016, April). *The “pupil” factory: Specialization and the production of human capital in schools*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. Retrieved from <https://www.nber.org/papers/w22205.pdf>

22. For a discussion of policy issues in K–12 Multi-Classroom Leadership, many of which apply in the early childhood education setting, too, see: Public Impact. (2014–2019). *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

23. For example, see LiBetti, A., & Mead, S. (2019, March). *Leading by exemplar: Lessons from Head Start programs*. Sudbury, MA: Bellwether Education Partners. Retrieved from https://bellwethereducation.org/sites/default/files/Leading%20by%20Exemplar%20Lessons%20from%20Head%20Start%20Programs_Bellwether.pdf; Ounce of Prevention Fund, & Illinois Association of School Boards. (2017, March). *Early learning user's guide for Illinois School Boards*. Chicago, IL: Ounce of Prevention Fund. Retrieved from <https://www.theounce.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/IASB-Ounce-EL-Users-Guide-full.pdf>; Children's Defense Fund. (2018). *Investing in early childhood development and learning is key to the success of our children and our nation's long-term economic growth*. Washington, D.C.: Children's Defense Fund. Retrieved from <https://www.childrensdefense.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/early-childhood-short.pdf>; Garcia, J. L., Heckman, J. J., Leaf, D. E., & Prados, M. J. (2016). *The life-cycle benefits of an influential early childhood program*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. Retrieved from <https://www.nber.org/papers/w22993.pdf>; National Head Start Association. (2017, June). *The Head Start advantage: A research compendium*. National Head Start Association. Retrieved from https://www.nhsa.org/files/resources/hsa_compendium.pdf

24. Rich, M. (2013, May 29). In raising scores, 1 2 3 is easier than A B C. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/30/education/reading-gains-lag-improvements-in-math.html>

25. See Public Impact's work on full-year, full-pay, within-budget teacher residencies in Opportunity Culture schools and also resources on instructional excellence, including the science of reading; <https://www.opportunityculture.org/teacher-and-principal-residencies/> and <http://www.opportunityculture.org/instructional-leadership-and-excellence/>

