



News Release

December 18, 2019

Contact: Sharon Kebschull Barrett, Sharon.Barrett@publicimpact.com; 919.590.4154

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

12 Memphis Charter Schools Begin Using Opportunity Culture to Extend the Reach of Excellent Teachers

MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE— With support from the [Memphis Education Fund](#), 12 Memphis schools from several charter organizations will implement [Opportunity Culture](#) models in 2020–21 in an effort to improve student achievement by extending the reach of excellent teachers and their teams to more students, for more pay, within schools' recurring budgets.

[Compass Community Schools](#), [Frayser Community Schools](#), [Leadership Preparatory](#), [Memphis Scholars](#) and [STAR Academy](#) will all participate in the cohort. The schools serve student populations that are largely economically disadvantaged and students of color.

"Memphis students deserve to have great teachers, and we believe great teachers deserve our fullest support," said Terence Patterson, CEO of the Memphis Education Fund. "The Opportunity Culture initiative inside these 12 public schools will enable great teachers to expand their impact, support more students, and, importantly, get paid more for their critical work, all for the benefit of students."

[Multi-Classroom Leadership](#) (detailed below) is the foundation of the national [Opportunity Culture initiative](#), founded by Public Impact and now in about 30 sites in 10 states. The Memphis Education Fund, with a mission to "create better classrooms for all kids," is supporting Opportunity Culture due to its strong research base, with the goals of attracting and retaining excellent teachers and improving student achievement.

In 2018, [researchers](#) at the Brookings Institution and American Institutes for Research released a study showing the effect Opportunity Culture 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, in six of the seven statistical models, from 66th to 72nd percentile in reading. Nearly three-fourths of the schools in the AIR-Brookings study were Title I.

In an Opportunity Culture, 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. The charter teams are meeting jointly with Public Impact to plan and implement a cost-effective transition to the new model. All will use Multi-Classroom Leadership, though each charter school or charter management organization will create its own career ladder and design.

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. School teams redesign schedules to provide additional school-day time for MCLs' teams to plan and collaborate.

Accountable for the results of all students in the team, MCLs earn substantially higher supplements (averaging more than 20 percent of teacher pay in other Opportunity Culture sites nationwide), within the regular school budget. The school design teams reallocate school budgets to fund pay supplements for MCLs and other roles permanently, in contrast to temporary grant-funded programs.

The participating Memphis schools and CMOs are:

Four schools from Compass Community Schools, serving 768 students: Compass-Binghampton; Compass-Frayser; Compass-Midtown; and Compass-Orange Mound. “Compass is excited to work with Opportunity Culture to explore different staffing models that will allow our participating schools to extend the reach of excellent teachers to positively impact student learning,” said Kristi Baird, executive director. “Our goals are to increase teacher effectiveness and student learning as well as give Compass the opportunity to recruit and retain top teacher talent in Memphis.”

Three schools from Frayser Community Schools, serving 1,126 students: Martin Luther King Jr. College Preparatory High School; Humes Middle School; and Westside Middle School. “Frayser Community Schools is seeking to provide outstanding instruction for our students through an innovative approach to supporting amazing educators,” said Brett Lawson, chief of strategy and head of schools. “This program will allow us to compensate exemplary teachers who choose to stay in the classroom and impact students directly.”

Three schools from Memphis Scholars, serving 993 students: Memphis Scholars Florida-Kansas Elementary School; Memphis Scholars Caldwell-Guthrie Elementary School; and Memphis Scholars Middle School (Raleigh-Egypt). “We want great teachers to have a great impact on a greater amount of students and teachers,” said James Dennis, executive director. “And we believe that the best educators should be compensated like the professionals they are.”

Leadership Prep is a single-site, K–4 charter school serving 197 students, with plans to expand to K–8. “We are excited to create a school that allows excellent teachers to touch as many students as possible,” said Valissia R. Allen, founder and executive director. “Our work with Opportunity Culture creates a path to building a school that helps strong teachers grow students and colleagues.”

STAR Academy Charter School is a single-site, K–6 school serving 313 students. “As we reimagine learning, we will continue to prioritize teacher equity and support. In short, scholarship should yield dollarship,” said Ed Stephens III, chief operating officer. “Exceptional educators should receive compensation that's commensurate with their performance. We believe Opportunity Culture's leadership pipeline creates upward mobility for our high-performing teachers and compensations that complement their efforts.”

###

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 and principals. 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](#). Hear directly from educators who have worked in Opportunity Culture schools in [columns](#) published on national and state news sites.

For more information, please visit www.OpportunityCulture.org. To arrange an interview with Public Impact, contact Sharon Keschull Barrett at Sharon.Barrett@publicimpact.com; 919.590.4154.