



## News Release

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### **Arkansas, Texas, Virginia, and North Carolina School Systems Join National Opportunity Culture Initiative**

CHAPEL Hill, N.C.—Eleven school districts and a charter management organization in Texas, North Carolina, Virginia, and Arkansas are the latest to join the national Opportunity Culture [initiative](#), led by Public Impact, which extends the reach of excellent teachers and their teams to more students, for more pay, within recurring budgets. Some sites also include yearlong, paid residencies for aspiring teachers, allowing them to learn on the job in a teaching team led by an excellent teacher. Fifty-five districts and charter school organizations in 10 states now use Opportunity Culture models in their schools, increasing student learning growth and access to small-group tutoring, and creating career paths for teachers and paraprofessionals that let them advance without having to leave the classroom.

#### **Texas:**

- Houston Independent School District (ISD), the eighth-largest district in the U.S., intends to begin by implementing Opportunity Culture models in 18 schools in 2022–23. The district’s Opportunity Culture teams will include yearlong, paid teacher residents in partnership with the University of Houston and the University of Houston-Downtown.
- Fort Bend ISD intends to implement Opportunity Culture models in 16 schools over the next two years. The Houston-area district’s Opportunity Culture teams will include yearlong, paid teacher residents in partnership with the University of Houston.
- Spring ISD intends to implement Opportunity Culture models in 16 schools over the next two years. The Houston-area district’s Opportunity Culture teams will include yearlong, paid teacher residents in partnership with Sam Houston State University.
- Uplift Education, a charter management organization, intends to implement at four elementary, two middle, and two high schools in Tarrant County (the Fort Worth area), Texas, in 2022–23. Uplift’s Opportunity Culture teams will include yearlong, paid teacher residents in partnership with Tarleton State University and Relay Graduate School of Education.

#### **North Carolina:**

Nash County Public Schools, Thomasville City School District, and Mount Airy City Schools were three of the four districts to receive North Carolina’s Advanced Teaching Roles grants in 2022. The grants support the districts in planning the transition to Opportunity Culture roles, while educator pay supplements will be funded with permanent school funding.

- Nash County Public Schools intends to implement Opportunity Culture models in 23 schools over the next three years.

- Thomasville City School District intends to implement Opportunity Culture models in its four schools, beginning in 2023–24.
- Mount Airy City Schools intends to implement Opportunity Culture models in its four schools.

#### Virginia:

- Winchester Public Schools intends to implement Opportunity Culture models in all of the district’s seven schools in 2022–23. The district won a federal grant from the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program to fund the transition to Opportunity Culture roles.
- Chesapeake Public Schools intends to implement Opportunity Culture models in 14 schools over the next three years.

#### Arkansas:

- Cutter Morning Star Public Schools intends to implement Opportunity Culture models in one elementary school in 2022–23, part of the Arkansas Department of Education’s statewide initiative to reach all students with excellent, personalized teaching.
- Lee County School District intends to implement Opportunity Culture models in its elementary school, serving grades K–6, and in its high school, serving grades 7–12, in 2022–23, part of the Arkansas Department of Education’s statewide initiative to reach all students with excellent, personalized teaching.

Opportunity Culture schools and roles are designed to maximize both student learning growth and educators’ paid career opportunities. In Opportunity Culture districts, each participating school forms a design and implementation team of teachers and administrators that determines how to use Opportunity Culture roles to reach more of their students with excellent teaching. The design teams reallocate school budgets to permanently fund substantial pay supplements for those in Opportunity Culture roles and for teacher resident salaries, in contrast to temporary grant-funded programs.

The foundational role is that of a [multi-classroom leader](#), or MCL—a teacher with a track record of high-growth student learning who leads a small teaching team for substantially higher pay. The MCL continues to teach students directly in various ways for a portion of each day; leads lesson planning, data analysis, and instructional changes; coaches team teachers, and co-teaches and models for them.

An MCL’s team may include team reach teachers, who—critically in a time of [teacher shortages](#)—directly teach more students, typically without raising instructional group sizes, for more pay. This avoids filling a portion of teacher vacancies with long-term substitutes. Advanced team reach teachers may take on some leadership responsibilities to assist the MCLs, especially those leading larger teams to reach more students.

Team reach teachers get support from an instructional paraprofessional called a reach associate, and from pre-existing teaching assistants, if available. Reach associates are a key part of MCL teams. They play a variety of roles, but the core is providing instructional support, with strong MCL guidance and coaching, through [tutoring small groups](#) and supporting students on skills practice and other assignments.

And teams may include yearlong, paid teacher residents, embedded in existing reach associate roles. They learn on the job, with *heavy* guidance and feedback from MCLs, just like new teachers on the team. Paid residencies provide a way to enter the teaching workforce for candidates who need to earn income while obtaining degrees and certification.

Third-party studies have found that, on average, teachers who joined Opportunity Culture multi-classroom leaders’ teams moved from producing 50<sup>th</sup> percentile student learning growth to 77<sup>th</sup> percentile student learning growth.

A [2018 study](#) looked at implementation in three early Opportunity Culture districts, while a [2021 study](#) looked at a Texas district’s outcomes during the 2020–21 pandemic year.

In the Texas study, the researchers highlighted how positive the results were for English language learners and students considered socioeconomically at risk—particularly notable during a pandemic. (Read more [here](#).)

Data gathered by Public Impact also shows that by the fourth year of implementation, as MCLs reach more students, Opportunity Culture schools' odds of high growth are more than 50 percent higher than schools without MCLs. And in interviews and surveys, educators report strong satisfaction with the support these roles provide.

“The newest sites show how Opportunity Culture models can work anywhere, from very large, urban districts to very small, rural ones, and in both traditional and charter schools,” said Stephanie Dean, Public Impact’s senior vice president of strategic policy advising.

“It’s exciting to see how many districts continue to embrace the possibilities the models offer to reach more educators with career paths that allow them to advance without leaving the classroom, and to reach more students with great teaching and small-group tutoring,” said Alison Harris Welcher; she and Shonaka Ellison are Public Impact’s senior vice presidents leading Opportunity Culture implementation.

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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 the Opportunity Culture initiative 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 regional news sites.

For more information, please visit [www.OpportunityCulture.org](https://www.OpportunityCulture.org). To arrange an interview with Public Impact, contact Sharon Kebschull Barrett at [sharon.barrett@publicimpact.com](mailto:sharon.barrett@publicimpact.com).