OPPORTUNITY CULTURE® INSIGHTS

DATA INSIGHTS 2026

Excellent **Student** Results. Excellent **Educator** Careers.

The Opportunity Culture® initiative is the nation's largest and most successful school staffing and instructional design effort, with high educator approval. At each school using Opportunity Culture design, a team of educators and administrators changes roles, schedules, budgets, and curricula-based instruction to reach all students with excellent teaching and educators with excellent careers. Dozens of variations allow school or system design teams to fit their specific needs.

Public Impact® committed to four bottom-line measures two decades ago: **reaching** large number of students, measuring **results** primarily in student learning growth, creating strong professional **relationships** and satisfaction for educators, and ensuring financial **replicability** of approaches (our "4Rs").

See *The State of the Opportunity Culture Initiative: Summer 2026* for a summary of recent 4R outcomes, including student learning growth and the 2026 educator survey; this brief extends the data insights there.

For 13 years, Public Impact has gathered data on the Opportunity Culture staffing and instructional designs schools use, analyzed the **relationship between design decisions and student learning growth**, and monitored the initiative's effect on **schools' fidelity to design standards** that are previously correlated with student learning and educator satisfaction. We strive to spread practices that work—through certification design standards, how-to modules for educators and system leaders in an online portal, and publications, podcasts, and videos.

In this brief, we share:

- **2025–26 data on schools' fidelity to design standards** and growing use of **high-quality instructional materials**; and
- **Insights on the relationship between 2024–25 design and student learning** (learning results released in 2025–26).

We base our annual insights on an ever-growing number of data points; these drew on over 50,000 school design and teacher survey data points.

OPPORTUNITY CULTURE CERTIFICATION STANDARDS

Staffing and instructional certification standards, based on elements previously correlated with learning growth, guide districts and schools toward sustained high-growth student learning and educator satisfaction, within budget. The elements are precise and based on data, but schools show dozens of variations within these.

Certification levels—from provisional to Level 3—convey strength of implementation in key areas, such as selectivity of Opportunity Culture roles, student access to instruction led by Opportunity Culture teams, incorporation of small-group tutoring into team schedules, financial sustainability of roles and pay, and other areas.

Instructional and Staffing Design Fidelity Surge: Summary of New 2025–26 Data

Fresh design data shared by over 450 schools using the Opportunity Culture (OC®) certification standards across a dozen states shows that in 2025–26, **fidelity to elements associated with higher rates of schoolwide learning growth surged.**

- **Fidelity to staffing design elements that have long been correlated with learning skyrocketed in just two years** to 93%—up from 67% right before the introduction of certification standards, increased portal access for educators, and new "how to" design modules for staffing and instructional design.
- **Tutoring led by Opportunity Culture educators, provided during the school day to all students, surged by hundreds of minutes annually *per student*** in just one year (tutoring = adult-led, data-driven instruction in small groups).
  - Their average tutoring minutes per OC student are now **more than double the U.S. average—and exceed the average of "high-dosage" tutoring sites studied nationally**.

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- **Elementary**: Students gained **284 extra minutes** in OC elementary classrooms, a 31% increase.
- **Secondary**: Students gained **306 extra minutes** in OC secondary classrooms, a 37% increase.
- **Students furthest behind** gained ***441 extra minutes*** (in all school levels combined), a 44% increase.

In addition, districts' use of HQIM rose. Elementary usage exceeded other U.S. schools in math and reading:

- **94%** of districts using OC design had adopted EdReports.org-approved HQIM in at least one subject at varying grade levels.
- **75%** of OC districts are using HQIM curricula in elementary reading, and 69% in math, compared to 64% and 65% in reading and math in large U.S. districts. Districts using OC design range from the very smallest to top 20 in size, with average size lower than this national dataset; HQIM adoption rates may be lower in a more comparable sample of districts.
- Nearly all district/system design teams now include a leader from both **academics** and **human resources**, creating departmental alignment that allows instructional team leaders (the Multi-Classroom Leader role) to lead curriculum and instructional changes seamlessly.

Watch for more from us on HQIM usage data and correlations with student learning growth. We anticipate adding more instructional elements with strong evidence of student learning growth and scalability, and guiding schools and districts to put these into practice.

Fidelity to other school design elements correlated with higher-growth learning also rose, including:

- **Financial sustainability leap—98.6%**: The percentage of schools funding all roles and pay within recurring budgets rose by 16 percentage points nationally.
- **Teacher-leader selectivity—98.3%**: In a large increase, nearly all teachers chosen for the critical Multi-Classroom Leader® (MCL™) role had prior high-growth student learning results, which follows longtime guidance from Public Impact.
- **Highest-ever MCL™ reach—74%:** MCL roles reached an average of 74% of students in atleast one core subject (typically reading or math) per school, nearly a 20 percentage-point leap since the year before Public Impact added certification standards and portal-based design guidance. Both third-party research and schoolwide learning growth data indicate that reaching more students per school and per subject has an enormous positive effect on learning.
- **Student reach rises 27%**: The number of students served rose by approximately 70,000 students to 325,000 in 2025–26 alone—and will surpass a cumulative 1.7 million student years in 2026–27.

Overall trends in fidelity included these:

- Many design elements saw an increase in the percentage of schools implementing at higher certification levels.
- No element had a significant decline in the percentage of schools implementing to meet certification standards.
- For four elements, the percentage of schools implementing basic standards rose while declining at higher levels: MCL pay, MCL time, principal communication, and accountability. Schools can take action to reach higher levels.

These findings, along with prior data about surges in student learning growth (see Figure 1, page 3) and outstanding satisfaction among educators—99 percent of teacher-leaders and over 90% of all staff in new roles want OC designs to continue—provide hope in an otherwise bleak national K–12 landscape.

Analysis of 2024–25 Designs' Relationship with Student Learning

KEY INSIGHTS

- Certifying in *all elements of the standards* doubled the rate of high-growth learning schoolwide.
- Certifying in *each individual element* increased rates of schoolwide high growth learning, as well—for all elements.
- Reaching all students with MCL teams had an especially large positive effect on schoolwide high-growth learning (see Table 1).
- Allowing teachers to reach more students directly—rather than filling persistent vacancies—had a large positive effect; schools should take note, as fewer schools use this design element even though it increases pay and in-school tutoring (see Table 1).
- Following *precise certification design standards predicted positive results at year 6+, but following general design principles did not*. Title I schools in year 6+ of OC implementation that *did* certify were more than twice as likely to make high-growth learning schoolwide as schools without OC classrooms, *on average*.
  - Without standards, implementation likely degrades as staff changes or other pressures dilute design knowledge and understanding.

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Other models of "strategic staffing" or "advanced roles" do not show the same results as design that meets the Opportunity Culture data-driven standards set for certification. For example, in North Carolina, the rate of *schoolwide high growth* in Title I schools with Certified Opportunity Culture School® status—49% showed schoolwide high growth—is far higher than in other N.C. Title I schools—21%—or others using state grant-funded "advanced teaching roles" but not OC design, at 29%. In addition, schoolwide *low* growth is far more prevalent in generic staffing models: 24 percent of grant-funded "ATR" schools that did not use OC design had low growth, compared with only 15% of schools using OC design.

These insights consider the correlations between certification design standards and student learning growth from the analysis of 2024–25 school and system data, conducted during winter and spring 2026 after all learning growth scores were released for the prior year. See below for methodology.

A full listing of details from our analysis of design elements and schoolwide learning growth (Table 2, page 4) provides insights that all education leaders can use; Opportunity Culture educators will find it most helpful in combination with OC design tools and a review of the detailed certification standards in the OC portal. Summaries of design elements here should are not a substitute for following the complete design standards, which are edited annually, when needed, with new data.

FIGURE 1. Schoolwide Learning Growth

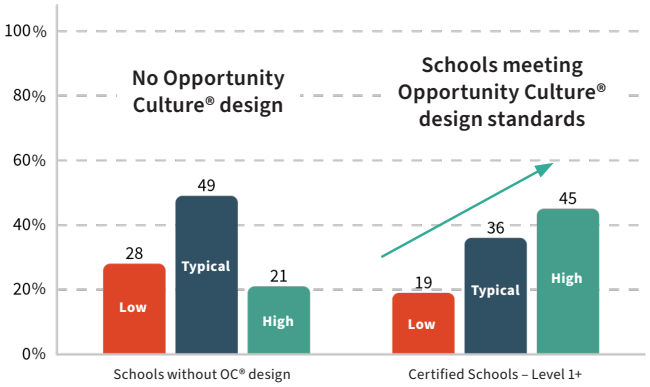

Figure 1 shows Title I schools nationally using OC design, 2024–25. Schools using OC design have higher poverty rates than other Title I schools, on average. "High" growth is top 25% growth in each school's state.

TABLE 1: Teachers Reaching More Students

Factor	School Growth Observed
Teachers Reaching More Students Directly	**~2X:** Certified schools (both Title I and other) with teachers who earned more for teaching more students directly were over twice as likely to make high growth schoolwide as schools without OC models. Many teams added paraprofessionals to avoid larger student: adult ratios. 96% with Team Reach roles had MCL roles; schoolwide growth was higher with both types of roles.
Schools Trading Classroom Vacancies	**+7:** Among all schools, certified or not, trading classroom vacancies, rather than filling them all or hiring substitutes, boosted schoolwide high-growth learning ~7 percentage points per trade, on average, above schools with less than 1 FTE classroom trade. Schools may pay more and add tutors with saved funds.

**A prior publication stated that OC paraprofessional pay standards were not correlated with learning. That was incorrect, and we apologize for the inaccurate statement.*

METHODOLOGY

2025–26 data comes from 12 states and over 460 schools; this does not include schools not yet certified, because those schools do not submit design data. Later analyses of learning growth for the same year will include all schools with learning growth data, even when design data are not available.

The 2024–25 data came from 15 states and 580 implementing schools, representing more than 200,000 students directly affected, who were among more than 275,000 students served nationally that year (data were not available for all schools, as not all states report student learning growth and not all schools report design data). Uncertified schools were included if we were able to collect learning growth data. We sorted schools with design data into three certification levels by whether they met all design standards at that level or higher. We also analyzed individual elements.

The Public Impact technical design team uses data analysis to edit materials and design standards for schools, to serve students and educators. New standards and guidance matching the data are released in early fall.

Comparisons are to schools without OC classrooms in the same state, unless otherwise indicated. Patterns described for all schools were the same when comparing among Title I schools. References to "small N size" mean 60 or fewer schools on the item discussed. All but one element (Team Reach™) had data from over 230 schools; most elements had data from more than 365 schools. We conducted a supplementary Team Reach analysis using publicly available teacher:student ratio data.

Note that schoolwide growth comparisons can understate positive effects at the team/teacher level when schools have low reach of the treatment. Comparisons may be inaccurate when "certifiable" schools do not report information about staffing and instructional design. In 2024–25 data, the great majority of "certifiable" schools chose to certify, making comparisons between schools with and without OC certification more accurate than if this were not true.

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TABLE 2: Insights from Analysis of 2024–25 School Design Certification Elements and Schoolwide Learning Growth

Element	Data Insights
Certification—Overall	• Schools were over twice as likely to have schoolwide high growth when meeting *all* standards (Levels 1+) in elements listed in the column at left vs. schools without OC® design and uncertified schools that began using OC design before certification standards were introduced.
Certification Per Element	• Schools meeting standards for *each individual certification element* in the column at left were significantly more likely to have schoolwide high growth—42%–57% on various elements—compared with schools with no OC design (25%). This was also true for Title I schools meeting the standards for each element versus those without OC design, at 36%–50% vs. 21%.
All OC teams have MCL™ roles	• MCL teams with Team Reach™ roles boosted schoolwide learning growth more than MCL roles alone. • Team Reach roles not yet on MCL teams also boosted learning.
MCL Role Reach	• MCL roles must meet the job definition and lead all instructional content and methods teamwide. • Reaching 50%–75% of students with MCL roles approximately doubled schoolwide high-growth learning. • Standalone MCL roles (without Team Reach roles) reaching fewer than half of students did not tip *schools* to high growth, but research indicates students served on their *teams* still benefitted. • Reaching 100% of students with MCL roles in reading or math tripled schoolwide high growth. Schools reaching all students in math or reading typically reached over half of students in the other subject as well. Adding Team Reach roles further boosted schoolwide high-growth rates.
Team Reach Standards	• Team Reach roles in which teachers taught more students directly were independently associated with higher rates of schoolwide high-growth learning. • We recommend using Team Reach roles *only if they include* pay increases. • See Table 2: Teachers Reaching More Students for precise data.
Tutoring Culture	• OC tutoring standards apply to small-group instruction. Small groups and their lessons are based on student learning data, and MCL educators are responsible for organizing lessons and aligning with the curriculum. • Schools providing at least 60 minutes weekly for *all* students and 90 minutes for students furthest behind had higher rates of schoolwide high growth. • 90 minutes for all students and 120 for students furthest behind doubled schoolwide high-growth learning. • 30 minutes in secondary and 60 in elementary did *not* change schoolwide growth (small N size).
MCL Selectivity	• Schools that selected teachers who previously produced high-growth learning for 100% of their MCL roles were over 75% more likely to have schoolwide high growth compared with schools not using OC roles.
MTRT™ Selectivity *MTRT= Model Team Reach Teacher™ role, previously called Master Team Reach Teacher™ role*	• Schools selecting teachers with prior high-growth learning for 100% of MTRT roles were more than twice as likely to have schoolwide high growth. • MTRT educators typically reach more students directly *and* coach a teacher on an MCL team. • Nearly all teams with an MTRT included two teachers with prior high-growth learning (MCL and MTRT).
Financial Sustainability	• Financial sustainability—funding pay supplements through recurring budgets—is required at all implementation levels and was associated with a 72% increase in the rate of schoolwide high-growth learning.
Planning/ Leadership Time	• Planning and leadership time standards for MCL roles range from 5 hours to about 20 hours weekly, depending on team size, during school hours. This time is for instructional planning, instructional leadership, data-driven differentiation planning, and team development. • Schools providing about one day's worth of core leadership time per week—plus additional lesson observation and feedback time per teacher—more than doubled high-growth learning. • Too few schools with OC design provided less time than this to draw further conclusions (small N size).
Principal Communication	• This standard counts the frequency of principal communications about the nature and purpose of OC design. • Schools whose principals provided at least seven clear communications about OC design before certifying were more than twice as likely to have schoolwide high growth. • Too few principals communicated less than this to draw further conclusions (small N size).
Accountability Matching Job	• This standard assesses whether roles are held accountable for specific students' learning. • Schools with written, formal accountability matching roles were more than twice as likely to have schoolwide high growth.

Pay Supplements	• Pay association with learning growth is complex; higher pay can increase educator satisfaction but decrease MCL reach if all funding sources are not used to reach more students.
	• These pay cut points all doubled the rate of schoolwide high-growth learning:
	  • Paying MCL roles supplements that were *at least* 18% (25% for teams of 6+) of average pay
	  • Paying MTRT roles *at least* 6% more, TRT roles at least 3% more and RA roles at least 5% more
	• High-level pay supplements for all four major OC roles had small N sizes, limiting conclusions.

Note: Elements with standards that are universal—the OC pledge and OC portal access—cannot be correlated with learning.	