

UNDERSTANDING THE OPPORTUNITY CULTURE® PRINCIPLES

BY PUBLIC IMPACT®

Schools and districts implementing Opportunity Culture® models can use this two-page guide as a **quick reference** to interpret the five **Opportunity Culture® principles**. The principles help schools ensure that roles extending the reach of excellent teachers and principals to far more students, and to their colleagues, are sustainable and effective. Learn more in [Introduction To School Staffing Design With Results: Unlocking the 5 Opportunity Culture® Design Principles](#).

The principles for teachers and for principals are very similar; guidance for each type follows.

OPPORTUNITY CULTURE® PRINCIPLES:

For Teachers Extending Their Reach

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

1. Reach more students with excellent teachers and their teams
2. Pay teachers more for extending their reach
3. Fund pay within regular budgets
4. Provide protected in-school time and clarity about how to use it for planning, collaboration, and development
5. Match authority and accountability to each person’s responsibilities

OPPORTUNITY CULTURE® PRINCIPLES:

For Principals Extending Their Reach in the Multi-School Leader™ Role

Teams of principals and district/network leaders must choose and tailor models to:

1. Reach more students with excellent principals and their teams
2. Pay principals more for extending their reach
3. Fund pay within regular budgets
4. Provide protected in-school time and clarity about how to use it for planning, collaboration, and development—within and across the schools each leader leads
5. Match authority and accountability to each person’s responsibilities

To guarantee excellence for students, consistently and long-term, adhere to each principle. Ignore any of the five principles, and your effort will fall short—for students, teachers, and principals.

These principles were developed in response to decades of failed efforts to create high-quality advanced roles for teachers and principals, and refined based on early Opportunity Culture® implementation. Research now shows the efficacy of the models and the Multi-Classroom Leader™ (MCL™) role—teaching team leaders with proven prior high learning growth with students. The research showed that teachers who were on average at the 50th percentile in student learning gains, who then joined MCL™ teams, produced student growth matching or approaching that of excellent teachers, on average. Teams had a median of five teachers in addition to the team leader. Higher MCL™ pay supplements, provided through reallocations of school budgets, were associated with better outcomes for team teachers.¹

The principles support one another. Roles that allow educators to extend their reach—taking on far more responsibility—should pay more. Higher pay must be funded with regular budgets, not temporary sources, so that advanced roles last. Roles that require taking on responsibility for more students or teachers must include more time for planning, team collaboration, and on-the-job development. And greater responsibility should be formalized, so that evaluations match each advanced role, and colleagues know who has authority to lead.

Don’t take shortcuts. The experiences of schools using Opportunity Culture® models have shown that following each and every principle, in letter and spirit, is the only way to achieve excellence consistently and sustainably. Delaying or compromising any principle reduces student learning, makes teachers’ jobs harder, and creates problems that must be fixed later.

1. 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/>.

UNDERSTANDING THE OPPORTUNITY CULTURE® PRINCIPLES

Principle #1: Reach more students and schools with excellent teachers, principals, and their teams

For teachers:

- * Excellent teachers reach more students directly or by leading teams *and* continue teaching, part or full time.
- * “Reach” means being formally accountable for the outcomes of extra students whom a teacher reaches via direct instruction (typically 33–50% more students) or who are taught by the teachers (s)he leads— typically no more than 2–8 teachers, plus assistants.

For principals:

- * A principal in the Multi-School Leader™ role spends time in every school and leads all principals to achieve excellence schoolwide.
- * “Reach” means being formally accountable for the student outcomes and teacher effectiveness in all schools being led. A principal in the Multi-School Leader™ role should lead no more than 8 principals.

Typical: Districts and schools aim for 80–100 percent of students to have highly effective teachers of record in the four core subjects, at least. Teacher and principal roles are designed, then added, to meet this goal fast.

Principle #2: Pay teachers and principals more for extending their reach

- * Schools pay a *lot* more to *excellent* educators reaching more students.
- * Schools pay somewhat more to *all* teachers who extend their reach.

Typical: Schools pay fixed-dollar supplements equating to 10–50 percent of average pay in roles reserved for top educators, with more pay as the number of students reached increases. Some districts pay smaller supplements to team teachers, rewarding the teamwork and collaboration that improve student learning.

Principle #3: Fund pay within regular budgets

- * Supplements for Opportunity Culture® roles in schools are funded by recurring, *school*-level budgets, not grants or temporary budget line items—and not by district line items, which are easily cut later.
- * Supplements are funded by trading positions or other costs for more pay for remaining positions, according to the pay plan (see principle #2). In most cases this can happen through natural attrition.
- * Pay is in fixed-dollar supplements (or is paid on a separate schedule for advanced roles), not percentage add-ons to base pay, to create budget certainty and equal opportunity for educators at all levels of experience.

Typical: All supplements are within school budgets and typically paid as fixed-dollar supplements. States generally allow schools trading positions to direct all funds toward pay increases (not so in North Carolina).

Principle #4: Provide protected in-school time and clarity about how to use it for planning, collaboration, & development

- * Teachers responsible for more students, and principals responsible for more schools, have more time to plan.
- * Team leaders and team members (whether teachers or principals) have commonly scheduled time at several points weekly during school hours to plan, collaborate, observe, and provide feedback; paraprofessional support and careful scheduling allow this.
- * Schools have clear roles, defined in part by district job descriptions, and processes for using time well.
- * Scheduled teaching, planning, and collaboration time is strongly protected from interruptions and interfering duties.

Typical: Most schools using Opportunity Culture® models redo schedules so that teachers on the same subject or grade team have several extra hours weekly for individual and team co-planning and other collaboration, with paraprofessional coverage where needed.

Principle #5: Match authority and accountability to each person’s responsibilities

For teachers:

- * Teachers are the formally accountable teachers of record in the district and state, matched to the students and subjects they reach through direct teaching or as a team leader.
- * A person’s level and span of formal authority matches his/her role, responsibilities, and accountability.

For principals:

- * Principals in the Multi-School Leader™ role are formally accountable for all of their schools’ student outcomes and teacher success and satisfaction, among other school-level measures of success.

Typical: Districts adapt district accountability system to match needs of roles in the short term; scaling up will require aligning state systems with team-based, teacher-led, extended-reach models.