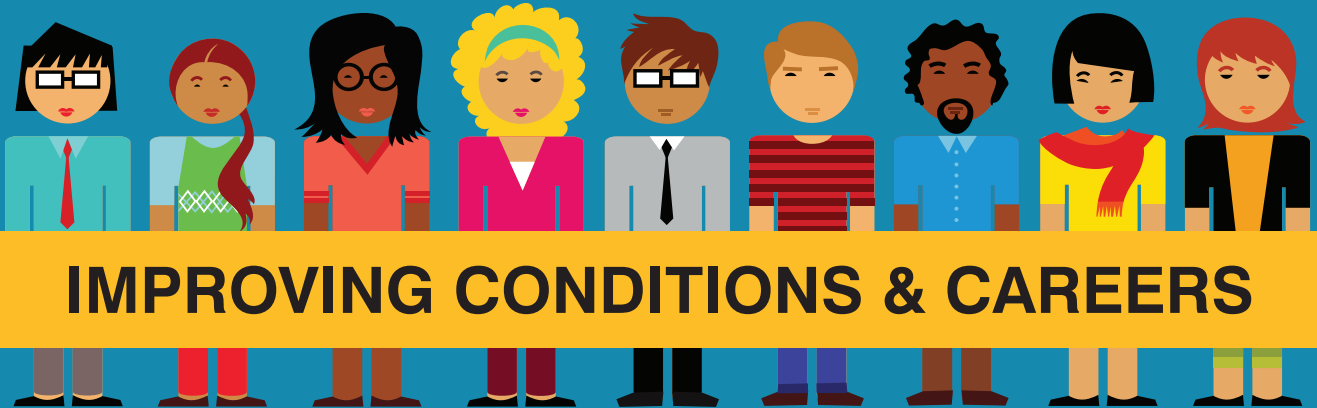




DIGITAL LEARNING NOW!

DLN
SMART
SERIES



HOW BLENDED LEARNING CAN IMPROVE THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Supported by:
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May 2013



DIGITAL LEARNING NOW! SMART SERIES

This is the seventh paper in a series of interactive papers that provides specific guidance regarding the adoption of Common Core State Standards and the shift to personal digital learning.

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According to the 2013 [MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Challenges for School Leadership](#), teacher satisfaction has declined to the lowest level in 25 years.³ This is not surprising, given the fact that today's teachers face mounting pressures, fiscal constraints, increased populations of high-need students and an ever-rising bar of expectations.

As student roles evolve within increasingly blended learning environments that are changing to meet the demands of new college and career-ready standards and the next generation of assessments, there is an unprecedented national opportunity to reimagine and reinvigorate the teaching profession.

This paper, which serves to inform educators, leaders, educational stakeholders, policymakers and influencers, presents a vision of blended learning that offers better teaching conditions and enables better career opportunities. In addition to confronting misconceptions about blended learning, the authors advocate for thoughtful policies that will allow teachers to create personalized learning experiences and facilitate the deeper learning necessary to master higher standards.

IMPROVING TEACHING CONDITIONS

In the section on improved teaching conditions, the authors assert that blended learning environments can create more and better opportunities for teacher collaboration, enable differentiated staffing and boost meaningful professional development opportunities. When blended learning tears down the walls of a traditional classroom, teachers have more opportunities to collaborate with one another and to put their individual talents to work in differentiated staffing models. Teaching in online and blended environments necessitates the development of new skillsets. Professional learning to develop these skills will be improved in a blended environment where the principles of individualized, competency-based progressions can be applied to teacher professional development. With sophisticated data systems, teachers have a flood of expanded and enhanced student data at their fingertips — improving efficiency and cutting down on time spent with routine tasks and record-keeping. Time saved from the thoughtful implementation of technology can be reinvested working with students, collaborating with other teachers and developing the new roles discussed in the next section.

IMPROVING CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Drawing on work from Public Impact’s Opportunity Culture initiative, the authors explain how shifts to online and blended learning create an expanded set of career options for teachers. By leveraging technology, schools can extend the reach of great teachers to impact more learners, while simultaneously improving the teachers’ experiences as empowered professionals. Specifically, the paper explores three ways in which digital learning creates these opportunities:

- The implementation of blended learning to “extend the reach” of in-person excellent teachers to more students and to teaching peers;
- The ability to teach remotely, allowing great teachers to reach students anywhere and to have more flexible careers; and
- The opportunity for “boundless instruction” and expanded impact through online sharing of teacher-created content.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Building on the Digital Learning Now! 10 Elements of High Quality Digital Learning, the paper ends with a discussion of policy enablers for blended learning. These include funding, evaluation, pay/career options, operations, timing and scalability, and performance incentives. Addressing these areas is necessary to eliminate existing policy barriers and increase the odds that blended-learning innovations will result in better teaching and learning.

CONCLUSION

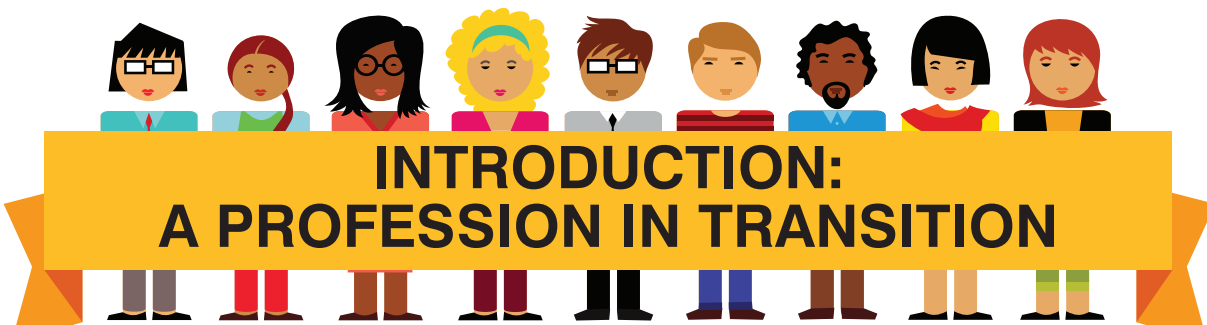
With calls for deeper learning opportunities, personalized learning, meaningful assessments and engaging new technologies, it is an exciting time to be a student. Teachers also stand to benefit from well-designed blended learning that provides unprecedented career advancement opportunities, time for collaboration and development, teacher-leadership roles, opportunities to earn higher pay, and job flexibility. Core to this is a belief that technology does not replace a teacher, but rather it empowers teachers and enhances their work. Altogether, these changes offer much promise for improving teachers’ working conditions and true professionalization of teaching careers.



WHAT IS BLENDED LEARNING?

According to the [Innosight Institute](#) (recently changed to the Clayton Christensen Institute for Disruptive Innovation), blended learning is “a formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online delivery of content and instruction with some element of student control over time, place, path and/or pace.”¹ In the [Blended Learning Implementation Guide, Digital Learning Now!](#) adds to this definition a statement of intent, noting that “blended learning is a shift to online delivery for a portion of the day to make students, teachers and schools more productive, both academically and financially.”²

IMPROVING CONDITIONS & CAREERS: How Blended Learning Can Improve The Teaching Profession



For the past 29 years, MetLife has surveyed teachers on a range of issues in education with the intent of giving educators a voice with leaders and policymakers. [The 2013 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Challenges for School Leadership](#) focuses on the responsibilities and challenges that educators and leaders face as they transition to Common Core standards and the next generation of instructional leadership. Key findings from this year's survey reveal some important revelations about the current state of the teaching profession:⁴

- “Teacher satisfaction has declined 23 percentage points since 2008, from 62% to 39% very satisfied, including five percentage points since last year, to the lowest level in 25 years.”
- “Less satisfied teachers were more likely to be located in schools that had declines in professional development (21% vs. 14%) and in time for collaboration with other teachers (29% vs. 16%) in the last 12 months.”

- “Innovative teachers are defining ‘hybrid teaching roles’ that keep them part-time in the classroom combined with other roles of service and leadership in education — ‘teacherpreneurs’ in the phrase coined by one group of teacher leaders, in their vision of the future of their profession. These opportunities are envisioned as new pathways for leadership and as ways to strengthen the profession, job satisfaction, and retention of effective teachers.”

Beginning with the current demands on the teaching profession and moving through the evolution that is unfolding, this paper makes the case that the shift to blended learning offers the potential to improve teaching conditions and improve career opportunities, while simultaneously confronting current misconceptions and advocating for thoughtful policies.

After an overview of the current demands on the teaching profession and shift to personalized, blended learning, the first section ends with a

review of expanded and redefined teaching roles. The next section focuses on improvements in teaching conditions — including peer collaboration, differentiated staffing and improved professional development opportunities. Next, the paper moves into the potential impacts of blended learning on career opportunities and pay by reviewing enhanced access to a variety of roles and career options and the opportunity for teachers to earn more, within existing budgets.

Building on the Digital Learning Now! (DLN) framework, the final section includes a discussion of policy implications and recommendations to create the policy space for realizing the potential improvements to teaching conditions and careers as more and more schools transition to personalized, blended learning.

“In the context of additional challenges for leading schools toward greater improvement, the continuing decline in teacher morale identifies itself as an urgent priority. During a time when expectations and standards are increasing for effective teaching and learning, teacher morale is yet another declining resource, one that is associated with schools with diminished budgets and other resources, fewer students meeting standards, and fewer colleagues highly rated for how well they are doing their job. Teacher leadership emerges as a potential resource for translating big challenges into opportunities, served by hybrid roles for teachers as leaders and as a method for addressing professional growth and satisfaction.” Source: MetLife 2013 Survey

CURRENT DEMANDS ON THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Teaching has always been a challenging profession, but the challenges have only grown over the last several years. Teachers who make it over the “five year hump” face the mounting pressure of a maturing standards movement, now two decades old, that has been reinvigorated by the implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Race to the Top state and district grants, and the next generation of student assessments. The CCSS are also introducing new [shifts](#) in instruction and what teachers are expected to cover over a year. The bar for teachers continues to rise to match the rising expectations for students. Student poverty and classroom diversity have increased. School budgets have shrunk. And teachers face new evaluation systems introduced through various state reforms and Race to the Top.

Attracting and retaining the best and brightest to become educators remains a problem in the face of the increasingly attractive pull of other professions that offer better opportunities for advancement, compensation and career diversity. Finding and keeping excellent teachers is difficult in any circumstance, but even more so in contexts where great teaching is needed most. The MetLife survey determined that “more principals find it challenging to maintain an adequate supply of effective teachers in urban schools (60% vs. 43% in suburban schools and 44% in rural schools) and in schools with two-thirds or more low-income students (58% vs. 37% in schools with one-third or fewer).”⁵

Innovations in teaching and learning, supported by thoughtful and purposeful technology implementation, can ease the burden on teachers caught in the middle of a seismic wave of educational change. The confluence of higher expectations and the potential of learning innovations to help achieve them creates an opportunity set for:

- personalizing learning for students;
- extending the reach of great teachers to more students, for more pay, within budget;
- creating more productive school models that work better for students and teachers;
- increasing the attractiveness of the teaching profession to high-caliber candidates, and retaining them; and
- improving teacher morale, a key factor of overall school climate and culture.

In order to create an overall climate that is supportive of broader shifts to CCSS and new models of teaching and learning, teachers must feel empowered, involved and supported. Teachers will rise up to meet the challenges they face if they recognize the potential of these shifts to dramatically improve their conditions and careers.

SHIFT TO PERSONALIZED LEARNING

There’s a groundswell of interest in innovations that help teachers and students meet higher expectations. The bridge between where each student starts and the land of higher learning standards is personalized learning. The National Education Technology Plan explains that personalized learning “is paced to student needs, tailored to learning preferences, and customized to the specific interests of different learners.”⁶

Blended learning offers the potential to bring personalized learning to scale.

According to the [Innosight Institute](#), (recently changed to the Clayton Christensen Institute for Disruptive Innovation), blended learning is “a formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online delivery of content and instruction with some element of student control over time, place, path and/or pace.”⁷ In the [Blended Learning Implementation Guide](#), DLN adds to this definition a statement of intent, noting that “blended learning is a shift to online delivery for a portion of the day to make students, teachers and schools more productive, both academically and financially.”⁸

A shift to blended learning can benefit both teachers and students. Each group benefits from the ability to personalize learning, increase student engagement, access better student data, customize content, support diverse learning modalities and vary delivery methods. School networks such as Rocketship Education, Carpe Diem and KIPP Empower have achieved strong student results by blending digital learning with a focus on excellent teaching.

As schools and districts explore the potential of blended learning to improve student outcomes, meet economic challenges, and better prepare students for the next generation of college and career readiness standards and assessments, stakeholders across the system would be wise to invest as much energy in exploring the evolution in the nature of teaching as they are in exploring the evolution in the nature of learning.

Without complementary shifts in the conditions and careers of teachers, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to bring personalized, blended learning to scale in order to reach every student in every classroom.

REDEFINED TEACHING ROLES

Decreased device costs, increased digital content and overall access to “anytime, anywhere” connectivity is redefining roles for all information-based professionals — doctors, lawyers, accountants and teachers.

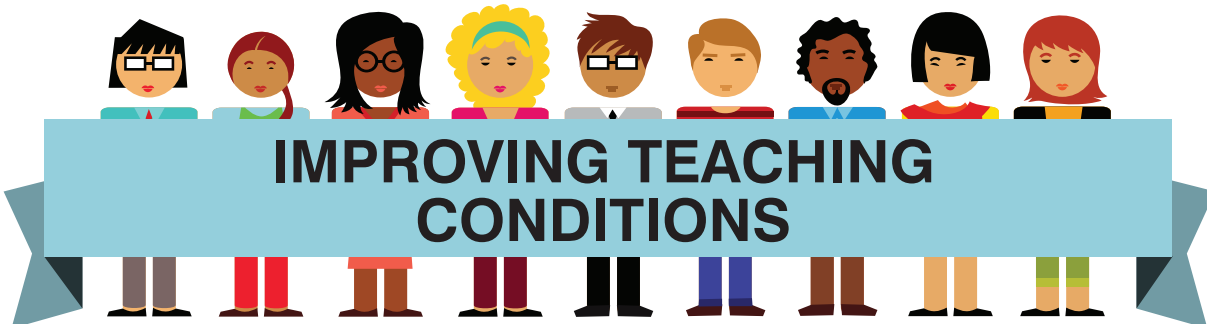
The [Alliance for Excellent Education](#) recognizes the changing role for teachers in the [Online Learning Imperative](#), asserting that “as both the knowledge and technological means of accessing it explode in the twenty-first century, the role of the teacher also changes. ... No longer are teachers the sole repository of content in classrooms; in the world of Wikis, open-source learning and online and virtual courses teachers also serve as guides, facilitators, and collaborators in students’ interactive educational experience.”⁹

The [Innosight Institute](#) notes that online and blended learning will allow teachers to be more creative and to focus on outputs rather than on regulating inputs.¹⁰ In their advice to districts regarding the Race to the Top-District competition, focused on personalized learning, Innosight advised, “Thinking through potential team-teaching models, new and differentiated teaching roles, models that extend the impact of great teachers, and innovative leadership that can spur personalized learning is imperative. For example, in new schooling models, some teachers may be content experts, others mentors or learning coaches, and still others non-academic mentors.”¹¹

Truly understanding the potential of blended learning leads to the realization that teachers become even more important in a personalized learning environment.¹² This realization, that teaching matters now more than ever, undergirds the [“Opportunity Culture” work of Public Impact](#), which explores how schools can extend the reach of excellent teachers using job redesign and technology and, in doing so, lead to better conditions and careers for teachers.

MYTHS & MISCONCEPTIONS

Like a big ship, the American education system is difficult to turn. Even with the best intentions, movement in bold new directions can be blocked by the prevalence of innovation-stifling myths and misconceptions. Often, these myths are rooted in the fear of the unknown, and with adequate exposure to new ideas in education, teachers and leaders are becoming increasingly comfortable with the evolution happening in their schools and districts. When it comes to blended learning and the teaching profession, there is a pervasive set of myths to combat — such as the belief that blended learning is a route to replacing teachers with technology. The flaw in this logic is that personalization from teachers and personalization from technology are not mutually exclusive. For example, teachers can use the information gleaned from advanced tech tools to further enhance what they are already doing to differentiate instruction, save time to plan instruction and develop collaboratively with peers, and focus their time with individual students on what each student most needs. Technology doesn’t remove teachers from the equation. In fact, [Public Impact’s Opportunity Culture](#) initiative shows that technology can help extend the reach of great teachers and create new roles and career advancement opportunities for educators in the digital age. As Bryan and Emily Hassel note, digital learning can enable all teachers to personalize instruction, which many teachers find difficult to achieve with whole classrooms of students who have a wide array of needs.¹³



12 WAYS TECHNOLOGY IMPACTS TEACHING

- 1 Content delivery
- 2 Information abundance (vetting, sorting)
- 3 Assessment
- 4 Personalization
- 5 Motivation/engagement
- 6 Insights from data
- 7 New student roles
- 8 Collaboration
- 9 Extended time
- 10 Scheduling & grouping
- 11 Mobile and social learning
- 12 Community/communication

In a recent Education Week Teacher Spotlight, Josh Woodward shared his personal journey from a traditional classroom to a blended one.¹⁴ He explained, “After some deep soul-searching, I came to the realization that, despite such success-affirming indicators, including glowing performance evaluations and a comfortable paycheck, at the end of the day I did not view teaching as a true profession. I despised feeling like, despite my best efforts, I was having little impact in my school beyond the four walls of my classroom.” Josh’s story embodies the struggle many educators face with the current demands on the teaching profession. Like Josh, a growing number of teachers are seeing blended learning as “a path to a sustainable career for teachers who are looking for a change of pace from a traditional school environment to one that values autonomy, mastery, and purpose.”

Blended learning can improve teacher collaboration, enable differentiated staffing and boost meaningful professional development opportunities.

TEACHING IS A TEAM SPORT

In “Education Technology Success Stories” from the Brookings Institution, the authors conclude with a call for abandoning what they call the “egg crate approach to education.”¹⁵ This approach divides classrooms like egg crates divide eggs — with teachers each occupying their own cell and rarely interacting with one another. Blended learning offers an opportunity to change this.

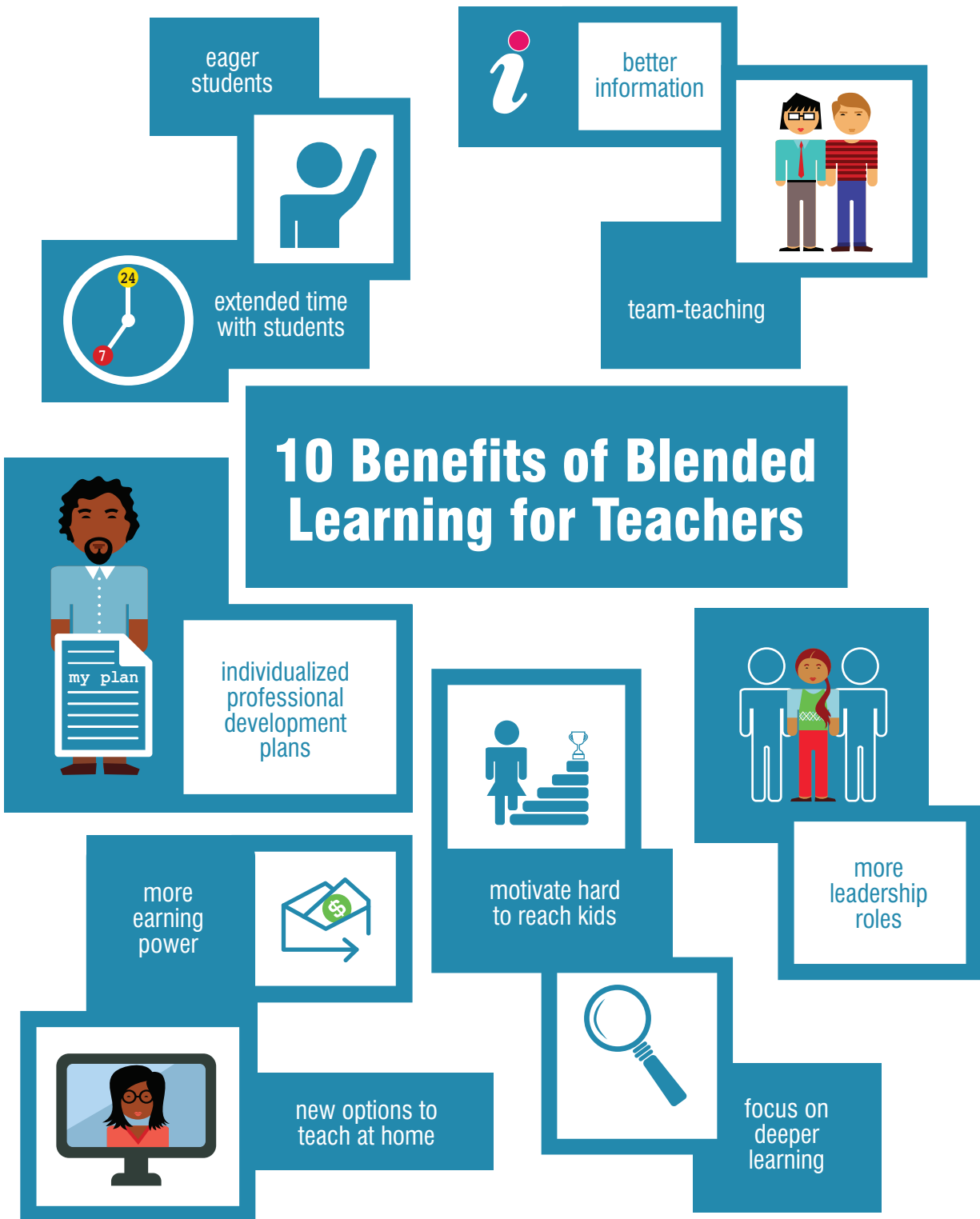
Blended learning has the potential to tear down the traditional four walls of a classroom, extending learning beyond the standard content from textbooks and the limited resources of the individual classroom teacher. Instead, teachers in blended environments can benefit from reduced isolation and more support as they form professional learning communities both online and on-site. Coupling blended learning with shifts to competency-based education, teachers can stop viewing students as “my kids” and instead regard the outcomes of “our kids” as the joint responsibility of all of the adults in the learning ecosystem.

Shifts to blended learning environments can also yield efficiencies in saved time and resources that can ultimately be reinvested to positively impact teachers. For example, employing adaptive learning technologies and smart recommendation engines will reduce teacher time needed to determine and maintain differentiated instruction. Putting technology to work to create and structure expanded student records, like those described in the [Data Backpacks and Learner Profiles](#) report, will lead to more and better data about student progress. As schools move to more collaborative and blended learning environments, thoughtful attention to developing systems for managing the flood of data will be crucial to ensure highly effective team teaching.

DIFFERENTIATED STAFFING

Digital and blended learning can also improve teaching by helping schools do what most other professional organizations do: differentiate roles in order to make the best use of each professional’s time and create professional development machines while delivering the best service. We return to this topic more fully in our discussion below of “Enhanced Access to a Variety of Roles and Career Advancement Opportunities.” Differentiated roles can help improve teaching conditions by enabling teachers to use their strengths while developing toward the highest standard on the team — enhancing students’ learning immediately — and by providing the time and student data for differentiated teams to collaborate. Even without digital tools, many teachers would likely be better off teaching in differentiated teams, and a blended learning environment can change everything for differentiated teams.

Digital learning helps by freeing up role-differentiated teachers to allow them time to collaborate and learn from each other and by summarizing student progress and instructional needs for the larger number of students served by teams. Students can spend age-appropriate portions of the school day learning digitally, perhaps supervised by paraprofessionals. During that time, teachers can play a range of roles: leading teacher teams, working with specific groups of students, analyzing student data, planning what’s next for students and so on — collaboratively. The freed time and summarized student data afforded by digital learning makes role differentiation much more feasible and likely to lead to teacher improvement than in environments where teachers spend almost all their time alone with whole classes of students.



IMPROVED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Digital learning can help teachers develop professionally, because it frees time and provides summarized student data for teaching teams to plan instruction collaboratively. This allows good teachers to learn from great ones by working together daily to produce student-learning outcomes that meet the best team teachers' standards of excellence. Without digital learning, schools have struggled to find time for daily, job-embedded professional development, which research has shown to improve student learning.¹⁹

Personalized Learning for Teachers

The world's leading organizations have used blended learning strategies to support human resource development for two decades. The military has intelligently blended social learning, online learning and on-the-job learning from experts to engineer rapid pathways to mastery.²⁰ In 2011, 77 percent of companies reported increasing or planning to increase the amount of online training.²¹

TEACHERS LEARNING IN NETWORKED COMMUNITIES

Tom Carroll, President of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) stated in a recent webinar on teaching in the digital age that "school is no longer the learning place; the open learning ecosystem is now the learning place."¹⁷ This means teachers are now "learning navigators" — a reality that necessitates a supportive professional network. NCTAF's [Teachers Learning in Networked Communities \(TLINC\)](#) initiative posits that the groundwork for ongoing professional learning must form during pre-service teacher training. Working with seven university partners across the country, TLINC leverages technology to better prepare teachers by facilitating "the induction of new teachers into strong professional communities with access to resources and just-in-time support."¹⁸

As schools consider blended and personalized learning options for students, they should do the same for teachers. A dynamic, engaging blended learning model should replace the old "sit-and-get" staff-wide model of professional development. Key ingredients of an improved system would include an expert teacher in charge of each teacher's development; team-based learning activities; and just-in-time online, customizable resources — all built upon a personalized, professional learning plan. Every teacher should have an individual learning plan with access to online resources that address three questions: How do I improve my teaching tomorrow? What do I need to learn to develop as a teacher? How do I reach my career goals? A team and a team leader or mentor should support short-term learning goals. Medium-term (2-3 year) goals should be part of a competency-based progression where teachers have the opportunity to demonstrate skill and the ability to boost achievement.

[Summit Public Schools](#), a charter management organization operating four schools in the Bay Area, has a smart teacher development and compensation system that can serve as a useful model. Their competency-based system is focused on what teachers need to know and be able to do to accelerate student achievement, and it is closely linked to an extensive professional development program. Every teacher has a Personalized Educator plan detailing areas for growth linked to 40 days of professional development. As Summit transitions to blended schools, teacher professional growth remains a priority.

New Skillsets

Teaching in online and blended environments will demand new skillsets such as curating and evaluating content, analyzing data, managing tech-rich learning environments and more. The increased professional learning demands on teachers will be softened by new forms of collaborative professional learning, as explained above. Schools that are making the shift to the CCSS and new forms of delivery have the enormous asset of on-site and online access to top talent within the existing teacher workforce. State and local leaders can and should take a cue from

states like Tennessee, which trained more than 700 teacher “navigators” to act as professional resources in the transition to CCSS, and create mechanisms to capture the energy and expertise of teachers who are already succeeding in blended classrooms to help develop the new skillsets of the remaining teachers in the workforce.²²

After an entire K-12 transition to blended learning last summer, [Rocky Mount Prep](#), east of Raleigh, North Carolina, offers a great case study.²³ The transition to a blended elementary model was relatively smooth, and they are already seeing strong academic gains. However, transitioning the high school to a rotation blend has been more of a challenge. The transition was a challenge for students used to a traditional schedule and even more challenging for teachers no longer responsible for primary content delivery.²⁴

The fact that teaching roles and the skillsets needed to succeed in blended models are so different suggests that preparation and development could become more model-centric. Teaching in a project-based blend (e.g., [New Tech Network](#), [Edvisions](#), [Big Picture](#)) is very different from teaching in a STEM blend (e.g., [Metro](#), [DSST](#)) or a self-paced dropout recovery academy (e.g., [AdvancePath](#), [Ombudsman](#)). While there are model differences, we can generally say that next-generation models will require less delivery and more analysis; less whole-group work and more small-group instruction; less isolation and more collaboration.

THE NEXT GENERATION OF TEACHER PREPARATION

A growing number of universities are offering programs that specifically prepare teachers to teach online and integrate technology with their pedagogy. For example, the [University of Wisconsin-Madison’s](#) Professional Certificate in Online Teaching offers a foundation of key principles and best practices in online teaching. The Online Teaching certificate program at the [University of Colorado Denver](#) is “designed for K-12, college and university educators interested in creating and teaching online and blended courses, or using Web-based/Web 2.0 components to enhance face-to-face instruction”; the program was designed to meet the professional standards for quality online courses from [iNACOL](#) and [IBSTPI](#) and has been accredited by NCATE. Some programs, including [UC San Diego’s](#) Teaching Online Certificate and the [University of Illinois’](#) Master Online Teacher certificate, also require their students to complete an online teaching practicum. [Western Governors University](#) offers a Master of Education in Learning and Technology, and is the first exclusively online university to receive NCATE accreditation, while [Washington State University](#) offers a free online non-credit course designed for instructors with limited online experience.

[NCATE’s standards](#) recommend that educator preparation programs collaborate with schools and districts to better prepare teachers and provide them with strong clinical experiences. The standards also suggest minimum admissions criteria for student teachers and recommend that surveys of students from pre-service teachers’ clinical practices, as well as observational data of their performance, be considered when assessing teachers’ readiness. Finally, the standards “insist that preparation be judged by outcomes and impact on P-12 student learning — Results matter; ‘effort’ is not enough.”

Because of the proliferation of teaching degrees that offer online education specialties, it’s important to choose a program that’s accredited by a credible source. The U.S. Department of Education maintains a database of accredited programs: <http://www.ope.ed.gov/accreditation/>.

As teachers set out to gain proficiency with new skillsets, they now have available to them a growing field of remote video-based teacher assessment and professional development options that include a number of companies and projects that make good use of smart phones, web-based technology, and data analysis. Among these are [BloomBoard](#), which offers teachers and administrators a free and flexible system for teacher observation and assessment that enables personalized feedback and offers professional development videos. Bloomboard's free services are supported by premium services it offers, such as third-party professional development content, professional development hosting software, and data visualization tools. "Talent," a product from [Torsch](#) is an online video repository and social network for teachers and schools. The Talent smartphone app simplifies video recording and uploading, while Talent's private social network system allows teachers to share videos with students, teachers and supervisors. Talent allows teachers to provide differentiated instruction to students, and to give and receive feedback from colleagues. [Edthema](#) offers video-based teacher observation, assessment, and coaching. Teachers record themselves while teaching and upload the videos to Edthema where other users can watch and give feedback. Peers can review each other's teaching as part of a networked improvement community, or expert coaches can view videos and provide teachers with coaching remotely. [Smarter Cookie](#) allows teachers and administrators to upload videos and share them with selected users, who can provide feedback linked to specific points in the video. Teachers can review feedback, which is sorted into "Glow" (praise) and "Grow" (suggestions).

COLORADO PILOTS PERSONALIZED LEARNING FOR TEACHERS

The executive director of teacher effectiveness at the Colorado Department of Education said, "BloomBoard offers a free, simple, scalable way for Colorado districts to manage our educator evaluation pilot. . . . Our districts have been asking for technology such as this and we are excited to provide the BloomBoard platform for [them]."

Bloomboard provides school districts and states with free user-friendly tools to collect effectiveness data and recommend personalized training for each teacher, based on his or her particular professional development needs. They customize tools so that districts can use their existing instructional frameworks, and also enable districts to empower their teachers to own their own development by allocating purchasing credits in the BloomBoard professional development marketplace to each educator.

Observers use an iPad or laptop to script notes in an observation and then tag those notes to relevant instructional standards. This same tagging functionality is available for documents, such as lesson plans and student work, as well as video observations. Observers can then choose to rate each instructional standard based on the evidence collected.

Bloomboard supports the use of video so that educators can leverage the same types of video feedback that other performance-based professions have been using for years. And, once an observer has provided feedback to a teacher based on video observation, he or she can ask the teacher to share that video with the library for other teachers to learn from. This functionality allows districts to quickly create impressive libraries of great practice that are completely aligned with their instructional standards in real time.



As the “School Model Snapshots” exhibit on page 14 demonstrates, there are many ways in which shifts to online and blended learning can facilitate improvements in career opportunities for teachers. These opportunities, discussed more fully over the next several pages, leverage technology to extend the reach of great teachers to impact more learners, enabling teachers to earn more and advance in their careers without leaving teaching.

ENHANCED ACCESS TO A VARIETY OF ROLES AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Far from “replacing a teacher with a laptop,” digital and blended learning can create a host of opportunities for teachers who want career advancement while continuing to teach.

Here, we focus on three ways in which digital learning is opening up new opportunities for teachers. First, the use of blended learning within brick and mortar schools can “extend the reach” of in-person excellent teachers both to more students and to teaching peers in collaborative or teacher-led teams.

Second, the ability to teach remotely makes possible a whole range of new employment opportunities for teachers, transforming teaching into a more flexible career like other professions.

Finally, the digital age opens up opportunities for teachers to affect students and other teachers “boundlessly,” expanding their impact outside of the classroom by creating video and smart software for students and other teachers based on their insights and practices.²⁵

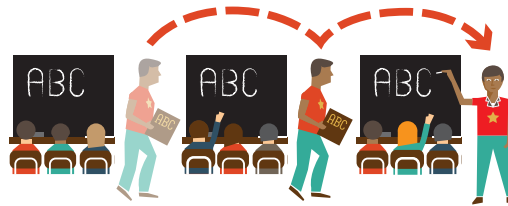
Through its Opportunity Culture initiative, Public Impact published a set of school models using elements from each of these categories. Each model lets great teachers reach more students, for more pay, within budget, while enabling all teachers to develop and giving great teachers more authority and credit for helping more students. All of the models allow paying all teachers more, while freeing time for great teachers to help good teachers produce excellent outcomes, too.

OPPORTUNITY CULTURE SCHOOL MODEL SNAPSHOTS

School Model Snapshots



CLASS-SIZE INCREASES
Excellent teachers teach larger classes, by choice and within limits, in some cases shifting students from other teachers' classrooms.



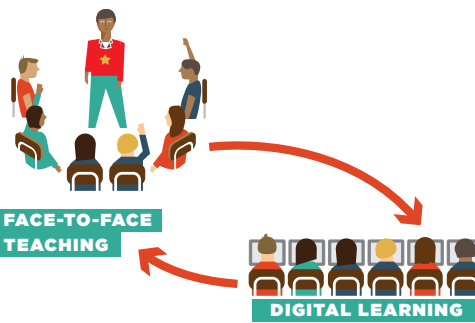
ELEMENTARY SPECIALIZATION

A school's best teachers teach one of two core subject pairs: math/science or language arts/social studies, while teammates take care of students the rest of the time and cover administrative work. This allows specialized teachers to instruct multiple classrooms of students and gain more time for planning and collaboration.



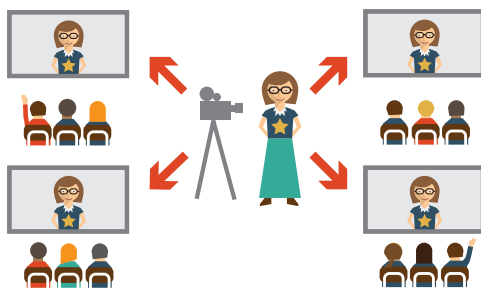
MULTI-CLASSROOM LEADERSHIP

Teachers with leadership skills both teach and lead teams or "pods" of other teachers in order to share strategies and best practices for classroom success. Responsible for achieving high growth for all classrooms in the pod, the teacher-leader determines how students spend time and tailors teachers' roles according to their strengths.



TIME-TECHNOLOGY SWAPS

Students spend part of the day engaged in self-paced digital learning. Digital instruction replaces enough of top teachers' time that they can teach more students, using face-to-face teaching time for higher-order learning and personalized follow-up. Teachers can use part of their freed time for planning and collaboration.



REMOTE TEACHING

Schools without enough excellent teachers can enlist accountable remote teachers down the street or across the nation. Remote teachers use technology to provide live, but not in-person, instruction, while on-site teammates manage administrative duties and develop the whole child.

FIVE REACH EXTENSION PRINCIPLES

Explicitly and rigorously aim to:

1. **Reach more children** successfully with excellent teachers who produce high-growth learning and more.
2. **Pay excellent teachers far more** for reaching more students.
3. **Achieve permanent financial sustainability**, after transition, by funding new models within regular budgets.
4. **Include roles that develop other teachers**, by working with excellent peers to produce excellent outcomes immediately.
5. **Identify adults who are accountable** for each student's outcomes, and clarify what people, technology, and other resources they are empowered to choose and manage.

Extending In-Person Teachers' Reach

Blended learning makes it possible for schools to employ “Time-Technology Swaps” — using digital learning to free a portion of a teacher’s time to reach more students (working with one group of students while another group works digitally) and to work with peers as mentors, coaches or group leaders.

Through the swaps, teachers gain time to reach more students, plan lessons and collaborate with other teachers. Students learn basic knowledge and skills online; the best versions of digital instruction are much more personalized than undifferentiated whole-group instruction, reflecting the mastery of each student. This allows students who are ahead to pursue advanced instruction, while students who are struggling in general or in a specific unit can repeat a lesson and complete additional practice until they understand.

Teachers can reduce the whole-group portions of their instruction that leave some students behind and other students bored. Instead, in-person teachers — who remain fully accountable for their students’ outcomes — can use the data from digital instruction to follow up with individual or small-group instruction and work on higher-order thinking skills.

Obtaining these benefits for both teachers and students does not mean placing students in front of a screen for hours on end: Students can spend as little as an hour a day on digital learning, with adults supervising them and stepping in when needed to offer personalized support.

Rotation models. Many schools use such swaps, such as California-based Rocketship Education, whose students spend about 25 percent of their time in a learning lab using self-paced digital instruction and live tutoring monitored by paraprofessionals. By freeing teachers’ time, Rocketship enables three teachers to reach 100 students in rotating 25-student classes, rather than the 75 students they would reach without this setup. The best math teacher of the three teaches math to all 100 students. Rocketship is currently revisiting this approach to make even

better use of teacher and digital time, but this early iteration of their staffing model has already achieved very strong results with students, with cities across the country now wooing Rocketship to expand in their jurisdictions.²⁶

KIPP Empower, a K-8 charter school in Los Angeles, also rotates students through computer-based adaptive-learning programs, small teacher-led groups and individualized work with teachers. This has allowed KIPP to increase the number of students reached by each teacher from 20 to 28, but work on core subjects with just 14 or 15 students at a time in the small groups.²⁷

Flex models. Another set of schools, such as Summit Public Schools and Touchstone Merit Prep, use what is called a “flex” model in which students work digitally for a more significant part of the day. With students spending more time on self-paced learning, fewer teachers are needed to educate a given number of students, enabling the schools to extend learning opportunities and pay teachers more.

Leadership models. The digital portion of instruction also lets the in-person teachers work in teams, by providing daily time for teams to plan instruction collaboratively and by summarizing student learning data for the larger numbers of students served by the team. When a team is led by an excellent teacher who has leadership skills — what we call Multi-Classroom Leadership — the rest of the team can learn from that teacher’s planning and instructional skills. A team can reach “pods” consisting of many more students than the excellent teacher could teach alone. When paraprofessionals are included on these teams, all teachers can earn more, and the teacher-leaders can earn substantially more.

The 2013 MetLife teacher survey underscores the fact that many teachers today yearn to play a key part in the leadership of their schools. The survey revealed that while most teachers do not want to become principals, more than half are interested in hybrid roles combining teaching with other responsibilities.²⁸ Teachers at Touchstone Education’s Merit Prep, for

example, proceed on a career path from associate teacher (novice) to master teacher. At the master teacher level, teachers can earn up to \$100,000 a year. Master teachers take responsibility for all students in a content area, teach the most difficult parts of the curriculum, and train and develop other teachers. As a result, all students have access to the methods and materials of a master teacher in every core content area.

Blended learning helps make this kind of hands-on leadership possible in two ways. First, teachers can use the time freed when students are working digitally to meet together and plan, to engage in professional development, and to observe each other teaching and provide feedback. This kind of embedded, collaborative development, long supported by

research and pined after by many teachers, has been elusive because of a lack of time — time now made available via blended learning. Second, digital learning software can provide teaching teams and their multi-classroom leaders with a stream of actionable data on students. Without that, the prospect of a single teacher taking responsibility for a large pod of students would be nearly unthinkable.

Between Time-Technology Swaps and Multi-Classroom Leadership, it is possible for schools to organize themselves so that nearly all students, rather than a lucky few, have an excellent teacher in charge of their learning. Teachers gain the opportunity to take on new, advanced roles in which they have more impact, without leaving the classroom, and for sustainably higher pay.

TEACHER-LED SCHOOLS

A small but growing number of charter schools in the U.S. are organized as “teacher professional practices.” Like law firms and doctor-owned medical practices, these schools are governed not by the typical charter school governing board but by the school’s teachers themselves. Teachers decide who works at the school, how to allocate resources, and what the school’s mission and instructional program will be.

Teacher-led schools offer a new set of opportunities for teachers beyond what’s available in a traditional principal-led school. In every other profession, there is a choice of working for a public service, for a large private practice, for a professional partnership or as a sole practitioner. Teachers should have the same options.²⁹

Teacher-led schools do not necessarily need to make digital learning central to their designs, but digital learning is likely critical to these schools’ ability to create the kind of professional environment they seek at scale. Technology takes root and spreads in other sectors when there is an inherent incentive for some people to use it — most often, the incentive for the owners/managers to increase productivity and efficiency while also improving the quality of their services or products.

The teacher-leaders in teacher-led schools have just that incentive. They want time to collaborate, and time to co-plan and develop each other. They want to be deeply involved in the management of their schools, which adds responsibilities. At small scale, many teacher-led schools can probably accomplish their goals without paying teachers more. But if they want to grow a large network of teacher-led schools, aligning additional pay with the planning and development time that lead to a collaborative, high-performing culture will be crucial. Using digital learning in the right ways provides that time and money. As described in these pages, digital learning can help meet all of these needs: giving teachers time to collaborate, plan and lead, and freeing the funding to pay more to teachers who take on added responsibilities.

For more on teacher-led schools, see the book [Trusting Teachers with School Success: What Happens When Teachers Call the Shots](#).

Remotely Located Teachers

Teachers can interact directly with students and be fully accountable for students' outcomes without being in the same classroom — or even the same state — using digital tools. Schools that face shortages of qualified teachers, overall or in some subjects, may use this model to connect students with excellent teachers via webcams and online whiteboards, for example. Remotely located teachers can reach more students without increasing class sizes because they will be freed from administrative duties and noninstructional tasks, which may be overseen by on-site paraprofessionals, and because students spend a portion of their day learning basic skills online, as in the Time-Technology Swaps described above.

While not the first choice for most schools, models that enable remotely located teachers to reach students anywhere may be far superior to letting students learn online without adequate academic supervision and support. Students in rural areas, students who have failed in traditional classrooms where social issues are distracting, and those who need very advanced or unusual courses stand to benefit most from this model.

Remote instruction may be synchronous — students and teachers interacting in real time — or asynchronous. Synchronous instruction may use webcams, whiteboards, videoconferences, texting or even phone calls. As technology improves, these interactions will feel more natural and less remote, with smoother videoconferencing, or three-dimensional holograms of teachers or “immersive” online environments such as students may already experience in games.

Asynchronous instruction still requires teachers to interact with students, but at times convenient for each, through online feedback on assignments, e-mail and discussion boards. Many teachers already use these methods to supplement traditional instruction, but without the financial, reach or personal benefits of all-remote teaching.

In addition to freeing teachers' time to reach more students for higher pay, working remotely opens up a range of new professional opportunities:

- Teachers can choose where to live, and continue teaching the same students even if they must move midyear. Rural areas, especially, struggle to attract enough teachers to provide great instruction to all students. Remote instruction makes it possible for teachers to live where they want, educating students anywhere.
- Teachers can choose their work setting. Teachers can work from home, or groups of teachers may come together to a shared office, as in other professions. Teachers may also combine traditional in-person teaching jobs and remote teaching, as some online teachers do today via the Alabama Virtual Academy and others. For some teachers, these new possibilities are a great fit. “Shifting to teaching online was like being a new teacher all over again,” says remote teacher Lindsay Woods. But after a few years, “she loves the flexibility and time at home with her son.”³⁰
- Teachers can choose their hours. Because remotely located teachers may be teaching students on opposite coasts, they have flexibility in their hours, whether full- or part-time, without reducing the number of students taught.
- Teachers can individualize instruction. Remotely located teachers can provide more individual attention than many students get with in-person teachers. Distance may actually make focusing on one student at a time easier, because teachers are not distracted by typical duties of an on-site teacher. Innosight Institute's profile of Riverside Virtual School, for example, reports, “Overall, teachers say that they interact more with students as online teachers than when they are teaching a face-to-face course. Students also report having higher levels of engagement.”³¹
- Teachers can specialize in their best methods of teaching: Teachers may excel at engaging presentations, small-group tutoring or analytic discussions, and remote teaching allows them to focus on these skills and reach more students without the distractions of on-site, noninstructional duties.

- Teachers can manage other remotely located teachers: An excellent teacher good at managing or coaching others could continue teaching remotely while leading teams of other teachers, extending the excellent teacher's reach by having others use his or her methods and holding him or her accountable for the results of the teachers' students.

While we focus here on teachers, it is worth noting that remote connections also open opportunities for other kinds of educators, such as the remote speech therapists working for organizations such as [PresenceLearning](#).³²

“Boundless” Instruction

Even with asynchronous remote teaching, teachers can reach only so many students in the course of a day. But today, anyone on the planet with a broadband connection can now access engaging content and some of the best teachers in the world. With boundless instruction, teachers combine technology with their best skills to reach potentially unlimited numbers of students, predominantly these days in three ways:

- **“Mediagenic” superinstructors:** Terrific teachers of content can become nationally known stars through video lessons broadcast over the Internet. Think of Sal Khan and his Khan Academy, the most well-known today. As of February 2013, the site's videos on math, science and other subjects have been watched more than 240 million times, and more than 1 billion of its math problems have been completed (a rate of more than 2 million per day).³³ Universities including Stanford, MIT and Carnegie Mellon have quickly jumped into offering “massive open online courses” (MOOCs). And initiatives such as LearnZillion collect top teachers' video micro-lessons tied to new Common Core standards, keeping the ones data prove to have the biggest impact. Internationally, companies like South Korea's MegaStudy have already propelled some teachers to seven-figure salaries with these models.³⁴ Over time, students will be able to learn about every topic from the very best worldwide at explaining that subject.
- **Application and organization architects:** Teachers eager to extend their reach may also find opportunities through digital learning to create or help design software applications that guide students through lessons, letting them master content and move on without direct teacher interaction. Current examples include the teacher-created Virtual ChemLab, through which students in a virtual environment undertake simulated chemistry experiments, used by more than 150,000 students per year; veteran English teacher Jeff Scheur's NoRedInk, which helps students learn grammar; Quest to Learn schools in New York and Chicago, where teachers collaborate with video game designers from the Institute of Play to create game-based curricula, games, and other learning materials that can be used within its schools and boundlessly; and Leadership Public Schools in California with its “distributed incubation,” enabling its own teachers to create digital content for use across the school network.³⁵
- **Inspiring other teachers:** By blogging, tweeting or otherwise tapping the power of digital distribution, teachers can now inspire and influence their peers on a much larger scale. As veteran teacher Susan Lucille Davis writes, “We grow together as professionals and as human beings even as we design our professional learning in a way that is meaningful and personal.”³⁶ The countless examples include Vicki Davis, AKA @CoolCatTeacher, who reaches thousands of teachers with her blog and Twitter feed. New services like [BetterLesson](#) offer a place for educators to connect and share curriculum and lesson plans. [The Teaching Channel](#) offers hundreds of exemplar videos of effective CCSS instruction and other teaching strategies. [Teachers Pay Teachers](#) is an open marketplace where educators can produce digital materials to buy and sell.

THE OPPORTUNITY TO EARN MORE, WITHIN CURRENT BUDGETS

In other professions, such as law and medicine, the last few decades have seen enormous technological progress that has changed the nature of work in those fields. These advances have been driven by professionals themselves, who realized that technology could enhance their “productivity” and work quality, enabling them to have more and better impact, and earn more for doing so, within their work hours.

Teaching could follow the same path with the implementation of digital and blended learning. As described above, one critical feature of digital learning is its potential to free teachers’ time. By using digital learning to free teachers’ time, schools can realize economic savings that can make it possible to pay teachers more for reaching more students. In the previous section, we described Rocketship Education’s model, in which three teachers — rather than the more typical four — take responsibility for four elementary classes of students by having students spend a small portion of the school day in digital instruction. Even after accounting for the costs of digital learning and the personnel needed to monitor it, the model yields savings that enable the schools to pay teachers 20 percent above the local salary schedule, without special, temporary grants.³⁷

This is just one way that schools could reorganize roles to yield savings that paid teachers more. If schools also grouped teachers into teams led by excellent teachers, Public Impact modeling suggests that teacher-leaders could earn 67 - 130 percent above today’s pay scale. It is possible that all teachers in a school could be paid more of out of the savings made possible by creative reorganization, using digital learning combined with new teacher roles to change how teaching and learning works.³⁸

Many teachers understandably worry that the savings yielded by a shift to digital and blended learning will not accrue to them. Instead, it will go to other priorities or be used to reduce education spending. We would urge policymakers to resist those temptations. If a good part of the savings from digital learning flowed to teachers, imagine the positive dynamic that would result. Excellent teachers would have strong incentives to integrate digital learning into their practice in ways that extended their reach to more students, enabling them to earn more.

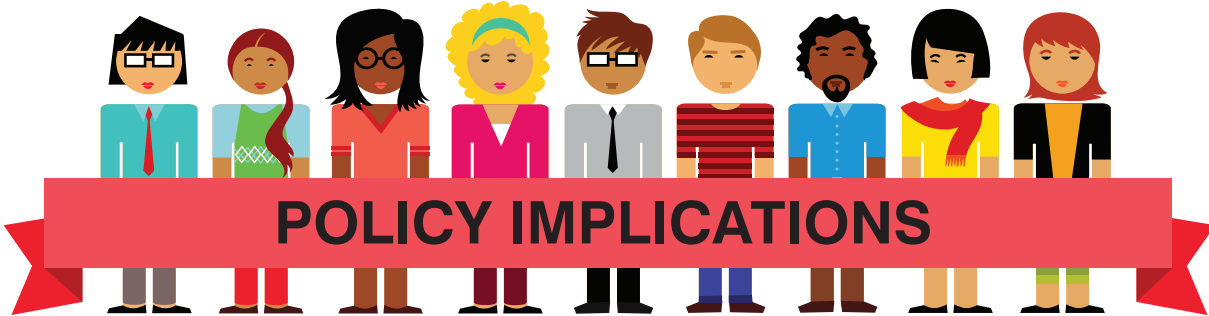
In addition, imagine if to maintain their expanded reach and pay, teachers had to continue producing high levels of growth for students, directly or by leading teams. Then, teachers would demand better and better quality in digital learning products, discarding ineffective software and flocking to applications that helped their students learn the most, engaged them the most fully and gave teachers the most actionable data. Teachers would become the same drivers of high-quality, productivity-enhancing technology that doctors, lawyers and other professionals are within their fields. Moreover, teachers would begin demanding the same high quality among entering teachers: when all teachers can earn more by producing excellent outcomes in teams using blended learning, every teacher has a strong incentive to demand better technology, teaching peers and school models that enable the best use of all.

Blended learning could enhance the power of successful existing programs that offer career opportunities and higher pay to excellent teachers, such as TeachPlus’s [T3 initiative](#) and the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching’s [TAP System](#). Integrating blended learning could help solve two age-old challenges facing programs like these. First, it could help schools gain teacher team planning and development time during the school day while students are engaged in digital instruction, facilitating the kind of teacher leadership and collaboration that is a hallmark of these initiatives. Second, blended learning could create cost savings to pay for career advancement without temporary grants, making these programs financially sustainable and scalable.

A GROWING ARRAY OF TECH-ENABLED CAREER OPTIONS

In addition to expanded opportunities within K-12, tech-enabled career options are expanding for learning professionals to teach and learn through a variety of media:

- **Post-secondary options:** An expanding array of online and blended post-secondary options enable would-be teachers to earn degrees and certificates. In turn, they offer educators opportunities to teach candidates on-site and online. Recent entrants into the Massively Open Online Courses (MOOC) category like [Canvas Network](#), [Coursera](#) and [EdX](#) extend access to even more institutional and individual instructors.
- **Informal learning:** Career and interest-based learning platforms like [Udemy](#) offer free and fee-based courses from anyone who wants to teach.
- **Training & development:** [Skillsoft](#), [General Assembly](#) and [P2P.org](#) are examples of new relevant, affordable, expert-led training in emerging job clusters like web design and development.
- **Professional learning networks (PLN):** Leaders in K-12 and other fields are using social learning networks to connect and learn. [ABEO](#) uses [Edmodo](#) to connect Washington school administrators to learn together about school improvement.
- **Lifelong learning networks:** Combining elements of all of the above, universities and professional associations are beginning to create lifelong learning networks — a strong alumni database with knowledge maps for relevant job clusters plus learner profiles and plans, scheduled and just-in-time online learning, and helpful social learning features.
- Taken together, these new options hold the potential to make teaching a much more varied, opportunity-rich profession. What is more, blended and digital learning can make it possible for teachers to earn more, within current budgets.



So far, this paper has made the case that blended learning can offer better teaching conditions and enable better career opportunities and pay for teachers, while confronting misconceptions along the way. Advocating for thoughtful policies is an important next step in realizing the potential of blended learning to make due on these promises.

HIGH QUALITY DIGITAL LEARNING: THE 10 ELEMENTS

In 2010, DLN was formed to conduct a rapid policy development process that resulted in [The 10 Elements of High Quality Digital Learning](#). The forward-leaning state policy framework suggests an environment in which students and teachers have expanded options. The recommended multiple provider environment provides expanded employment options for teachers, including alternative environments and schedules. The 10 Elements recommend that states provide alternative certification routes, reciprocity across state lines and the ability for multi-location instruction. It is also recommended that states ensure that teachers have professional development or training to better utilize technology and before teaching an online or blended learning course.

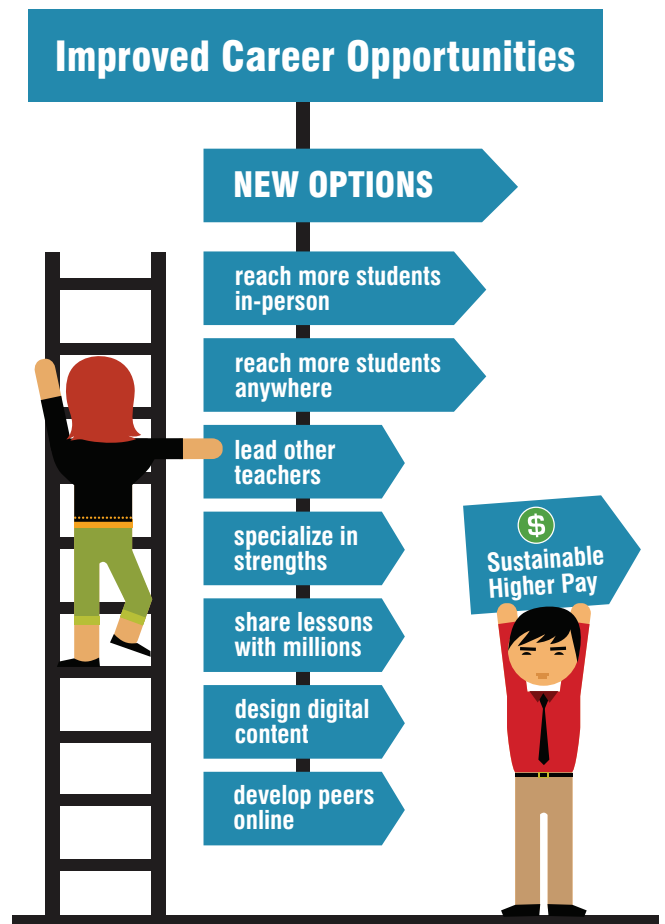
POLICY ENABLERS FOR BLENDED LEARNING

Implementing DLN’s Element recommendations would lay a strong groundwork for effective teaching using blended and digital learning. Policymakers intent on using digital learning to transform teaching conditions and career opportunities as described in this report can consider an additional set of policies designed to remove barriers and incentivize innovation. Those policies fall into several categories:³⁹

- **Funding.** Provide funding in flexible lump sums that can enable optimal combinations of teachers, other staff and technology. Funding should be commensurate to the challenges faced by the enrolled student body and should be flexible enough to support innovation. (For more on this topic see [“Funding Students, Options and Achievement”](#) from DLN.)
- **Evaluation.** Amend teacher evaluation systems to enable new models (such as teams and teacher-leaders serving multiple “classrooms” of students). A lead teacher can take responsibility for the outcomes of the whole

pod of students served by a team, but the team still needs methods to evaluate team members' contributions to student learning and provide team members with rich feedback about their practice. Improve growth measures so they truly capture individual student progress in all grades and subjects, at the unit and course level. Enhance observation rubrics to reflect new and different practices shown by research to be valuable in a blended learning environment.

- **Pay and career options.** Reform pay scales to direct the savings from blended learning to pay teachers more. Allow or incentivize districts and schools to create technology-enabled advanced teacher roles in which excellent teachers can earn more for reaching more students.
- **Operations.** Amend simplistic class-size restrictions or limits on the use of paraprofessionals that restrict schools' ability to differentiate staff roles and use time in the school day differently to meet students' needs.
- **Timing & scalability.** To allow more rapid adoption of careers- and conditions-change digital learning, enable start-up of new schools and turnaround attempts in struggling schools to use blended learning designs that personalize learning for students while offering teachers new opportunities. Scale up successful efforts while shutting down those that do not work.
- **Performance incentives.** Consider a variety of incentives with the power to induce school and district leaders to make big changes needed to capitalize on blended learning's potential to transform teaching. Create competitive preferences for blended learning models that transform teaching as part of existing grant programs.





Reflecting on his personal journey from a traditional to a blended classroom, Josh Woodward explained, “Blended learning is not about replacing teachers with machines. Rather, it is about leveraging technology to provide students and teachers with immediate feedback, holding each individual student accountable for his or her academic success, and personalizing coursework to best meet students exactly where they are.” He continued, “This point is absolutely critical: Without highly effective teachers and instruction, a blended-learning model cannot be successful or sustainable.”⁴⁰

We agree with Josh, and with the countless teachers like him who are feeling frustrated, disempowered and unfulfilled by their current careers, that blended learning can reinvigorate the teaching profession.

In this paper, we have explored how the shift to blended learning facilitates the opportunity to create better conditions and career options for teachers. We have confronted misconceptions and advocated for thoughtful policies to remove existing policy barriers and to incentivize the continued proliferation of educational innovation.

The shift to the next generation of standards and assessments, increased accessibility to high-quality digital content, and the pressures of “new normal” economy have created an unprecedented national opportunity to call the key components of our antiquated, factory model of education into question. Outdated notions of teaching and learning that lock students and teachers into one-size-fits-all experiences no longer serve the college and career needs of the 21st century.

As the nation pauses in this moment of time to reflect how learning innovations can positively impact the daily experiences and outcomes for students, equal reflection must consider how conditions and careers can improve for teachers. These innovations can also be applied to improve the lives of teachers, attracting and retaining the best teaching talent in a time when great teaching is needed most.

The National Education Association (NEA) recently released the [NEA Policy Statement on Digital Learning](#), stating: “NEA believes that the increasing use of technology in the classroom will transform the role of educators allowing the educational process to become ever more student centered. This latest transformation is not novel, but part of the continuing evolution of our education system. Educators, as professionals working in the best interests of their students, will continue to adjust and adapt their instructional practice and use of digital technology/tools to meet the needs and enhance the learning of their students.”

APPENDIX A: RESOURCES

Alliance for Excellent Education: The Online Learning Imperative: A Solution to Three Looming Crises in Education
<http://www.all4ed.org/files/OnlineLearning.pdf>

Alliance for Excellent Education Webinar: Perspectives on the Future of Teacher Preparation in the Digital Age
<http://media.all4ed.org/webinar-mar-20-2013>

The Brookings Institute: Education Technology Success Stories
<http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Research/Files/Papers/2013/3/20%20education%20technology%20success%20west%20bleiberg/Download%20the%20paper.pdf>

Michael & Susan Dell Foundation: Case Studies of Blended Learning
http://www.msdf.org/programs/urban-education/initiatives/united-states/blended-learning/?utm_source=Blended+Learning&utm_campaign=00c6b79466-Blended_Learning_Case_Studies7_23_2012&utm_medium=email

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute: Teachers in the Age of Digital Instruction
http://www.edexcellencemedia.net/publications/2011/2011_CreatingSoundPolicyforDigitalLearning/20111116_TeachersintheAgeofDigitalInstruction.pdf

FSG: Blended Learning in Practice: Case Studies from Leading Schools
<http://www.fsg.org/tabid/191/ArticleId/799/Default.aspx?srpush=true>

Publications from the Innosight Institute (recently changed to the Clayton Christensen Institute for Disruptive Innovation)
<http://www.innosightinstitute.org/media-room/publications/education-publications/>

Publications from the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future
<http://nctaf.org/research/research-papers/>

Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC) Breakthrough Models
<http://www.nextgenlearning.org/wave-iii>

Public Impact's Opportunity Culture Website: Extending the Reach of Excellent Teachers Using Job Redesign and Technology
<http://opportunityculture.org/>

U.S. Department of Education: Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies (2010)
<http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/tech/evidence-based-practices/finalreport.pdf>

APPENDIX B: AN OPPORTUNITY CULTURE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

OPPORTUNITYCULTURE.ORG

AN OPPORTUNITY CULTURE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

MOVING TOWARD A HIGHLY PAID, HIGH-IMPACT PROFESSION



If you are an excellent teacher, or one who aspires to excellence, you probably did not choose teaching for the pay and career advancement potential. You teach because you cannot help yourself. You thrill at untapped potential. You revel in breakthrough moments. *You change destiny: not just what students know, but how they envision and then make their futures come true.* Despite the challenges—and there are many—that is why you teach. If you are an excellent teacher, or one who aspires to excellence, schools need far more like you, and they need you to expand your impact and power. Schools must return to you the respect that you show students.

Imagine this: Schools where all teachers can improve their teaching and are rewarded for getting better. Imagine schools where teachers focus on their strengths and interests, and they have time to plan and collaborate in teams. Imagine schools where teachers who achieve excellence can multiply their impact by giving more students access to their teaching, and they can lead peers while continuing to teach.

Imagine being part of a profession that attracts the best and the brightest to be your colleagues. Imagine having salaries competitive with highly paid professions. And imagine a teaching profession with a reputation for developing and retaining great teachers through all of these opportunities.

Rather than being burdened with conditions that sometimes make you wonder why you became a teacher, **what if teaching were so full of opportunities and outstanding peers that you enjoyed the challenge and always felt proud to teach?** What if your reputation were enhanced by being part of a selective, well-paid, high-performing profession critical to our nation's success?

We call this an **Opportunity Culture**, because all teachers have career opportunities dependent upon their excellence, leadership, and student impact. Advancement allows more pay and greater reach. Development toward excellence is possible for all staff, in every role.

Unfortunately, advancement opportunities in most schools today remove teachers from direct responsibility for students, increase workloads, confer little real authority to lead peers, and either pay no more or provide only temporary pay increases from grants. Most do not make the best use of great teachers' precious time by magnifying their impact on student learning.

Opportunities are limited because nearly all teachers work alone with a class or a few classes of students. And teachers spend large portions of their time on tasks that, in other professions, would be handled by paraprofessionals or technology.

EXCELLENT TEACHING MUST NOT BE IGNORED

You certainly know how important good teaching is, but you may not have realized how essential *truly excellent* teaching is. Research continues to confirm that today's top 25 percent of teachers help students make well over a year of learning growth—or about three times as much growth as the bottom 25 percent of teachers produce. This high growth is essential to help students who start behind catch up, and to help students who are on track leap forward like their peers in the highest-achieving nations. With just today's "good growth," students cannot catch up or leap ahead. Students need excellent teachers consistently, year after year.

Moreover, all students need the higher-order thinking and social, emotional, and organizational skills that great teachers develop so well in their students.

SCHOOL DESIGNS IN AN OPPORTUNITY CULTURE

To create an Opportunity Culture that helps far more students excel, teachers need new school models. These models must "extend the reach" of great teachers and provide career paths enabling all teachers to pursue excellence. With input from teachers and other experts, Public Impact has published numerous school models that redesign teachers' jobs and, in some cases, use age- and child-appropriate technology to put excellent teachers in charge of more students' learning and other teachers' development, *for more pay*. **Multi-classroom leadership, elementary specialization teams, blended learning "time-technology swaps,"** and small **class-size increases** (within limits, and by choice) extend teachers' reach and save teachers time. For places with extreme shortages of excellent teaching, overall or in certain subjects, excellent teachers can use technology to reach students anywhere—using tools like webcams and online whiteboards—with help from on-site paraprofessionals who nurture the whole child.



A Teacher's Impact =
Student Outcomes x
Number of Students Reached



Watch the Video

Extending the Reach Video Part 1

Publicly available on YouTube courtesy of Opportunity Culture

WATCH A VIDEO ABOUT SCHOOL MODELS THAT USE YOUR TIME WISELY



Share this Video with Other Teachers



<http://opportunityculture.org/multimedia/extending-the-reach-video-part-1/>

Great teachers can reach more students and focus their time on the teaching roles that personalize and inspire great learning. Most models free enough time to let good teachers work in teams with great ones, so they also can master the practices that improve student learning. You can learn about all the possibilities [here](#).

In an Opportunity Culture, models of extended reach combined with rigorous teacher selection let schools maximize the number and impact of excellent teachers through:

- * **Induction** delivered by proven, excellent, accountable teachers
- * **Planning time** built into the school day
- * **Collaboration and teamwork** built into the school day
- * **Development** that is part of daily teaching, led by teacher-leaders accountable for student outcomes, and customized to individual teachers and their students
- * **Leadership** positions that are well-paid, fully accountable, and fully empowered to lead teams
- * **Respect for teachers' time** by using technology, paraprofessional support, and purposeful scheduling to give teachers more time for the activities above—and to reach more students. See [Career Paths that Respect Teachers: More Pay & Time to Collaborate, Lead, Reach More Students](#)
- * **Evaluations** that help teachers pursue excellence, and help schools offer the right career advancement opportunities
- * **Pay that is much higher** on average, and even higher at the top—commensurate with excellence, reach, and leadership

Using reach models, teachers can earn 20 to 40 percent or more over today's pay, and teachers who also lead other teachers can earn as much as 130 percent more. Because teachers are reaching more students, schools can pay them more with regular funding, rather than relying on temporary grants. In the past four decades, per-pupil spending has increased nearly 150 percent in real terms. Teachers' pay has increased a mere 11 percent. When budgets rise in the future, school models that value excellent teaching can focus funding increases on those teachers accountable for students' outcomes. See our [Pay Teachers More](#) publications for more.

A HIGHLY PAID, HIGH-IMPACT PROFESSION

In an Opportunity Culture, the teaching profession is full of outstanding opportunities and peers, and the reputation of every teacher is enhanced. In an Opportunity Culture:

- * **Selection** uses highly selective screening methods, including academic success and competencies for great teaching
- * **Teaching roles** are varied and use teachers' strengths, develop teachers, and reach more students with excellence
- * **Career advancement** is possible without leaving teaching. Teachers advance by reaching more students and leading peers, for more pay. See details on our [career paths page](#)
- * **Teachers' impact** on students and peers increases with teaching excellence and leadership
- * **Job flexibility** is high. By using teams *and* extending teachers' reach, schools make part-time, professional jobs possible within budget, and technology allows great teachers to teach students in need anywhere
- * **Teacher retention** is high: Your best colleagues keep teaching
- * **Your colleagues** are highly capable and committed to excellence
- * **Dismissal** and low performance are rare, because few teachers incapable of excellence enter teaching
- * **Teacher power** increases, especially for great teachers, in schools and the profession overall

AN OPPORTUNITY CULTURE FOR ALL

Students need excellent teaching consistently. Excellent teachers and ones working hard to achieve excellence truly are schools' most important assets. Teachers, your school or district really must provide career paths that let you continue teaching, pay you more for excellence and leadership, increase your impact on students and peers, free your time for collaboration and development, and provide these opportunities sustainably, not temporarily. You can advocate for [new school models](#) and for [policies](#) supporting an [Opportunity Culture](#) for teaching and learning. Expanding the prevalence, power, and impact of excellent teachers within their schools and the profession must become schools' #1 priority.

Learn more about how new school models help great teachers expand their impact and good teachers develop their full potential at OpportunityCulture.org.

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