

Creating Sustainable Teacher Career Pathways:

A 21st Century Imperative | Executive Summary



Executive Summary prepared for the National Network of State Teachers of the Year (NNSTOY) and the Center for Educator Learning & Effectiveness at Pearson

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Introduction

Teaching has historically been described as an “unstaged occupation,” with few opportunities to access higher earning and higher status positions as one would experience in other “staged professions.” Within the profession, income increments are generally modest and there are few status differences among practitioners. Yet the opportunity for significant upward movement is, in essence, the definition of a career. Attorneys can be appointed partners; academics can gain rank and promotion; crafts move through stages of apprenticeship, journeyman, and master craftsman; and business and governmental organizations provide hierarchies of power and privilege (Lortie, 1975). The main opportunity for career advancement for teachers has been—and remains today—leaving the classroom to become a school administrator.

Largely due to anticipated teacher retirements, Generation Y (defined as those individuals born between 1977 and 1995) teachers are projected to make up nearly half of the educator workforce by 2020. Gen Y is characterized as being committed to high levels of achievement, to changing the world for the better, and to communicating and presenting in styles that are engaging and innovative. Without structural changes to the teaching profession—including better working conditions, competitive compensation, flexibility and career staging—it will be increasingly difficult to attract and retain enough highly motivated and qualified teachers into the profession. Building additional career stages that value and reward high performing teachers may be one way to motivate promising newcomers to the profession to set longer-term goals that involve leading from the classroom (Coggins et al., 2010).

In this report, we offer a new vision of teacher career pathways for the 21st century that holds promise for recruiting and retaining excellent teachers who further student learning. We showcase recent initiatives at the local, state, and national level that promote teacher role differentiation and create different models of teacher staffing and teacher career continuums. The culmination of our report includes preliminary recommendations related to creating the conditions necessary to develop sustainable teacher career pathways and potentially make teaching a more attractive career option for a generation that expects flexibility in the workplace, collaborative work structures, differentiated roles, and compensation systems that recognize performance and differing levels of responsibility.

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Methodology

Our work began with a review of the literature on past and present initiatives to promote teacher leadership, differentiated staffing in schools, and career ladders or teacher career pathways. This included examining how other licensed professions advance the careers of their members, and what recent trends can be seen in business. We also examined features of the teaching profession in countries whose students perform at high levels.

We examined recent policy documents addressing strategies to attract and retain highly effective teachers from organizations such as the Alliance for Excellent Education, American Federation of Teachers, National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality,¹ National Council on Teaching Quality, National Education Association, Public Impact, and Public Agenda. International comparisons of the teaching profession relied on sources from the Asia Society, Center on International Benchmarking, McKinsey & Company, and Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

We also conducted web searches on a preliminary basis to identify state-level strategies to promote teachers in leadership roles. These were followed by interviews² of representatives of all 50 state education agencies and/or state professional standards boards to discuss in more detail their states' current and proposed initiatives related to teacher career advancement. In addition, we conducted interviews with representatives of the District of Columbia Public Schools, National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET), and Public Impact to help inform the recommendations contained in this report.

Advancing Teachers' Careers: Lessons from Other Professions and the Past

Our report draws upon lessons from other licensed professions, business, and the teaching profession in countries whose students perform at high levels; and identifies how these lessons can be applied more systematically across the teaching profession in the U.S. in order to meet 21st century career expectations for a new generation of teachers and learners. These include attracting academic high achievers into the profession; identifying and managing talent; and defining career stages associated with the acquisition and demonstration of expertise. The teaching profession needs to recognize and reward expertise by following the lead of other professions that create diverse and flexible career options; link compensation to performance, expertise, and responsibilities; and work to retain "high achievers." Generation X and Y workers expect that collaboration and teamwork are built into their day-to-day professional lives and that they will participate in less hierarchical organizations that place more decision-making at middle-levels of the organization—such working conditions for teachers are common in countries whose students perform at high levels.

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¹Now called the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders

²In several states, responses to our questions were answered via e-mail instead of telephone interview. The interviews were conducted between January and May 2013.

Attempts to attract more talented teachers into the profession, recognize the different stages of a teacher's career, and promote differentiated roles for teachers are not new. Early efforts included differentiated staffing models of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Tiered licensing systems and professional certification proposals emerged in the late 1980s. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards was formed in 1987 to award National Board Certification to qualified candidates as a means to elevate the status, voice, and role of accomplished teachers modeled after the professions of medicine, engineering, and the law. Beginning in the mid 1980s, more than 30 states had launched or proposed some form of career ladder to differentiate teacher salaries and provide new leadership roles for teachers. Peer Assistance and Review (PAR), which provided a program of mentorship and evaluation of teachers by teachers, began in Toledo, Ohio in 1981, and still operates today in Toledo and Cincinnati, Ohio; Rochester and Syracuse, New York; and Montgomery County, Maryland. Both career ladder systems and PAR represented a challenge to the norms of teachers working in isolation and having few opportunities for leadership roles. Unfortunately, many of these initiatives ended or were repealed when the funding was no longer available or support eroded due to ill-defined responsibilities for lead teachers or inadequate training to assume those leadership roles. Teacher induction programs also challenged the norms of teachers working in isolation from colleagues and having the same job responsibilities at the beginning and end of a teaching career. Although nearly 80 percent of new teachers report taking part in an induction program by the late 1990s (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004), these programs were often unevenly implemented with inadequate or unsustainable funding.

Educational reform of the 1990s centered on creating professional learning communities of educators, and these offered opportunities for expanding the leadership roles of teachers. But teacher leadership today remains more the exception than the norm because most schools remain organized in a one-teacher-one-classroom mode, which restricts opportunities for collaboration and more effective teacher leadership. Further, funding for teacher leadership tends to be often short-lived.

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Restructuring Teachers' Jobs and Career Paths

There are some hopeful signs that the teaching profession may finally be ready to embrace change in its conception of a teacher's career as new staffing and career path models are emerging. "Neo-differentiated staffing"—drawing from the business-based concept of "mass career customization" (Weisberg & Benko, 2008)—would allow teachers to move flexibly between different roles as their expertise shifts, interests evolve, and family responsibilities grow and recede (Coggshall, Lasagna & Laine, 2009). Teachers would be organized in teams with their roles differentiated according to their skill, expertise, the demands of the curriculum, and the needs of children. Hassel and Hassel (2009) expand on this concept by suggesting that, when teams of educators in differentiated roles reach more students, the costs of "extended reach" (including paraprofessional support and technology) can provide ways to pay teachers for career advancement with minimal or no additional funding. Johnson and Papay (2009) provide a "Tiered Pay-and-Career Structures" model that serves as an alternative to bonuses and merit pay systems, which

often discourage collaborative work among teachers, create technical problems in identifying the most effective teachers based on student test scores, and fail to compensate for difficult working conditions. In addition, we are also seeing examples of successful district-union agreements that have modified teacher contracts to promote teacher leadership with differential pay, examples of which include AFT Local 1977 (St. Francis, Minnesota) and the San Juan Teachers Association in San Juan (California) Unified School District.

Promising Practices and Innovations

This report highlights several innovative models of teacher career advancement whose unique and comprehensive approaches to re-structuring teachers' roles and career paths make them worthy of serious study and attention. Some innovative models of teacher career advancement are as follows:



Arizona Career Ladder: This is the longest-standing career ladder initiative in the country. Unfortunately, state funding is slated to be fully phased out by the 2014-15 school year due to a lawsuit challenging the law's constitutionality because of inadequate state funding. Nonetheless, this remains a worthwhile model to study because of its longevity and positive results it has had on student achievement in career ladder schools.



TAP System: The TAP System (TAP™) has been in effect since the 2000-01 school year and has offered a comprehensive approach to school reform based on enhancing the quality of teaching and offering career advancement to effective teachers. In general, TAP System schools show consistently high rates of student achievement growth, TAP System teachers show growth over time in the quality of their instruction, and the TAP System increases the recruitment and retention of highly effective teachers.



The Public Impact "Opportunity Culture" Initiative: This is an innovative model for staffing schools which aligns with the concepts of "neo-differentiated staffing models" and "tiered pay-and-career structures" described earlier. The end goal of these models is to reach every student with excellent teachers in charge of learning. In the Opportunity Culture model, teachers earn more and advance their careers by "extending their reach" to more students, directly or by leading peers in teams. The Opportunity Culture models are currently being piloted in several locations around the country, including Charlotte-Mecklenburg's Project L.I.F.T.,³ Nashville Public Schools' Innovation Zone, and Clark County in Nevada (Las Vegas).



The DC Leadership Initiative for Teachers: The LIFT initiative is a five-stage career ladder that provides high-performing teachers with opportunities for advancement inside the classroom, as well as additional responsibility and increased recognition and compensation. The initiative has only been in effect for less than one school year, and feedback from teachers may result in further changes to the model.

³Note that this initiative is entirely separate from the District of Columbia's LIFT initiative as noted above.

Federal and National Initiatives

Federal and national initiatives that are helping to shape new models for teacher career pathways or teacher leadership are highlighted below:

Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF): a competitive grant program designed to encourage innovations in performance-based teacher and principal compensation;

Race to the Top Federal Grant Competition: a significant federal initiative, one of whose goals is to promote the recruitment, development, reward, and retention of effective teachers and principals where they are needed;

The Recognizing Educational Success, Professional Excellence, and Collaborative Teaching RESPECT Project: an initiative designed to promote a national conversation led by active classroom teachers in order to elevate teachers' voices in shaping federal, state, and local education policy;

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Teacher Leader Certification: a nascent National Board certification initiative to promote teacher leaders—working with their principals—to serve as instructional and organizational change agents and help recruit and retain accomplished teachers, slated to launch in the near future;

Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium: a broad array of education organizations, state education agencies, teacher leaders, principals, superintendents, and institutions of higher education who joined together to create model standards for teacher leaders. The standards were released in 2010, and have been used by numerous states in the exploration of their own standards and policies for teacher leadership;

The Multi-State Consortium: a six-state collaborative effort (Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, South Dakota, Utah, and West Virginia) to re-vision a new system of educator recruitment, preparation, development and advancement. The goal is to encourage states to envision and promote a teacher career continuum as part of state policies;

Reforms Proposed by Teachers' Unions/Education Associations: efforts to support significant changes to the teaching profession through recently released policy positions by the National Education Association (NEA) and American Federation of Teachers (AFT). These are designed to address the challenges of the 21st century global economy and established an education system and teaching profession prepared to meet those challenges.

We present the results of a 50-state investigation of state-level strategies to recognize and promote teacher leadership, as well as teacher career advancement initiatives in the following pages.

Overview of State-based Initiatives

We present the results of a 50-state investigation of state-level strategies to recognize and promote teacher leadership, as well as teacher career advancement initiatives conducted between February and May 2013. The following summarizes current state-based efforts to promote teacher leadership through a variety of approaches, with more detail available in the full report.

Only two states and one jurisdiction currently have comprehensive teacher career initiatives:

Currently in effect: Arizona, District of Columbia, Iowa⁴

Proposed: Georgia, Missouri, New York

Twenty states currently have multi-tiered certification systems with tiers for advanced or master teachers

Current: Alabama, Alaska, Colorado, Delaware, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Utah, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin

Proposed: New York, Georgia

Eight⁵ states currently have certification endorsements related to teacher leadership (e.g., teacher leader, instructional facilitator)

Currently in effect: Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Virginia, Wyoming

Proposed: Connecticut, Illinois, Mississippi, Missouri, New Jersey, Oregon, Utah, Vermont

Three states currently have “designations” for master teachers

Currently in effect: Connecticut, Wyoming

Four states have adopted Continuums of Teaching Practice Rubrics

Currently in effect: Alabama, California, Missouri, North Carolina

Proposed: Uncertain, although states participating in the Multi-State Consortium (Arkansas, Kansas, South Dakota, Utah, West Virginia) may adopt some form of the model standards.

One state has adopted policies for and nine states are exploring the development of teacher licensing systems linked to teacher effectiveness

Currently in effect: Tennessee

Proposed (or under discussion): Colorado, Michigan, Missouri, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Utah, Wisconsin

Two states are implementing state-mandated compensation systems designed to reflect teacher effectiveness and teachers in leadership roles

Currently in effect: Indiana, Tennessee

Four states have introduced new teacher leader roles related to assisting teachers in adopting the Common Core Standards at the local district level

Currently in effect: Louisiana, Maryland, Tennessee, West Virginia

⁴Passed the Iowa General Assembly on 5/22/2013

⁵The New Jersey Assembly passed a bill implementing a teacher leader endorsement on 5/23/2013 and it is expected to be approved by the Senate.

Defining The Conditions Necessary To Create Comprehensive Teacher Career Pathways

The overarching goal of a teacher career advancement continuum is to ensure consistent access by all students to excellent teachers and teaching teams, create the conditions for advancing student learning for all students, increase the effectiveness of all teachers, and retain the most effective and talented teachers. To that end, we include in the full report a set of preliminary recommendations designed to create the conditions necessary to create sustainable teacher career paths. A more comprehensive set of recommendations will follow the second phase of this work, which involves on-site case studies of schools and districts with established career advancement initiatives, out of which we will develop a model for teacher career advancement. Examples of some of these recommendations are shown below:

At the state and national level (examples):

- » Advocate for federal and state legislation and grant programs that support new school staffing structures and leadership roles for teachers as well as advance teacher career paths;
- » Establish policies that encourage higher education institutions to match the supply of prospective educators to demand and increase the selectivity of admissions policies to undergraduate and graduate programs for educators;
- » Encourage the removal of barriers to the mobility of teachers between districts and states as well as between careers inside and outside of education by re-structuring teacher pension systems and making them more portable;
- » Encourage states to incorporate structures for teacher leadership roles into state licensure systems and districts to recognize and deploy teachers in leadership positions and differentiated roles with appropriate credentials.

At the local/school level (examples):

- » Re-examine district human resource policies to see if they are effective in recruiting teachers who are high academic achievers; identify and manage talent; and provide diverse and flexible career options as part of retaining “high achievers;”
- » Re-think the one teacher/one classroom organization of schools to facilitate new staffing structures that differentiate roles of teachers and extend the reach of highly effective teachers;
- » Implement flexible job structures that recognize the life and career cycles of teachers, such as sabbaticals, job-sharing, and part-time work;
- » Take advantage of technology in extending the reach of highly effective teachers through blended learning structures and promoting teacher collaboration and professional development through social media and other technological tools.

The challenges to restructure the teaching profession can seem daunting, but the returns to investing in sustainable teacher career pathways are incalculable.

If this strategy results in attracting the “best and brightest” into the profession, retaining the most effective teachers in classrooms and schools, creating more successful schools, and producing sustained student learning gains. Policy makers, educators, and the public have few alternatives if we expect our schools and students to be competitive in the global economy of the 21st century.





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