



To: Hunter Brown, Louisiana Department of Education
From: Bryan Hassel, Public Impact
Re: Public Impact's Response to Louisiana's Request for Information
Date: November 18, 2016

Public Impact (PI) is pleased to present this response to Louisiana's Request for Information to engage in a collaborative and innovative school redesign process. The memo that follows outlines our background, our track record of success, and our organization's model.

1. Partner Background

Mission and services related to this RFI. Public Impact is a national education policy and research organization based in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Our mission is to dramatically improve learning outcomes for all children in the United States, with a special focus on students who are not served well. Through the suite of services explained below, Public Impact has a history of innovatively supporting and redesigning low-performing schools and districts to dramatically improve student achievement.

Supporting schools and districts in the selection and hiring process. Public Impact has worked with districts to revamp their selection and hiring processes by integrating the use of research-based turnaround leader competencies, including:

- Providing resources, sample job descriptions, and recruitment strategies to attract more highly-qualified candidates with the right competencies.
- Restructuring the selection process to one that has several rigorous and competency-aligned steps, including resume screens, phone interviews, in-person interviews, and live demonstration of skills.
- Training district leaders in Behavioral Event Interviews, an in-depth interview technique that is designed to measure a candidate's strength on specific competencies by analyzing his or her past behaviors.

Planning for school turnaround, with an emphasis on staffing redesign to reach all students with excellent teachers. Public Impact has supported several schools in their school turnaround planning. Specific services include:

- Assisting schools in redesigning their staffing model to establish an Opportunity Culture. In an Opportunity Culture (OC), schools extend the reach of excellent teachers and their teams to more students, for more pay and within budget. By reworking daily schedules and enlisting selected aspiring teachers and paraprofessionals to take on non-teaching duties, teachers gain time to

plan and collaborate, and everyone gets more support. Instead of promoting excellent teachers outside of the classroom into administrative roles, OC creates a career pipeline, where excellent teachers with a proven track record of success are increasingly responsible for more students through new roles, such as Direct Reach teachers, where teachers are paid more for reaching more students directly, and Multi-Classroom Leaders, where teacher-leaders directly teach some students, lead teams of teachers, and are held accountable to all student results on the entire team. Teachers earn 20-50 percent more than average for taking on these roles, all within existing school budgets.

- Supporting schools in planning, writing, and editing a detailed turnaround plan, including setting school priorities and establishing leading indicators of success.

Providing implementation support. After assisting schools throughout their planning process, Public Impact works to support schools as they implement new strategies and designs. Specific supports include:

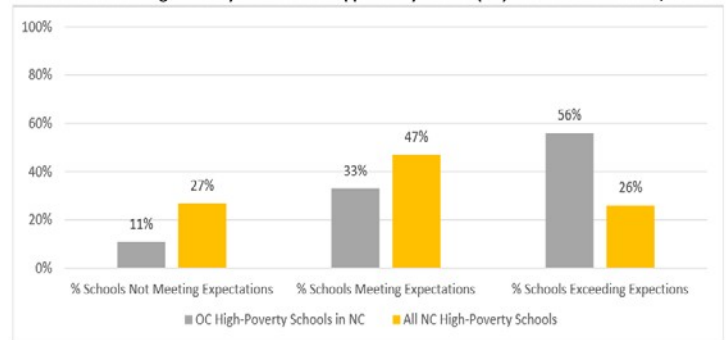
- Conducting school support visits, including interviews with the principal, leadership team members, and teachers, and observations of classrooms, planning meetings, and professional development sessions.
- Providing professional development for teacher-leaders and paraprofessionals taking on new Opportunity Culture positions. Sessions include topics such as having difficult conversations, leading coaching conversations, managing student behavior, and analyzing data.
- Providing development for turnaround leaders individually and/or through a cohort experience, where principals learn about and develop research-based turnaround leader competencies, monitor progress of priority strategies, and brainstorm challenges with their peers.

2. Evidence of Track Record of Student and School Outcomes

Although Public Impact has done many pieces of the work described in #1 with districts and states, including the Tennessee Department of Education, the School District of Philadelphia, and Denver Public Schools, most of the focus of our direct school support to date has been with innovative staffing design through Opportunity Culture, with more than 80 schools implementing nationally in 2016-17. Our most up-to-date OC results are in North Carolina, where we have sustained, deep engagement with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Cabarrus County school districts.

Fifty-nine percent of Opportunity Culture schools in North Carolina exceeded student growth expectations in 2015–16, more than double the percentage of N.C. schools overall at just 28 percent. Similarly, high-poverty OC schools exceeded growth expectations at much higher rates than in North Carolina overall: 56 percent versus 26 percent of high-poverty schools statewide. Two-thirds of North Carolina Opportunity Culture schools were high-poverty schools, where 40 percent or more students qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Student Growth in High-Poverty N.C. Schools: Opportunity Culture (OC) Schools vs. Statewide, 2015–16



3. Public Impact's Model

- a. **Differentiation.** Within the Opportunity Culture turnaround work, Public Impact has worked with large urban districts like Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Schools, mid-sized districts like Syracuse City School District, and small, rural districts in Texas and Arizona. In each of these unique contexts, we differentiate our services to meet the needs of the district. During the OC design process, districts take overarching OC principles and adapt them to meet their needs. School design teams made up mostly of teachers are given the autonomy to make design decisions within these parameters set by the district. This process allows for differentiation to meet the needs of any school or district.
- b. **Ideal Partners.** For students and staff to realize the benefits of creating an Opportunity Culture, school leaders need a supportive management and policy environment that allows for full implementation of the reach extension models. Our ideal partner district is one in which the superintendent and board have fully committed to the OC principles and have assigned a point person to be fully accountable for implementation. In addition, school leaders are ideally opting into implementing an Opportunity Culture, are committed to engaging teachers in the design process, and already have a solid method for identifying highly effective teachers.
- c. **Experience with other providers.** We have long, deep experience working with partner organizations in this work, such as Education First, Education Resource Strategies, and Mass Insight, to plan and lead the work together. We also work actively to make Opportunity Culture support the work of other existing district initiatives or partner organizations. Working with partners brings best practices and more viewpoints to the table, but it also comes with its own challenges. For coherence, it is important that the school or district set a clear vision and direction for the turnaround work. This way, all partners can work toward the same vision. One way to do this is to have one partner take the lead and assign other partners to fill in gaps. Public Impact is interested in taking on that lead in Louisiana, but is also happy to fill in service provider gaps, as needed.
- d. **State support.** As described in the response to #3b, the most helpful support a state or district partner can provide is a commitment by the leadership to make the kind of change that is needed. It is important that district or state leadership puts the necessary resources forward, makes policy changes necessary for flexibility, and encourages stakeholder engagement to build support and momentum for changes. Other areas of support that would enhance success include providing easy access to data to monitor progress toward goals around recruitment, hiring and selection, and student academic growth.