Opportunity Culture Initiative
First Implementation Site: Project L.I.F.T. Schools
(Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina)

Project L.I.F.T. is the first of five implementation sites in Public Impact’s initiative to extend the reach of excellent teachers and build an Opportunity Culture for teachers and students. In Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools (CMS), four schools working with the nonprofit organization Project L.I.F.T. have received intensive design assistance from Public Impact throughout 2012 and early 2013 to begin extending excellent teachers’ reach to all students in fall 2013.

Public Impact’s initial design assistance has focused on:

- **Phasing and assisting with initial messaging** about the Opportunity Culture Initiative, its benefits for students and teachers, and the primary staffing models to extend teachers’ reach. Our consulting team planned and conducting meetings and presentations with L.I.F.T. and CMS leadership, school principals, and school design teams comprised of excellent teachers and administrators from each participating school;

- **Facilitating the work of school design teams, L.I.F.T. leadership, and partners from Education First Consulting** to complete long-term staffing plans that reflect each school’s approach to extend the reach of excellent teachers through an opportunity culture;

- **Assisting with schools’ initial budgeting and communications planning** to ensure that their plan is financially sustainable, they have tools and a plan for sharing information about the initiative throughout the spring;

- **Providing tools, sample plans, templates, targeted research, and other resources** to schools and Project L.I.F.T. as they have defined the leading edge of implementation.

Each of the four schools has developed a unique staffing plan to move from its current staffing structure to one that fully implements reach extension principles and goals within three years.

- **Allenbrook Elementary** will use a combination of Multi-Classroom Leadership and Time-Technology Swaps to extend the reach of excellent teachers in grades K-5. By 2015, excellent blended learning teachers in each grade will reach more students by combining face-to-face instruction with labs focused on digital learning. In addition, multi-classroom leaders will lead pods of four novice and/or developing teachers by co-teaching, observing and developing team teachers, and directly teaching groups of students. Pay increases for blended learning teachers and multi-classroom leaders are made possible by the phase-in of lab monitors and teaching assistants and attrition within traditional classroom roles.

- **Ashley Park PreK-8** will implement a combination of Multi-Classroom Leadership and Time-Technology Swaps in all grades. Team and blended learning teachers will work in teams that span two (in elementary) to three (middle) grades, led by a multi-classroom leader and assisted by lab monitors and learning coaches. Ashley Park will incur significant financial savings from its staffing model, which it plans to reinvest in sustainable pay increases for blended learning and multi-classroom teachers, and hardware and software updates that enable teachers to use digital learning from to inform student groupings and instruction.

- **Ranson IB Middle School** plans to implement a combination of Multi-Classroom Leadership and Time-Technology Swaps. In each grade and subject, multi-classroom leaders will
instruct students in their own classrooms, while overseeing small teams of two novice or developing teachers and one lab monitor. These pods will utilize time-technology swaps to create common planning time for collaboration and development. Ranson’s plan integrates positions at multiple levels, creating clear opportunities for teachers to advance from a novice team teacher, to a more experienced team teacher with increased responsibility, and eventually to a multi-classroom leader.

- Thomasboro Academy plans to integrate Multi-Classroom Leadership in all grades, along with a time-time swap in grades 3-8. In the primary grades, multi-classroom leaders will oversee and develop teams of teachers and be supported by teacher assistants. In grades 3-8, students will spend part of each day working with paraprofessionals on basic knowledge and skills and projects, enabling excellent teachers to extend their reach to two grades of students. Multi-classroom leaders will provide support to novice and developing teachers in grades 3-8. This wide variety of teaching roles will provide all teachers with career pathways and opportunities to contribute to excellence.

Public Impact’s primary focus areas to support schools’ implementation of these plans will include:

- Continuing to serve as advisors to school design teams as they consider implications of their final staffing plan (such as for scheduling, facilities, teacher contracts, professional development, Title I and SIG applications, student assignments, and so on);

- Working closely with L.I.F.T’s leadership to successfully support schools’ plans (such as through recruitment, screening, hiring and placement for all OC positions; and developing compensation, evaluation, professional development and accountability systems for participating staff members); and

- Assessing and documenting initiative results to help L.I.F.T. support schools’ successful ongoing implementation, and inform scale-up to other L.I.F.T. and CMS schools.