

# High Impact Philanthropy to Improve Teaching Quality: Fact Sheet



The Center for High Impact Philanthropy

School of Social Policy & Practice | University of Pennsylvania

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## WHY THIS, WHY NOW?

- Over the past twenty years, despite increases in per-pupil spending, dropout rates remain alarmingly high, achievement gaps persist, and U.S. students rank behind their peers in many other countries. Across the United States, approximately 30% of seniors in our public high schools fail to graduate.
- Teachers are the top in-school factor affecting student achievement. A good—or bad—teacher has a greater impact on student outcomes than class size, school culture, or parental involvement in school.
- Focusing on the *change* in student learning, as opposed to a single test score, is important. Many high-need students enter middle or high school already a grade or more behind. A teacher who not only keeps that gap from widening but also narrows it is producing impact, even if a student's raw test score remains below grade level.
- **What is a high-quality teacher?** A teacher who has a positive impact on student learning. They are lifelong learners in their subject areas, teach with commitment, and are reflective about their teaching practices. In addition to deep knowledge about subject matter and the learning process, high-quality teachers have strong diagnostic skills, an understanding of learning styles and cultural influences, knowledge about child and adolescent development, and the ability to marshal a broad range of techniques to meet student needs. They set high expectations and support students in meeting them. They establish an environment conducive to learning and leverage available resources outside as well as inside the classroom.

## PART 1: IMPROVING INDIVIDUAL TEACHERS' SKILLS

- Secondary students with the greatest needs are taught by a revolving door of teachers with the least experience and skill to address their needs. Approximately one-third of K-12 teachers leave the profession within their first three years, and almost half leave by year five.
- Four key challenges to **improving individual teacher's skills**:
  1. Lack of selectivity for recruitment into the profession
  2. Teacher training that is disconnected from practice
  3. Lack of instructional support for new teachers
  4. Ineffective professional development
- **Model in Practice: Year-Long Apprenticeships in High-Need Schools**
  - Nonprofit: Urban Teacher Residencies United (UTRU)
  - **Bang for Buck**: ~ \$60-\$134 per secondary student taught by a residency program graduate:
    - i. 70% higher gains in student test scores measuring mastery of content in key areas, such as reading.
    - ii. 66%-84% improvement in teacher retention rates, even in high-need schools. For a district, this represents significant savings of an estimated \$10,000 - \$18,000 in replacement costs per teacher lost.
- **Model in Practice: Comprehensive In-School Mentoring Support**
  - Nonprofit: New Teacher Center
  - **Bang for Buck**: ~ \$34-\$40 per secondary student who is taught by a new teacher, based on the nonprofit New Teacher Center's reported costs:
    - i. Gains on standardized tests that are enough to move the average student 4 percentile points in reading and 8 percentile points in math — improvements that can make an important difference for high-need students who need accelerated learning to close achievement gaps.
    - ii. Teacher effectiveness after the 2-year program that is greater than the average 3rd-year teacher and equal to the average 4th-year teacher.
    - iii. 76% improvement over national teacher retention rates.

## PART 2: CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR GREAT TEACHING

- About half of teacher turnover is due to dissatisfaction. Turnover in high-poverty schools is 50% higher than in low-poverty schools, averaging around 19-26% annually.
- Four key challenges to **creating an enabling school environment**:
  1. Structural barriers to forming relationships with peers, students, and parents
  2. Lack of professional culture and pay structure that reward performance
  3. Unsafe physical environment and student behavioral problems
  4. Lack of leaders prepared to lead high-need schools
- **Model in Practice: Recruiting, Training, and Supporting New Principals for High-Need Schools**
  - Nonprofit: New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS)
  - **Bang for Buck**: ~ \$170 per secondary student, in a school led by a principal who received high quality training and support:
    - i. Gains on standardized tests that are enough to move the average middle school student up 2.4 percentile points in math and 2.5 percentile points in reading. For high-need students, such accelerated annual growth is critical to closing achievement gaps.
    - ii. Approximately 2.5 times increase in the percent of middle schools where at least 90% of students are on track to perform at grade level within five to seven years. Such gains are significant in high-need schools, where students often enter several grade levels behind.
    - iii. 14% improvement in graduation rates over the district average, despite a higher need student population.
- **Model in Practice: Enhancing the quality of public high schools - Alternative charter school model**
  - Nonprofit: Green Dot Public Schools
  - **Bang for Buck 1**: Average annual cost of \$8,400 per high school student attending a new charter school, produces these student impacts:
    - i. Four times greater growth in learning as measured by a variety of academic measures, compared with other public high schools in the same neighborhood and district.
    - ii. 12% improvement in graduation rates for Green Dot schools over comparable schools.
    - iii. 86% of graduating students going on to attend two or four-year colleges, despite serving high-need student populations.
  - **Bang for Buck 2**: Average annual cost of \$9,800 per high school student, a school turnaround can result in the following impacts in the first two years:
    - i. 50% decrease in the two-year student attrition rate.
    - ii. 48% – 75% increase in the number of high school students enrolled in courses required for college enrollment.
- **Model in Practice: Redesigning district schools to improve the learning environment for teachers/students**
  - Nonprofit: Generation Schools
  - **Bang for Buck**: ~ \$15,000 per high school student, the school's initial start-up phase in New York has resulted in the following impacts:
    - i. 70% of students passing exams required for graduation, despite the fact that only 20% of students entered the school performing at grade level.
    - ii. More than a two-fold increase in the number of students on track to graduate on time.

## PART 3: WHAT DONORS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE BROADER POLICY ENVIRONMENT

- The policy environment can limit, expand, or sustain the impact of philanthropy.
- Two Examples of Holistic District Reform
  1. Atlanta Public School District: Philanthropy played a role in developing human capital strategies. The Gates Foundation supported the Effective Teacher in Every Classroom (ETEC) Initiative. The Wallace Foundation partnered to create the Superintendent's Academy for Building Leaders in Education (SABLE).
  2. Denver Public Schools (DPS): Philanthropy played a role in developing evaluation tools to better measure teacher effectiveness in the classroom and in supporting teacher residency programs.



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