

TEACH +PLUS

**Opportunities for Teachers,
Results for Urban Students**

Fifteen Ideas for Promoting Effective Teaching in MCS with Master Teachers

Teach Plus and the Teacher Effectiveness Initiative in Memphis City Schools have in common a core belief that increasing student learning requires having effective teachers. The Teacher Effectiveness Initiative, guided by four strategies, has specific goals that will directly impact teachers. As classroom teachers in Memphis, we hope the development and implementation of these policies will include us. This brief is focused on recommendations for Strategy 2 of the TEI—to better support, utilize, and compensate teachers. We are highly interested in the goal of developing the role of a “master teacher.”

We offer the following recommendations for the master teacher role in MCS. We believe that if we well-structure this role, master teachers will have a larger impact on student achievement in the district.

Create clear, transparent definitions and processes to identify master teachers.

1. Identify master teachers using a combination of measures such as: growth in student learning, results on the revised teacher effectiveness measures, student feedback, demonstrated knowledge of content, anticipated contributions to colleagues' knowledge.
2. Recognize master teachers for their accomplishments. In Chattanooga, the mayor hosted an annual dinner with terrific teachers. We appreciate this kind of recognition and want the criteria for invitations to be transparent to all.

Tap into master teachers to promote effective teaching across the district.

3. Compile a list of master teachers who are willing to be observed, including their subjects, grade level and school.
4. Match MCS professional development sessions to master teacher expertise: Give master teachers opportunities to lead professional development sessions. Giving master teachers additional responsibilities such as leadership in professional development for teachers will expand their impact and enable them to reach more students. Set up an “observation station” in mentor teachers' classrooms for observers that includes long-term planning documents, daily lesson plans and samples of student work.
5. Bring master teachers in specific subjects together to design lessons and assessments, especially in non-tested subjects.
6. Film master teachers at work. Use the videotapes in an “Effective Practice” library.
7. Offer Saturday Sessions with master teachers, during which master teachers provide one-on-one support to teachers with specific, identified needs.

Assign master teachers – our best resource – strategically.

8. Cluster master teachers so that they are not alone; focus on the students and schools that need them the most.

Keep them: Focus on retention.

9. Give master teachers additional planning time to be used to observe or meet with other teachers, especially teachers who are struggling in the area in which the master teacher has demonstrated success.
10. Let master teachers teach as much as possible. Streamline paperwork, especially for master teachers; focus every minute on teaching students or teaching teachers.
11. Give master teachers an extra resource budget to purchase resources to be used in working with novice teachers.

Recognize that master teachers want to get better, too!

One of the hallmarks of a successful person is that he or she is constantly striving to get better. The same is true of effective teachers in MCS. These teachers never rest on their laurels; they seek constantly to improve, to be stronger, to meet more students and accelerate them. They want opportunities to learn from other master teachers and to be continuously challenged and grow. In fact, these teachers are frustrated when their learning reaches a plateau. To retain them, keep them challenged and provide learning opportunities for them.

12. Support master teachers to meet with other master teachers to promote even greater levels of effectiveness.
13. Provide opportunities for master teachers to compete for funding to increase their knowledge or learning. For example, in Chicago, the district conducts competitions for teachers to participate in the “Fund for Teachers”; the competitive funding pays for teachers to pursue specific learning opportunities during the summer. A master art teacher might apply to go to Italy for three weeks to study Renaissance painting and bring that learning back to her students. A biology teacher might apply for a stipend to offset costs to work in a research lab during the summer.

Align new evaluation and compensation systems with opportunities for master teachers.

Right now, MCS is embarking on revising the evaluation and compensation structures through the work of the Teacher Effectiveness Initiative. We suggest the district build opportunities for master teachers into this revised system.

Specifically, we believe master teachers—proven teachers who have demonstrated their capacity to promote student learning in a variety of ways—should be given opportunities to serve as Peer Assistants and Reviewers if MCS moves to using this type of system in teacher evaluation. What better person to serve as an observer and evaluator than another teacher, especially one who is effective and has knowledge of the subject and grade level?

14. Select master teachers as Peer Assistants and Reviewers: Promote effectiveness among our own. Give master teachers first dibs at being Peer Assistants and Reviewers in a revised evaluation system.
15. Provide additional compensation for master teachers (stay tuned for our thoughts on this in our next Teach Plus Memphis Teaching Policy Fellows’ brief).

Memphis Teaching Policy Fellows 2010-2012

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The mission of Teach Plus is to improve outcomes for urban children by ensuring that a greater proportion of students have access to effective, experienced teachers. Teach Plus is grateful to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for their support. The views in this brief represent the Memphis Teaching Policy Fellows and Teach Plus. www.teachplus.org.