

6-2015

# Empowerment, Ownership, and Authentic Professional Learning: Meeting the Needs of Our Teachers Through Career Pathways

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EMPOWERMENT, OWNERSHIP & AUTHENTIC PROFESSIONAL LEARNING:  
MEETING THE NEEDS OF OUR TEACHERS THROUGH TEACHER CAREER  
PATHWAYS

Amber Field

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements of  
Doctor of Education  
in the Foster G. McGraw Graduate School

National College of Education  
National Louis University

June 2015

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## Abstract

This policy advocacy paper, the third part of a series on professional development (PD) in the charter management organization KIPP NYC, argues for the development and implementation of a Teacher Career Pathways structure. The recommended policy change would recognize senior and master teachers who plan to remain in the classroom for the longevity of their careers. This structure allows teachers to design their own professional development plans, provides them with a stipend to participate in high-quality PD, and expands their reach to other teachers who will in turn benefit from the former's instructional leadership. This advocacy document analyzes the educational, economic, social, political, moral, and ethical need for such a change. After describing the policy, it examines the challenges that may result from its implementation. Implementation and assessment plans are also described.

## Preface

This policy advocates for the creation of a teacher career pathway for educators who foresee a long-term future in the classroom. These educators, who will be designated as senior and master teachers, will be able to design their own professional learning plans, receive stipends to participate in high-level professional development (PD), and will lead other teachers, who will greatly benefit from these collaborative experiences. This policy flows seamlessly from the *Program Evaluation*, which assessed KIPP NYC's PD structures and found that the organization is in need of more collaborative structures. That work led to the development of the *Change Plan*, which structured the establishment of professional learning communities (PLCs) throughout the region. Our strongest teachers lead PLCs, and this policy arose from the need to support their development. I noticed their instructional development was inconsistent, and this policy ensures they receive the support they need to be continuous learners.

This process has had a tremendous impact on what I have learned about leadership. The original design of this policy reflected an all-encompassing policy that tied salary to the career pathway in addition to the PD support system. The plan spanned over five years, and the first cohort of senior teachers was not to be identified for at least another year. As I refined the policy, I recognized that while it is important to develop and implement grand plans that positively impact student achievement, smaller steps that support the realization of those plans can be taken in the interim. This was an important leadership lesson for me because I have often been paralyzed by the planning process. In my attempts to create and implement large-scale projects, I lose urgency in addressing the issues they were designed to tackle. The work on this policy allowed me to deconstruct

the larger goal into smaller, yet equally powerful objectives. I learned that these well-planned steps move us closer to the ultimate goal of providing excellent instruction for all students, rather than keeping us frozen in a planning process that benefits no one. We will continue to work toward creating a salary structure that honors teaching as a profession and ensures its place as a viable career option, but we will also take immediate action in response to the needs of exceptional educators. I am grateful for the opportunity to have learned such a valuable lesson.

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## **SECTION ONE: VISION STATEMENT**

### **Introduction**

Twenty years ago, David Levin founded KIPP Academy Middle School in New York City's South Bronx, with the vision of doing whatever it takes to ensure all students learn. Levin and the school's first teacher, Frank Corcoran, taught each day with relentless focus, "constantly pushing students to go further and do better" (Matthews, 2009, p. 211). Although the school was new and considered experimental at the time, Corcoran thought, "KIPP might actually make progress, if they could keep it together" (Matthews, 2009, p. 210). This drive resulted in KIPP Academy holding court as the highest performing middle school in the Bronx during the 1998–1999 school year; KIPP students' reading and mathematics scores were higher than those of any other Bronx middle school program (Education World, 2015). At that time, KIPP teachers put in 10-hour workdays and frequently observed each other in order to improve. Hard work and collaboration still represent the tenets of effective professional learning, and KIPP NYC's approach to professional development has evolved.

### **Critical Issues**

KIPP NYC currently employs over 500 teachers, and we expect everyone to meet the same bar of excellence Levin and Corcoran set two decades ago. Throughout our 11 schools, teachers participate in workshops and meet regularly with managers. There are also some effective professional learning communities established throughout the region. These structures engage all teachers in professional learning, yet they are ineffective at meeting the various needs of our most effective teachers. As the director of professional development, I gather input from our teachers in order to design professional learning

experiences. As cited in the *Program Evaluation*, some teachers speak highly of the workshops and support they receive early in their KIPP NYC tenure, but they also feel that development opportunities are inconsistent once they have been within the organization for three or more years. Jasmine, who has been with KIPP for six years, says that during her first two years the KIPP NYC Days were “everything she needed for lesson planning and building up content knowledge,” but now they do not meet her where she is. At this point, experienced teachers leave the classroom for leadership positions, leave the organization, or experience a growth plateau (TNTP, 2012). Unless KIPP NYC addresses the need for more advanced professional development, it runs the risk of losing its most experienced teachers. Another risk involves growth stagnation: if teachers are not developing, students cannot reach their highest academic potential. We are in need of a comprehensive system that supports the continuous growth of our most effective teachers, because all teachers need professional development that “changes teaching practice and improves student achievement” (Darling-Hammond, Wei, & Andree, 2010, p. 1). In this paper, I propose a policy that aims to keep our best teachers in the classroom and support their constant growth.

### **Recommended Policy and Envisioned Effect**

This policy paper advocates for KIPP NYC to create a pathway for excellent teachers who want to remain in the classroom for the duration of their educational careers. The initiative, which will be called Teacher Career Pathways, is a systematic and coordinated approach to recognizing and developing excellent teachers as they progress through a clearly articulated path for growth. Teachers with four or more years of experience can apply to become ‘senior teachers’; those teachers will be eligible to apply

for ‘master teacher’ status after two years as senior teachers. KIPP NYC Teacher Career Pathways educators who achieve senior or master status design their own professional learning plan, serve as teacher leaders in ways that “align their responsibilities with their teaching and leadership strengths” (Public Impact, 2014, p. 5), and receive professional development stipends that support their learning needs. This structure encourages effective teachers to stay in the classroom longer, as well as expand their reach beyond their classrooms to other teachers and ultimately to all students.

This policy employs the best practices of adult learning and honors teachers as lifelong learners. Rather than rely solely on manager-driven workshops and coaching, it formally empowers our best teachers to design their own professional learning experiences. At a certain level, teachers will be able to develop an individualized development plan that reflects their specific learning needs. Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009) support the “kind of context-specific professional learning and action research that has been found to be more effective in catalyzing change in teaching practice than the generic workshops that are common in the US” (p. 4). Furthermore, this policy leverages what is known about how adults learn:

Adults will make sense of their experiences in developmentally different ways. Therefore, we need to attend to developmental diversity in order to understand and attend to our different ways of knowing. A person’s way of knowing shapes how she understands her role and responsibilities as a teacher, leader, and learner, and how she thinks about what makes a good teacher, what makes a good leader, what constitutes effective teaching practice, and the types of supports and developmental challenges she needs from colleagues to grow from professional learning opportunities. (Drago-Severson, 2008, p. 61)

This policy acknowledges that teachers know themselves best, and thus should play a significant role in determining how to learn as well as improve their practice.

Ultimately, as a result of this policy, we will create a culture of continuous learning that “models for . . . students how knowledge is created” (Mills, 2003, p. 11). Additionally, we will see an urgent focus on teacher growth and development. According to Gabriel Diaz-Maggioli (2004), we learn best when we are invested in our development: when professional learning includes opportunities for teachers to identify their own goals and draw their own conclusions about areas for growth, there is an increased motivation, understanding, and urgency around meeting those goals. A community of invested learners sees challenges not as deterrents from success, but rather as pathways to get there. Furthermore, this policy benefits the community because it engages everyone in the development of innovative solutions, subsequently opening doors to new opportunities. Lastly, we ideally build an authentic culture in which all stakeholders believe that they matter, that their ideas are appreciated, and that their opinions count.

This paper will analyze the need for such a policy. It will then provide a thorough explanation of the policy and examine its benefits and challenges. Lastly, this paper will describe how the policy will be implemented and how its effectiveness will be measured.

## SECTION TWO: ANALYSIS OF NEED

Beth (pseudonym) is a well-respected teacher and instructional coach at one of KIPP NYC's middle schools. She enjoys her work but feels she has grown little over the last two years. Pleased with her work, her principal struggles to provide feedback that pushes her practice: he says he is unsure of what she needs to be developed. He does, however, give her permission to craft an experience for herself. Taking ownership for her own learning, Beth develops a plan she feels will help her grow. She says she learns best by seeing what other people do and engaging those people in conversation, so Beth finds a colleague with a similar role at a nearby school and arranges to spend the day with him. She observes his coaching sessions, reviews his calendar, and has conversations with him about the issues they each face. Beth participates in this visitation wanting to know how someone else does the work that she does. She looks for differences and sees them as new insights to incorporate into her own practice. This experience encourages her by highlighting strategies she has not previously considered. According to Beth, "This was the single most impactful experience of the year" (personal communication, March 10, 2014). Unfortunately, this is also Beth's last year with the organization. After 13 years with KIPP NYC, she feels that opportunities to grow are limited and misaligned with her needs. At some point, the work shifted from invigorating and challenging to restrictive and frustrating. Barring other factors that may have influenced her decision, Teacher Career Pathways could have provided Beth with structured opportunities to work with colleagues, to reflect upon new insights, and to freely experiment with new strategies so that she felt her growth within the organization was limitless. Perhaps then she would

have wanted to stay. This section examines why Teacher Career Pathways makes that possible.

### **Educational Analysis**

According to a RAND Education fact sheet (2012), “Teachers matter more to student achievement than any other aspect of schooling” (para. 2). Furthermore, Grover J. Whitehurst, director of the Institute of Education Sciences, stated that “a student who has effective teachers for three straight years is likely to score more than 50 percentile points higher on standardized tests than a student who has ineffective teachers” (as cited in Barnett & Ritter, 2008, para. 2). Effective teachers, while not solely defined by years of experience, still require some time to grow in the classroom. Therefore, we need to keep our teachers in the classroom so they can become as effective as possible to successfully impact student achievement. Additional support for this need comes from a study published through the National Bureau of Economic Research. The study’s findings support the claim that students do worse on ELA and math exams in years where teacher turnover rates are higher, as compared to years with less teacher turnover (Ronfeldt, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2011).

Due to these significant findings, it is necessary to address teacher attrition. In 2014, the Alliance for Excellent Education and the New Teacher Center (NTC) reported that approximately 457,000 teachers (13% of America’s 3.4 million public school teachers) move or leave schools annually, and between 40 and 50 percent quit within five years (Haynes, 2014). The report further states that “high annual turnover rates seriously compromise the nation’s capacity to ensure that all students have access to skilled teaching” (p. 2). The 2013 KIPP Report Card states that 18% of KIPP NYC teachers left

the classroom by the end of the 2012-2013 school year (KIPP Foundation, 2014, p. 55). With this amount of attrition, even strong teachers within this organization may be able to “achieve one year of learning progress” for students; however, without the consistency of excellent teaching every year, “achievement gaps remain intact” (Public Impact, 2014, p. 1). In order for KIPP NYC to keep its promise of ensuring all students learn and have consistent access to excellent instruction, we must keep our effective teachers in the classroom.

### **Common Core State Standards**

The implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) presents another opportunity to examine the educational need for Teacher Career Pathways. Some teachers who choose to leave the classroom cite the lack of high quality professional learning opportunities throughout their tenure that would allow them to learn new initiatives and “adjust to the newest teaching styles” (Bisaillon, 2013, para. 5). Teachers are in need of significant support in order to successfully incorporate the new standards into their practice.

With the development of the CCSS, students are being held to higher standards. These standards “provide clear and consistent learning goals to help prepare students for college, career, and life. The standards clearly demonstrate what students are expected to learn at each grade level” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2015, para. 1). Students are expected to engage in more rigorous work that will prepare them for college and career, so these changes to the curriculum are necessary. Based on the results of the 2012 PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), American students are scoring lower than other nations. In a book review of *The Smartest Kids in the World:*

*And How They Got That Way* (2013), David-Lang (2013) explains that “while the US scored a respectable twelfth in the world in *reading* on the PISA, we attained the below-average spot of twenty-sixth in math” (p. 2). The effective implementation of these standards depends upon teacher development: the instructor must have a deep conceptual understanding of the standards in order to ensure students experience maximum success with them. Teacher Career Pathways provides more opportunities for “teachers to develop specific pedagogical content knowledge” (Murray, 2014, p. 14). As we learn more about what it takes to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, schools are starting to take a closer look at the strategies used to ensure students are learning at high levels. Students are expected to learn more “complex analytical skills, . . .and teachers must learn to teach in ways that develop higher-order thinking and performance” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009, p. 7) Therefore, professional learning experiences must reflect those types of learning opportunities. Drill-and-kill and lecture style strategies do not represent the 21<sup>st</sup> century thinker. Senior and Master Teachers keep their instructional knowledge and practice current through professional development that meets their needs, and in turn share that knowledge with colleagues.

### **Teacher Collaboration**

Finally, this policy serves the dual purpose of employing one of the most impactful approaches to professional development. In the *Change Plan*, I draw on Murray’s work to support the claim that “progress is made when . . .teachers learn together and work together toward the common goal of increasing student learning” (Murray, 2014, p. 27). Teacher Career Pathways employs teacher collaboration by illuminating each teacher’s impact outside the walls of his or her classroom. Our best teachers will

serve as models for excellent instruction and engage with others in order to share their best practices. Public Impact’s Opportunity Culture serves as a model for this component of the policy. Its goal is to give all students access to excellent teaching by “extending the reach of excellent teachers to far more students, directly and by leading teaching teams” (Public Impact, 2014, p. 1). Depending upon the skill and interest of Senior and Master Teachers, they will lead professional learning communities that engage in student work and data analysis, lesson study, and curriculum and assessment development. As a result, teachers will expand their impact without having to leave the classroom environment behind. Teacher collaboration has a substantial impact on teacher growth, and, as stated above, high quality teachers have a direct and positive effect on student achievement.

### **Economic Analysis**

Teacher Career Pathways can have significant financial implications for KIPP NYC. One such implication this section will examine is how it will attract and keep teachers in a profession known to underpay its workers. The second examines the high cost of teacher turnover. Teacher Career Pathways aims to save KIPP NYC the money it spends on recruiting, hiring, and training.

### **Financial Support**

The Center for Teaching Quality has found that the highest-performing countries<sup>1</sup> invest a substantial amount of money in developing their teachers. Singapore, for example, pays for graduate school and “each year, all teachers are entitled to 100 hours of professional development paid for by the Ministry” (Center for Teaching Quality, 2014, p. 10). In contrast, the US does not have a consistent approach to paying for continuing education for its teachers; many teachers must spend their own money on development

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<sup>1</sup> Countries are ranked according to student performance on the PISA and TIMSS.

(Center for Teaching Quality, 2014). The Teacher Career Pathways policy proposes the creation of the Teacher Opportunity Fund (TOF), which will support the goals developed in individual PD plans. Through the reallocation of regional professional development funds, the TOF ensures teacher development is not limited by budgetary constraints. Furthermore, KIPP NYC is committed to designing learning opportunities that reflect effective PD. Currently, the regional budget supports large-scale isolated events. Starting in the 2015-2016 school year, the organization will minimize these events led by external presenters and maximize smaller events that call upon the leadership of senior and master teachers and provide opportunities for teacher collaboration. The TOF gives excellent teachers access to learning that is aligned with their needs.

Some KIPP NYC teachers state that professional development within the first few years of the organization is strong, providing a solid foundation for teaching and school culture expectations. However, after this point, school and regional offerings inconsistently address the specific needs of the teachers who have been working for KIPP three or more years. It is then that teachers seek external professional opportunities. New York City is home to nationally renowned universities and programs that offer professional development; however, KIPP NYC does not have a structured policy regarding how to use organizational funds to pay for these experiences. In my role, I share external opportunities with teachers and am often asked if KIPP NYC will pay for the class, workshop, or coaching. If the experience does not support an organizational initiative or goal, we do not pay for it.

Additionally, each school has a professional development budget, but its size and usage regulations vary by school. Unfortunately, teachers inconsistently take advantage

of external opportunities because they must pay for the cost. Teacher Career Pathways brings clarity to the teachers who wish to seek external opportunities as well as structure for all teachers to ensure they know what is available. Furthermore, Teacher Career Pathways assures teachers that the organization values their continued learning and will get them the needed resources when we do not have them. Lastly, KIPP NYC is not yet able to tie teacher performance to salary; nevertheless, Teacher Career Pathways provides the financial support needed to participate in some high quality learning experiences. This is a step to reassure teachers that with KIPP NYC, they can “afford to teach” (Kopkowski, 2008, para. 29).

### **Money Saver**

In 2005, the Alliance for Excellent Education estimated the cost of replacing public school teachers in the United States at \$4.9 billion per year (Shockley, Guglielmo, & Watlington, 2006). High turnover rates cost schools money that could be used to ensure all students learn. To further illustrate this point, consider a study finding that each ‘leaver’ cost one district \$9,501 due to recruiting, hiring, and training costs (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007). The average US per pupil spending amount in 2014 was \$10,608 (Badger, 2014). In some states, per pupil funding is far below what it costs to replace a teacher. This data alone support the urgent need for Teacher Career Pathways, which effectively addresses the need to improve teacher support and development—one of the reasons teachers leave. By investing in the development of teachers, we will spend less on recruiting and hiring and ultimately be able to invest more money in tools, resources, and materials used directly with students in the classroom.

## **Social and Political Analysis**

Historically, teachers have preferred to work alone because they “find working alone safer than and preferable to working together” (Barth, as cited in DuFour, 2004, para. 29), but this approach to teaching does not result in the kind of student outcomes needed to close the achievement gap. Teacher Career Pathways aims to strengthen the school community by recognizing excellent teaching and giving teachers the honor that the profession deserves. Furthermore, this policy fosters teacher collaboration: teachers rely on professional models of excellence, and Teacher Career Pathways names those teachers and makes them available to other teachers who wish to learn from them.

Teachers appreciate recognition, and Teacher Career Pathways identifies senior and master teachers within KIPP NYC. Current structures do little to differentiate between high performing and novice teachers outside of giving the more experienced teachers additional leadership responsibilities. While some teachers welcome these duties, some prefer to focus on the students in the classroom. Teacher Career Pathways honors this decision and recognizes that there are stages teachers go through on the path to becoming excellent. Tucker (2014) contrasts the teaching profession with the law profession in order to support this point:

For most teachers, the job they have on their last day in the classroom is the same as it was on the day they became a teacher. Contrast this with the law firm, or the military or an engineering firm. Focus for a moment on the law firm. Recent law school graduates don't sign up to be junior associates for the rest of their lives. Their aim is to make partner, maybe senior partner, maybe even managing partner. As they move up the ladder, they get more pay, more responsibility, more autonomy and greater status in the eyes of their colleagues and in the larger community. My guess is that the regard if not the admiration of their colleagues is worth at least as much as the pay to them. (para. 6)

As with other professions, Teacher Career Pathways serves to commend, honor, and recognize growth. It also shifts the paradigm about what additional responsibility comes along with success. This structure assumes that “all professionals are capable of assuming responsibility for their own professional growth and development” (Mills, 2003, p. 5). As in other professions, Teacher Career Pathways acknowledges that a teacher is indeed a professional, or a “certified expert who is afforded prestige and autonomy in return for performing at a high level, which includes making complex and disinterested judgments under conditions of uncertainty” (Gardner, 2011, para. 2). Lastly, in a profession, where workers selflessly serve the students and community, this policy ensures that high performing teachers get the recognition they deserve.

### **Creating a Culture of Collaboration**

Research has shown that teacher collaboration greatly impacts student achievement and teacher satisfaction (Markow, Macia, & Lee, 2013). When we encourage collaboration across teachers, “they work smarter by working together” (as cited in Honawar, 2008, para. 3). A major component to the success of our teachers is the opportunity for structured and focus-driven collaboration with other teachers. Working collectively toward a goal or toward the solution to a problem develops community. A group of teachers rallied around the same purpose encourages, supports, and motivates each other to accomplish the goals they set out to achieve. By working together, sharing best practices, and teaching each other what works, educators develop a sense of accountability to each other, to students and their families, and to the entire school community (Inger, 1993). Teacher Career Pathways prioritizes teacher collaboration and

formalizes structures for teachers to learn from each other in order to more effectively replicate the excellence of senior and master teachers.

### **Moral and Ethical Analysis**

All children deserve access to the best teachers, and there is a moral imperative to ensure this. KIPP NYC is committed to providing the students it serves with an exceptional education—but this education is only as strong as the teachers providing it. If the best teachers are not staying in the classroom, KIPP NYC will fail to achieve its mission. According to Barnett and Ritter (2008), “Many researchers maintain that improving the quality of the nation's teaching force is the best policy intervention for raising student achievement” (para. 2). Additionally, the Alliance for Excellent Education provides statistics showing that “high-poverty schools experience a teacher turnover rate of about 20 percent per calendar year—roughly 50 percent higher than the rate in more affluent schools” (Haynes, 2014, p. 3). The study further states, “The price tag for recruitment and replacement seriously underestimates the cumulative costs eroding the caliber and stability of the teacher workforce, particularly in chronically underperforming schools serving the neediest students” (p. 3). Two of KIPP NYC’s lowest-performing middle schools lose teachers at higher rates than the other schools, and their student achievement data support the claim that turnover can be detrimental to student academic success. If a policy such as Teacher Career Pathways can extend the reach of excellent teachers throughout the region, and if KIPP NYC believes that “all of the students are all of ours,” then its implementation is unquestionable.

Our best teachers must stay in the classroom because what they do matters: if student achievement is dependent upon excellent teaching, then continuing to fall short of

properly developing and providing resources for our teachers sends the message that we are not willing to take the necessary steps toward improving our education system. It says that neither our children nor our teachers are worth the effort. Our educators should feel respected, honored, and valued given the responsibility they have to educate our country's children. Additionally, our educators should feel that teaching is a viable career, rather than a stepping-stone to a more lucrative profession. Teacher Career Pathways ensures that both our teachers and students thrive.

## SECTION THREE: POLICY ADVOCACY STATEMENT

### Introduction

In 2004, a group of business leaders, educators, and mathematicians founded Math for America, an organization that aims to “make teaching a viable, rewarding, and respected career choice for the best minds in science and mathematics” (Math for America, 2013a, para. 1). Over ten years later, it supports hundreds of teachers committed to providing students with an excellent STEM education, as well as their own professional development through collaboration. This successful program embodies the vision of Teacher Career Pathways, because it believes that all students deserve to be taught by an inspiring and expert teacher and that all excellent teachers deserve prestige and support. The Math for America website succinctly explains its values, which accurately describe the beliefs of our KIPP NYC policy:

*Teaching is a true profession.*

We have enormous respect for teachers as expert professionals and also as mathematicians and scientists. We honor their skills, creativity, and drive to do what they do every day.

*Great teachers are always learning.*

The best teachers strive to improve continually in three areas: their depth of content knowledge, their expertise in the craft of teaching, and their ability to know and teach to the strengths of every student in their classrooms.

*Excellence comes out of deep collaboration and ongoing growth.*

Great teachers need time, space, and opportunity to work with fellow experts to keep growing throughout their careers. When they come together as a

community to exchange ideas and challenge each other, they not only become better—they define excellence itself.

*Teacher accountability should be complex.*

Great teaching is a complex craft, and we should evaluate it—and teachers—in sophisticated and meaningful ways that advance the profession.

*Honoring greatness elevates the profession.*

When we celebrate, promote, and advocate for the best teachers today, we raise the prestige of the whole profession and attract the best possible candidates to a career in the classroom. (Math for America, 2013b, paras. 4-8)

Math for America serves as a model for Teacher Career Pathways because it focuses on supporting our best teachers and keeping them in the classroom. Additionally, Teacher Career Pathways seeks to improve other teachers by leveraging the excellence of KIPP NYC’s top educators, just as Math for America does. This section will thoroughly explain the Teacher Career Pathways policy as well as its goals and objectives.

### **Teaching is a True Profession**

In the fields of law, medicine, and finance, workers start at an entry level and work their way to positions such as managing partner, chief resident, or vice president. Through years of experience and achievement, workers reach these levels and are honored with titles, additional responsibilities, and peer recognition. In contrast, if teachers choose to stay in the classroom, teachers may leave the profession after many years at the same level at which they entered (Tucker, 2014). Considering the profound

impact that teaching has on lives, teachers deserve a formal structure that elevates them through the ranks and honors their choice to remain in the classroom. Teacher Career Pathways does this by creating two career growth tracks for excellent KIPP NYC teachers: The senior and master teacher positions give teachers access to differentiated learning opportunities that meet their advanced needs, allow for increased autonomy through the responsibility of driving one's own professional learning, formalize the impact excellent teachers have on the greater community through structured collaborative experiences, and compensate teachers for their experience through professional learning grants.

### **Senior and Master Teachers**

Senior and master teachers represent KIPP NYC's standard of teaching excellence, and they have at least four years of classroom experience. According to TNTP (2012), teachers plateau between three to five years, and Teacher Career Pathways aims to engage teachers at the point where they feel their options to grow are becoming limited. Furthermore, teachers designated as 'senior' or 'master' are committed to staying in the classroom for at least four additional years. Within this time span, senior and master teachers can affect change through collaboration with others who may also reach this status.

At this level, teachers are expected to demonstrate excellence in the areas of student learning and instruction. Student learning is comprised of evidence that 90% or more of students are growing and learning in the teacher's classroom by at least 1.5 years. Teachers will submit at least two data points that represent the impact of their instruction on student learning. For K-8 teachers, one of those data points must be the

MAP<sup>2</sup>, which KIPP NYC administers to all K-8 students. This assessment has a strong correlation with student SAT scores. While it is not perfect, it represents one reliable and consistent data point. High school teachers must submit either New York State Regents or Advanced Placement exam scores. Teachers must also submit at least one other student data point that provides evidence of impact in the classroom. Examples of this include STEP<sup>3</sup>, F&P<sup>4</sup>, SRI<sup>5</sup>, interim, and midterm assessment results. This standard represents KIPP NYC's commitment to prioritizing student learning.

Teachers wishing to be considered for this position must also provide evidence of exceptional instruction as measured by key behaviors in the KIPP Framework for Excellent Teaching (KFET). The KFET describes over 40 effective teaching behaviors, and the Teacher Career Pathways focuses on nine of them, following the lead of New Mexico's Board of Education's Professional Development Dossier expectations (Darling-Hammond, 2013). These criteria are further differentiated in the senior and master teacher rubric (see Appendix A):

1. Knows the essential content, concepts and big ideas of the discipline well enough to create questions that teach and assess them.
2. Matches materials/explanatory devices to objectives.
3. Provides ongoing and specific affirming and adjusting feedback about academics and character to students.
4. Uses knowledge of the developmental ranges of what students can do academically to inform planning and instruction.

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<sup>2</sup> KIPP uses the nationally norm-referenced test Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) to measure growth and college readiness as well as compare the performance of KIPP students to their peers nationally.

<sup>3</sup> STEP is a reading level system used in grades K-4.

<sup>4</sup> F&P is a reading level system used in grades K-8.

<sup>5</sup> SRI (Scholastic Reading Inventory) is a reading assessment used in grades 3-8.

5. Assesses all students to inform teaching regularly.
6. Creates a classroom where kids are proud to be and you can tell.
7. Provides students with opportunities to make choices and to influence the classroom culture.
8. Seeks feedback and data early and often and adjusts as needed.
9. Researches, observes, experiments, shares, and collaborates. (KIPP Foundation, 2011)

Along with student data points, teachers will submit student work, manager observation notes, KIPP NYC Growth and Development plans<sup>6</sup>, parent and student surveys, and other relevant resources as evidence to support their status as senior and master teachers. Other relevant resources play a significant role in the designation of teachers in these positions, as they represent a teacher's breadth of professional knowledge. Teachers may also submit transcripts verifying the successful completion of relevant coursework. Furthermore, teachers may include evidence of their extensive participation in "meaningful professional development...such as conferences, summer institutes, and school-based efforts" (Math for America, 2013c, para. 8).

The culminating requirement for senior and master teacher selection includes the applicant's letter of interest, which explains his or her overall qualifications and expectations for how the position will support his or her own development, impact student achievement, and benefit the teaching community. Lastly, teachers will include a

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<sup>6</sup> All teachers receive midyear and end-of-year reviews aligned with the KIPP Framework for Excellent Teaching.

letter of recommendation from their school leaders that should reflect a demonstrated excellence in student learning and instruction.

This approach “creates an aligned system that focuses teachers on what their students learn as a result of their teaching decisions, and on how they can learn to improve their effectiveness” (Darling-Hammond, 2013, p. 42).

### **Decision-Making Rights**

Teachers interested in attaining senior teacher status submit their complete application in the fall of each year to the selection committee consisting of the superintendent, senior director of curriculum, assessment, and instruction, managing director, and two senior teacher peers. One of the peers teaches the same subject as the applicant. The student achievement data and instructional excellence evidence will be weighted and used to assign each applicant a point value to ensure decisions are as minimally subjective as possible. Each cohort of senior and master teachers is selected by the end of the first quarter and announced to the KIPP NYC community at the regional conference in December.

Master teachers must first qualify for senior teacher status. After two years, senior teachers may apply for master teacher status by submitting an application that reflects the behaviors of master teachers as described in the rubric (see Appendix A). The master teacher selection committee is comprised of the superintendent, senior director of curriculum, assessment, and instruction, and two master teacher peers. If possible, one of the peers teaches the same subject as the applicant.

Some teacher pathway programs rely solely on leadership to determine who qualifies for their tiered teaching positions, whereas this policy asks teachers to apply for

senior and master teacher status. Teacher Career Pathways draws on research that states that we learn best when we are invested in our development. When professional learning includes opportunities for teachers to identify their own goals and draw their own conclusions about areas for growth, there is an increased motivation, understanding, and urgency around meeting those goals (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004). This structure supports the benefits of teachers and leaders engaging in this process together. In this way, teachers are taking ownership over their growth and development.

### **Great Teachers are Always Learning**

Once selected for senior or master teacher status, each teacher designs a robust professional development plan with the support of the school leader, direct manager, and senior director of curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Two of the goals of this policy are to give excellent teachers access to differentiated learning opportunities that meet their advanced needs and to allow for increased autonomy through the responsibility of driving one's own professional learning. The success of Teacher Career Pathways hinges on the creation and execution of each teacher's professional development plan.

### **Professional Learning Fellowship**

In the *Program Evaluation and Change Plan*, I include data from teacher interviews supporting the claim that KIPP NYC teachers feel professional learning opportunities appropriately aligned with their needs weaken the longer they stay with the organization. Furthermore, there are few available opportunities that grow along with them. Therefore, the Professional Learning Fellowship seeks to match senior and master teachers with high-quality professional development that meets their needs and experience level. Drago-Severson (2008) identifies four pillars for adult learning that

“support transformational learning or growth” (p.62). The fellowship draws on these pillars: teaming, providing leadership roles, collegial inquiry, and mentoring and “creates situations for adults to regularly think and talk about practice and encourages self-analysis” (p. 62). Additionally, it represents KIPP NYC’s commitment to designing professional development congruent with the learning principle that states, “Adults are internally motivated to learn and need to direct their own learning. They want to be involved in diagnosing, planning, implementing, and evaluating their own learning” (Roberts and Pruitt, as cited in Murray, 2014, p. 13)

Each yearlong fellowship strengthens a teacher’s content knowledge and pedagogy. It must also meet the standards of effective professional development insofar as the fellowship focuses on student learning and specific content, is extended over time and connected to practice, and aligns with school priorities and goals (Murray, 2014). The fellowship will also cultivate strong collaborative working relationships, which is discussed in depth in the next section.

The teacher works with the school leader, direct manager, and senior director of curriculum, assessment, and instruction to examine options and generate new ideas. New York City is home to an extensive amount of rich professional development opportunities, and KIPP NYC will build partnerships with those most aligned with our goals in order to facilitate our senior and master teachers' work with them. This will also match our excellent teachers with a peer group most effective at pushing their practice. Some examples include Math for America, Facing History, Teachers College Readers and Writers Workshop, Bank Street Saturday Math, and the American Museum of Natural History Teacher Institute. Teachers may also choose to create an independent

study that pulls together experiences from some of the country's top teaching organizations. Depending on the level, teachers may choose to travel to other schools or participate in online courses. Master teachers may use the fellowship to work toward National Board Certification (see Appendix B).

### **Teacher Opportunity Fund**

Tying teacher pay to performance is often the subject of intense debate. Those who support merit pay state that it recognizes teachers for performing well and treats teachers like professionals; the opposition argues that merit pay only uses one data point as the determining factor (Rosales, 2009). Rosales further explains the concern by stating that “when pay raises are based on student test scores, you’re only measuring a narrow piece of the teacher’s work” (para. 5).

KIPP NYC is carefully weighing the benefits and disadvantages of linking performance with pay, and will likely follow the lead of organizations like Achievement First, which create career paths that allow teachers to “move through the salary system for things that actually improve teaching and student learning, such as experience, knowledge, and skills (Rosales, 2009, para. 9). While the organization is not yet ready to align salary with student achievement, it can compensate teachers for their experience through professional learning grants: senior and master teachers will receive stipends to support the execution of their professional learning plans (see Appendix B).

Teacher Career Pathways emphasizes the tenets of effective professional development by empowering excellent teachers to design their own learning experiences. It also seeks to strengthen the entire teaching community by leveraging its best teachers.

The next section will explore the role Teacher Career Pathways plays in building strong collaborative working relationships within and across KIPP NYC schools.

### **Excellence Comes Out of Deep Collaboration and Ongoing Growth**

John Ewing, president of Math for America, states:

We start with the best teachers and believe that bringing them together, giving them a chance to work together, and then giving them a chance to work with other teachers — to reach out to their colleagues and to young teachers and teachers in training — that this is the right way to make teaching into the kind of profession that I think really good people will find attractive. If you don't do that, if teaching becomes less and less attractive as a profession because of all the things that are going on right now, I don't care how hard you try. You're not going to get great people to go into teaching. (Harding, 2013, para. 10)

According to research cited in Murray (2014), adults prefer to work in teams when they can share ideas and develop new perspectives. Many of the teachers I interviewed in the *Program Evaluation and Change Plan* state that they attribute their own growth to working with other excellent teachers. Teacher Career Pathways incorporates these findings into its structure, since KIPP NYC believes that we can keep strong teachers in the classroom and increase their impact: more teachers can learn from our senior and master teachers and become excellent teachers themselves. Because of the positive impact that teacher collaboration has on student learning, KIPP NYC ensures that our best teachers are able to work with others. We feel that we are all responsible for the success of all of our students, and we allow senior and master teachers to design collaborative structures that align with their needs and support the development of teachers in their schools. Teacher Career Pathways formalizes the impact excellent teachers have on the greater community through structured collaborative experiences.

This policy is modeled on Drago-Severson's (2008) pillar practices to support teacher development. Through teaming and providing leadership roles, all teachers learn

from each other. In teams, senior and master teachers have the opportunity to “plan lessons together, share instructional practices, assess student work together, and observe each other’s teaching” (Murray, 2014, p. 17). The knowledge that senior and master teachers bring to these discussions allows for everyone to grow (Murray, 2014).

Honoring the importance of teacher input in professional learning design, senior and master teachers can choose to participate in collaborative learning structures such as action research, classroom lab sites, lesson study, looking at student work protocols, or Critical Friends Groups<sup>7</sup>. These structures are an important component of Teacher Career Pathways because they create a mutually beneficial experience for all teachers involved. Senior and master teachers can also take on teacher-leadership opportunities such as designing and leading professional development opportunities, facilitating lesson study and planning meetings, and mentoring new or novice teachers. The development of these collaborative structures and leadership opportunities complete the professional learning plans.

Teacher Career Pathways provides a structured approach to replicating excellence within and across KIPP NYC schools. By involving senior and master teachers in collaborative structures, KIPP NYC ensures excellent teaching is the norm, not the exception.

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<sup>7</sup> Highly collaborative, teacher-driven professional development that focuses on classroom practice and student learning and relies on structured conversation guides called protocols (Murray, 2014, p. 85).

## SECTION FOUR: POLICY CHALLENGES

The KIPP Framework for Excellent Teaching (KFET) describes the elements and behaviors of high quality instruction within KIPP NYC (see Appendix C). As educators, we seek excellence in classroom culture, the teaching cycle, content knowledge, our own development, as well as our relationship with others. The framework provides for continuous learning, yet our current structures do not encourage the following behaviors from the KFET:

- A. Get it and use it: Seek feedback and data early and often and adjust.
- B. Pans for gold: Research, observe, experiment, share, and collaborate.
- C. Growth mindset: Set and achieve big and small goals for professional growth.
- D. Sharpens the saw: Take advantage of learning experiences both in and out of school.

Teacher Career Pathways puts an emphasis on these behaviors, views them as critical to our success, and creates an environment that “encourages risk taking, inquiry, and critical thinking” (Blase & Blase, 2004, p. 86). This policy employs principles of adult learning and effective professional development practices, yet there are three challenges to address in order to ensure the successful implementation of Teacher Career Pathways: First, Teacher Career Pathways relies on extensive collaboration within and across KIPP NYC schools. This requires a paradigm shift for teachers and leaders who have not yet bought into the benefits of collaboration. Next, this policy focuses on further developing excellent teachers, rather than new or novice teachers. Historically, KIPP NYC leaders have given our struggling teachers the most resources, subsequently paying less attention to more experienced teachers because they assume that they know what

they are doing. Lastly, Teacher Career Pathways must align with the needs and interests of its intended targets, as previous attempts to recognize and engage with excellent KIPP NYC teachers have failed to capture their interest.

### **Collaboration is the Way We Do Things**

There is recognition that the process of collaboration represents a powerful strategy for improving student achievement, but bringing it to life in the real world of schools remains difficult. Educators are asked to change long-standing assumptions, expectations, and habits regarding schooling. They are asked to relate to colleagues and students in new ways. They are called upon to abandon the tradition of pursuing the latest educational fad and instead asked to sustain a commitment to a very different way of operating schools—forever. (DuFour & Marzano, 2011, p. 69)

Jackie (pseudonym) has been teaching for over four years, and she is a founding teacher at a KIPP NYC elementary school. Not only do her students post the highest math scores in the grade, but her students also rank among the top students in the organization. It is no secret that Jackie is an excellent teacher, and the central team often reaches out to her principal in order to include her in regional collaborative efforts. Unfortunately, Jackie has no interest in working outside of her classroom beyond the requisite team meetings and planning sessions.

Teacher Career Pathways sets the expectation that collaboration is at the heart of KIPP NYC's success, and that our students' achievement is dependent upon our ability to work together and learn from each other. The way to ensure that our teachers engage in this policy is to make visible the fact that collaboration is mutually beneficial for everyone. New and novice teachers will develop as a result of working with senior and master teachers, and the latter will gain from the experience because "studies show us that when teachers are given the time and tools to collaborate they become lifelong learners, their instructional practice improves, and they are ultimately able to increase

student achievement far beyond what any of them could accomplish alone” (Carroll, Fulton, & Doerr, 2010, p. 10). Furthermore, it “promotes the professional growth and development of the...teachers, giving them an opportunity to leave their mark on their school by transferring their knowledge, experience, and skill to [a team of teachers]” (Murray, 2014, p. 137). To address this challenge, leaders must provide the time, space, and vision to properly execute collaborative learning structures (Murray, 2014).

### **Changing the Pareto Principle**

As a principal, I spent the majority of each day one of two ways: meeting with the parents of a small number of students who were struggling academically or behaviorally, or observing and coaching teachers who struggled to teach well or effectively manage the classroom. This approach has been called the Pareto Principle, or 80-20 rule, which states that roughly 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes (Pinnacle Management, n.d.). Within KIPP NYC, most professional development is geared toward a minority group of new or novice teachers. Teacher Career Pathways seeks to change that by investing resources in the development of senior and mentor teachers.

In order to successfully shift the focus from new and novice teachers to senior and mentor teachers, leaders and teachers must understand that this change will result in more support for all team members. Teachers Career Pathways seeks to leverage the strengths of KIPP NYC’s excellent teachers by having them serve as teacher leaders in collaborative learning structures, because principals cannot do it all (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). By building the capacity of excellent teachers, principals can more effectively identify and solve problems.

## **No, Thank You**

Each year, KIPP National awards ten teachers with the Harriet Ball Excellence in Teaching Award. This \$10,000 award is bestowed upon teachers who demonstrate excellence in student learning, instruction, and impact on the overall school community. Last year, Thomas (pseudonym) won the prestigious award, but he turned it down. Thomas has been a teacher for 15 years, and he has been with KIPP NYC for over 10 years. Each year, Thomas's students receive the highest state math assessment results in the region. When the KIPP NYC Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction Team plans, it incorporates Thomas's practices to serve as models for all teachers. Thomas is the teacher for whom Teacher Career Pathways has been created. He often says that he just wants to stay in the classroom.

This situation illustrates a significant challenge for the successful implementation of the policy. Teacher Career Pathways must meet the needs of the teachers who satisfy the current criteria for senior and master teacher status. A conversation with Thomas will provide context for his decision, but it is representative of the results of previous attempts to recognize excellent KIPP NYC teachers. KIPP NYC has twice attempted to convene working groups that focused on teacher retention and differentiated professional development. The working groups were supposed to be composed of our best and most experienced teachers, yet the majority of interested teachers were second- and third-year teachers. These more novice teachers were able to contribute helpful information, but these opportunities did not attract the teachers with four or more years of experience, who could have illuminated what measures were necessary to keep them in the classroom.

To effectively address this challenge, Teacher Career Pathways must clearly describe how this policy helps students learn, as well as how it honors a teacher's preference to stay in the classroom. Furthermore, the application requires additional work, but represents KIPP NYC's belief that teachers are more invested and motivated when they can make decisions about their professional learning experience (Murray, 2014). Lastly, it may be necessary to increase Teacher Opportunity Fund amounts and expedite the process of tying salaries to the Teacher Career Pathway.

## **SECTION FIVE: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The KIPP NYC Teacher Career Pathways policy seeks to retain the organization's top teachers by giving them autonomy over their professional development, supporting the development of differentiated learning experiences, increasing their impact within and across the schools, and compensating their learning with substantial learning stipends. Ultimately, this policy ensures that the best educators teach our students in order to ensure optimal academic achievement. This section explains how KIPP NYC will implement this policy throughout the region.

### **Educational Activities**

#### **Focus Group**

The first stage of Teacher Career Pathways represents one of this policy's tenets. We know that teachers prefer to have a say in their development; therefore, we will convene a focus group, comprised of 10-12 teachers across content areas and grade levels who would qualify for senior status, to share and get feedback on the policy. The first goal of the focus group is to explain the rationale of Teacher Career Pathways. While we feel that the current goals and structure reflect the needs of teachers who plan to stay in the teaching profession, their investment in the policy is crucial to its success. They are highly respected in our community, and other teachers aim to replicate what they do.

We will educate the focus group on the following:

- What is Teacher Career Pathways, and what purpose does it serve?
- What are the senior and master teacher qualifications?
- What process is required to become a senior or master teacher?
- How does senior and master teacher status benefit teachers?

- What is expected of senior master teachers?

Because this policy focuses on professional learning, this focus group will also support the development of senior and master teacher fellowship options to ensure they reflect what keeps our best educators in the classroom.

### **Develop Impact Models**

To ensure that this policy becomes fully incorporated into KIPP NYC's culture, we must address the full scope of Teacher Career Pathways. It is necessary to project the impact of Teacher Career Pathways over time so that we can set SMART<sup>8</sup> goals that reflect the full nature of the initiative's educational, social, and financial implications. The work of Public Impact's Opportunity Culture (2014) provides an ambitious model for KIPP NYC to consider. They aim to:

- Reach at least 80% of students with truly excellent teachers who are formally accountable for their learning,
- Pay supplements of 10 to 50% to highly effective teachers from the start,
- Fund pay supplements within regular budgets,
- Add time for teacher planning and collaboration, and
- Adapt evaluation and accountability systems to reflect the responsibilities of new roles. (p. 1)

In addition to initial implementation plans, long-term models must be developed in order to achieve this policy's ultimate goals. The impact model will answer the following questions:

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<sup>8</sup> SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound goals.

- What percentage of teachers will reach senior and master teacher status?
- What budget implications does Teacher Career Pathways have in the long term?
  - At what point will KIPP NYC tie salary to the Teacher Career Pathways?
- What school-based and regional structural changes are needed to reflect a collaborative learning culture?
- How must KIPP NYC's performance management system change as a result of Teacher Career Pathways when fully realized?

We will work with members of KIPP NYC's finance, recruitment, human resources, and Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment teams to create an in-depth model of Teacher Career Pathways policy's long-term impact on students and teachers.

### **Development of Partnerships**

Initial implementation is dependent upon the availability of resources and professional development opportunities. The professional development fellowship seeks to match senior and master teachers with ongoing learning opportunities aligned with their needs and experience levels. The KIPP NYC Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment team will be responsible for developing partnerships with high quality professional development organizations, programs, and universities. The first step will be to generate a list of potential partnerships. We will research organizations with which we already have relationships. Math for America and Facing History are two examples of high quality organizations dedicated to supporting the development of excellent teachers. This is also an opportunity to engage the teachers who are most likely to earn senior and master teacher status and involve them in the implementation process.

Another important step in the development of partnerships is to define the relationship. Prior to engaging with these organizations, KIPP NYC must set goals and define the components of the relationship, including time, resources, and deliverables. We must also clarify our expectations around flexibility and accountability. Organizations such as Facing History offer fellowships to work with a mentor as well as opportunities to participate in workshops and receive curriculum development support. Thus, it will be necessary to answer questions such as:

- Can KIPP NYC design a program specifically for its teachers, or will it be necessary to fit within the guidelines of current programming?
- How might a partnership be mutually beneficial for KIPP NYC and the organization or program?

Most importantly, KIPP NYC is committed to affording senior and master teachers autonomy over their development; as such, we must understand the decisions teachers who choose to work with an organization make in relation to how their learning occurs.

### **Research an Online Professional Development System**

Teacher Career Pathways engages teachers and leaders across the region. From collaboration among teachers to the development of the professional learning plan, a number of people are involved in a senior or master teacher's learning experience. Therefore, an online professional development (PD) system will aid in effectively planning and tracking key components of this policy. According to EdSurge (2014),

Real life tells us that constructing new knowledge, applying that learning in the classroom, and detecting evidence of student impact unfold in a more fluid, and often overlapping manner. The purpose of thinking in a specified order is to organize the plan around the expected cause and effect relationship, and to identify how evaluation data will be collected at each stage. (p. 13)

Currently, a number of PD systems exist that “put the individual educator firmly in the middle of learning” (EdSurge, 2014, p. 6). EdSurge also reports on current systems that help manage learning plans by “empowering teachers to assess their needs, set goals, create their own learning plans, and find the right resources to meet their needs” (p. 13). KIPP NYC aims to facilitate that process and keep teachers’ decisions centrally organized so leaders can easily facilitate the collaborative learning experiences for all their teachers and subsequently monitor progress. One platform to initially consider is MyLearningPlan PDMS, “a PD flexible learning management tool that districts can use to track content, assess learning, [and] track reflections and credits for both formal and informal learning activities” (EdSurge, 2014, p. 13). At this point in the implementation plan, we will meet with the MyLearningPlan team, engage with their references, and determine if this platform meets KIPP NYC’s needs.

### **KIPP NYC Board and Senior Leadership Approval**

The above activities will culminate in a comprehensive policy presented to the board of directors and One Love, KIPP NYC’s leadership team comprised of the superintendent, chief academic officer, chief operations officer, chief finance officer, managing directors, and principals. This component of the implementation plan is significant, as the board’s and One Love’s approval green-lights the policy. Furthermore, their investment in the policy is as important as that of the teachers if this policy is going

to become an ingrained component of KIPP NYC’s culture—rather than another short-lived initiative.

### **Professional Development Needs**

Knoster’s (1991) complex change management matrix illustrates components of successful change (see Appendix D). The matrix claims that without skills, stakeholders feel anxious, and without resources, stakeholders feel frustration. The strength of Teacher Career Pathways lies in the ability of senior and master teachers and their leaders to design effective professional development plans. Furthermore, this policy requires teacher collaboration; therefore, leaders must also be able to facilitate professional learning communities and provide necessary resources, such as time. In this section, I will describe the resources and skills needed for successful implementation of Teacher Career Pathways.

### **Professional Development Plan Creation**

The Professional Learning Fellowship will reflect the goal-driven, ongoing and job-embedded experiences that define effective professional development (Murray, 2014). The senior director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment will help teachers and leaders develop the needed skills to ensure each plan goes beyond isolated events that have little impact on student learning and instead results in student achievement. Goal setting is critical to the development of an effective plan because “We [teachers] cannot say *how* to teach or *which* material and activities to use until we are quite clear about which specific understandings we are after and what such understandings look like in practice” (Wiggins & McTighe, as cited in MyLearningPlan, 2011, pp. 9-10). Teachers and their school leaders must be able to analyze relevant data such as student

achievement results and historical performance information in order to determine goals that will have a significant positive impact on student learning. The result of this work will be the creation of high-yield student SMART goals and educator learning goals. Next, teachers and leaders will receive training from the senior director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment on how to develop work plans that will result in the attainment of the goals. The yearlong goal will be divided by each quarter, and the teachers and leaders will learn how to determine what skills, knowledge, and resources are needed to attain the goal as well as how to effectively assess and reflect on the process.

### **Facilitating Collaborative Learning Structures**

Teacher Career Pathways seeks to formalize the way our excellent teachers work within the school community. Therefore, goal-oriented structures that reflect a focus on student learning, a culture of collaboration, and a focus on results must be developed. In the *Change Plan*, I draw on DuFour and Marzano's (2011) recommendations for implementing professional learning communities (PLCs), and I share how the initial step applies to the implementation of this policy.

The superintendent can address the need for skill development by modeling the PLC process and illuminating important skills through 'meta moments'<sup>9</sup>. The superintendent can immediately employ this strategy during monthly senior leadership meetings. KIPP NYC gathers and analyzes student data regularly, but school leaders do not formally engage in conversations about what has led to successful data and what may be causing poor results. This first step engages school leaders in ongoing opportunities to

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<sup>9</sup> In 'meta moments', leaders take a brief step back from situations in order to explain their actions and decisions.

learn from each other. DuFour and Marzano (2011) describe how this works and its positive effects:

Principals present their colleagues and the central office staff with a comprehensive analysis of evidence of student achievement... Principals are then expected to work collaboratively with their colleagues to learn from each other's successes and help resolve one another's difficulties. This process, when done well, provides the combination of pressure and support that build capacity. The process helps foster collaboration, collective responsibility, a results orientation, and a culture of accountability... And, very importantly, it represents a powerful tool for increasing a principal's effectiveness in leading a PLC because it develops a stronger sense of self-efficacy among principals (p. 39).

In addition to the collaborative approach to looking at data regionally, these meetings can also be used to collaboratively create school schedules that prioritize teacher collaboration as well as to design physical spaces that cultivate team relationships.

## Time Schedule

Initial implementation of the Teacher Career Pathways policy will take two years. During this time, we will complete its long-term design, ratify the plan with senior leadership and board members, and train school leaders to effectively support the policy in the schools. Additionally, we will execute two pilot years and assess and reflect on the policy in order to adjust it as needed. The chart below further illustrates this plan:

<b>Window of Time</b>	<b>Task</b>
<i>April 2015-August 2015</i>	<p>Step 1: Research &amp; Design Completion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene excellent KIPP NYC teacher focus group</li> <li>• Develop relationships to support professional learning plans</li> <li>• Research online professional development plan platforms</li> </ul> <p>Step 2: Design Long Term Impact Plan w/ Budget Implications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career pathways w/ professional learning plan component</li> <li>• Teacher opportunity fund</li> </ul> <p>Step 3: One Love and Board Presentations for Policy Ratification</p> <p>Step 4: Leadership Training on PDP Development and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional Learning Community Implementation</li> </ul>
<i>September 2015-June 2016</i>	<p>Step 5: Regional Pilot Year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch application process</li> <li>• Select 1<sup>st</sup> cohort of senior teachers</li> <li>• Design senior teacher professional learning plans (quarterly revision cycles)</li> <li>• Recognize Senior Teachers at Regional Conference</li> </ul>
<i>June 2016-August 2016</i>	<p>Step 6: Formal Evaluation &amp; Reflection on 1<sup>st</sup> Year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise policy as needed</li> </ul>
<i>September 2016-June 2017</i>	<p>Step 7: Regional Pilot Year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch application process</li> <li>• Select 2<sup>nd</sup> cohort of senior teachers and 1<sup>st</sup> cohort of master teachers</li> <li>• Design senior and master teacher professional learning plans (quarterly revision cycles)</li> <li>• Recognize senior/master teachers at regional conference</li> </ul>

## Program Budgets

Initial implementation budget for this policy will come from our regional professional development budget. KIPP NYC will only offer one regional professional development day (rather than three), which frees up \$70,000 for the first two years of Teacher Career Pathways. However, the long-term implications of this policy require a thorough analysis of the KIPP NYC budget. There is no limit to the number of teachers who can qualify for senior or master teacher status, and barring significant changes in their performance and student achievement, teachers do not lose this status. Therefore, growth has the potential to be exponential. The KIPP NYC senior leadership team, including the superintendent and chief financial officer, will need to determine the source of additional funds. The initial implementation budget is provided below:

Table 1

### *Implementation Budget*

Description	Cost
Professional development stipends	\$15,000 (\$1,500 x 10 senior teachers) \$2,000 (\$200 x 10 senior teachers)
Online PD management tool	\$3,000 initial fee + yearly per teacher cost (currently unknown)
<b>Total</b>	\$20,000 (+ pending additional cost)

### **Progress Monitoring Activities**

Effective implementation of this policy requires the coordination of a number of team members. The director of professional development will create a detailed work plan that lists specific action steps, deadlines, and point persons with whom to follow up. The next step will be to convene an ongoing working group and meet with them biweekly to assess the status of the work plan. The working group consists of the director of human resources and the managing director of recruiting. It will also be necessary to schedule monthly meetings with each senior teacher and principal to review the professional development plan. These meetings will ensure that the plan continues to be high leverage by making ongoing revisions as needed. Whether these meetings illuminate the need to develop, strengthen, or even abandon a professional development program, organization, and/or university partnership, the director of professional development will lead the execution of those action steps.

## SECTION SIX: POLICY ASSESSMENT PLAN

The Teacher Career Pathways policy seeks to send the message to our educators that KIPP NYC places the highest value on excellent teaching. As a result of this vision, we will keep our best teachers in the classroom to guarantee that KIPP NYC students always have excellent teachers. The evaluation of this policy includes assessing the following questions:

- Are we are retaining our best teachers?
- Does this policy aid teachers in perceiving teaching with KIPP NYC as a viable, lasting career?
- How has this policy impacted student achievement? Are students learning as a result of Teacher Career Pathways?
- Does this policy increase collaborative learning structures that facilitate the replication of excellence throughout schools and the region?

Using these questions as guides, we will assess the impact of Teacher Career Pathways yearly in three areas:

1) *Talent Retention*. We aim to keep our best teachers in the classroom, and we will track who is staying.

2) *Student Achievement*. We will look at the student achievement data for these teachers to determine the added value of Teacher Career Pathways.

3) *Educator Growth and Development*. We need to find out how teachers feel about their professional learning opportunities as well as look for evidence of impact of the policy in student work and collaborative learning experiences.

## **Talent Retention**

We will gather yearly hiring data from the recruitment team as well as analyze the reasons for leaving shared in exit interviews conducted by the human resources department. We will also set and measure targets from the Q14, a regional survey administered to all KIPP NYC employees. One of the statements, *I have a long future with KIPP NYC*, will provide data for effectively assessing Teacher Career Pathways. The KIPP NYC recruiting and human resources teams will be responsible for compiling this data.

## **Student Achievement**

We will develop a cohort of students who are taught by senior and master teachers. We will examine their MAP and state assessment data. Eventually, we will track students who are taught by senior or master teachers over multiple years. This will further illuminate whether or not Teacher Career Pathways has had an impact on ensuring that students consistently receive excellent instruction from the best teachers. It will also be helpful to look at the students of teachers approaching senior status as one way to determine any impact Teacher Career Pathways may have had on motivating teachers. The KIPP NYC data and assessment team will be responsible for generating this data.

## **Educator Growth and Development**

A major component of Teacher Career Pathways is the professional development plan. The senior director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment will survey teachers to ascertain whether they agree or disagree with the following statements:

- Educators have high quality, ongoing opportunities to grow professionally within KIPP NYC.

- Educators feel that learning opportunities have a significant impact on their practice and have evidence of it.
- Educators work formally and informally in impactful ways (as measured by student data) with fellow educators in my school and in other schools.
- Professional learning opportunities contribute to student achievement.

We will then follow up with senior and master teachers in order for them to further explain their responses and, in turn, further develop the policy. Ongoing assessment of these three areas will ensure the Teacher Career Pathways policy reaches its intended goals.

## **SECTION SEVEN: SUMMARY STATEMENT**

On June 30, 2003, I sat down at a table with six other educators. We were the founding staff of KIPP STAR College Prep Charter School in Harlem. In June 2004, I became the 5<sup>th</sup> grade team leader, and in June 2005, I flew off to attend the KIPP School Leadership Program in Palo Alto, California to prepare me for my position as the assistant principal. A year later, I was promoted to school leader, a capacity in which I served for three years. After six years in the classroom, I catapulted to the top position in my school. I am now five years removed from my time as principal, and I often think about how much I miss teaching. I am ambitious, driven, and determined to reach the top of my career. As I think about Teacher Career Pathways, I wonder if I would have stayed on that path. I could still be in the classroom today if KIPP NYC had sent the message that teaching is a career, and the best educators are rewarded with more opportunities to do what they do best: teach and learn.

A fully implemented Teacher Career Pathways reaffirms KIPP NYC's commitment to developing excellent teachers who ensure all students learn. It says we believe that our mission can only be achieved if we retain and reward our best teachers, whom we have developed to become the best. With Teacher Career Pathways, our schools are filled with excellent teachers who seek to continuously learn and develop their practice. Teachers have a clear path toward professional growth ahead of them, and they know they have the support to reach their highest potential. These teachers are motivated by the possibilities for growth and believe the KIPP NYC ceiling is unreachable. Teacher Career Pathways connects our community of educators and

encourages an environment of lifelong learning. We are invested in our own learning, we work collaboratively, and we are engaged in the learning of the educators around us.

Above all else, our model proves what is possible for our students: The impact on student achievement is undeniable, as our ‘KIPPsters’ reap the benefits of a school community filled with people dedicated to learning, growing, and achieving. There is stability, familiarity, hard work, and commitment. Students who are taught by high-performing teachers do better, and the more they have, the more lasting the impact (Barnett & Ritter, 2008).

This policy ensures that all of our educators have access to the path to become excellent teachers, since KIPP NYC’s mission is to provide our students with the skills needed to be successful in our schools, college, and the world beyond. We need our best teachers to do that, and we need them to stay. *Great teachers aren’t born. We become them.*

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Appendix A

KIPP NYC Teacher Career Pathways Senior and Master Teacher Rubric

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>KIPP NYC Teacher Career Pathways Senior and Master Teacher Rubric</b></p>			
<b>KFET Location</b>	<b>KFET Behaviors</b>	<b>Senior Teacher</b>	<b>Master Teacher</b>
4.2A	10. Knows the essential content, concepts and big ideas of the discipline well enough to create questions that teach and assess them.	Has a <b>deep</b> understanding of the content and concepts of the discipline and has a <b>thorough</b> understanding of what comes in the years before and after their curriculum. Makes content and concepts <b>almost always</b> accessible to their students, including ELL and SpEd.	Has a <b>deep</b> understanding of the content and concepts of the discipline and has a <b>thorough</b> understanding of what comes in the years before and after their curriculum, including what academic skills, scholarly habits, and character traits are needed to make students successful in college. Makes content and concepts <b>always</b> accessible to their students, including ELL and SpEd.
3.3D	11. Matches materials/ explanatory devices to objectives.	Designs activities that <b>align</b> with and <b>accomplish the purpose</b> behind the steps of the lesson cycle.	Designs <b>innovative, student-centered</b> activities that <b>align with the principles</b> of effective lesson planning (e.g., activates prior knowledge, articulates key ideas, anticipates misunderstandings, infuses scaffolded student practice, assesses understanding) and <b>effectively and efficiently</b> lead to student mastery.

3.9A	12. Provides ongoing and specific affirming and adjusting feedback about academics and character to students.	Grades student work and provides academic feedback consistently both <b>verbally and in writing</b> so students are aware of their performance.	Grades student work in an <b>on-going</b> and <b>timely</b> manner and academic feedback consistently both <b>verbally and in writing</b> so students are <b>keenly</b> aware of their performance.
4.1A	13. Uses knowledge of the developmental ranges of what students can do academically to inform planning and instruction	Has a <b>thorough understanding</b> of the appropriate academic, social, and emotional developmental stages of students. Uses this knowledge to make <b>most</b> academic and behavioral choices.	Has a <b>thorough understanding</b> of the appropriate academic, social, and emotional developmental stages of students. Uses this knowledge to make to <b>motivate, engage, support emotionally, discipline</b> and <b>teach</b> .
3.8E	14. Assesses all students to inform teaching regularly.	<b>Regularly</b> administers diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments to determine student <b>progress</b> (through unit tests, weekly quizzes, exit slips, etc.). Tracks student performance <b>regularly</b> so that data can inform short- and long-term planning and differentiation. Accurately and efficiently grades in a way that helps students <b>understand</b> their performance and where they are <b>in relation to the big goals</b> .	Administers assessments as <b>often as necessary</b> for students to <b>work to mastery</b> . Accurately and efficiently grades in ways that help <b>individual</b> students <b>learn</b> their strengths and weaknesses, <b>improve</b> their performance and see where they are <b>in relation to the big goals</b> . Tracks student performance <b>immediately</b> so that data can drive short- and long-term planning and differentiation.

2.2E	15. Creates a classroom where kids are proud to be and you can tell.	Teacher <b>consistently</b> creates <b>opportunities</b> in the classroom to celebrate individuals and class and <b>frequently</b> seizes organic moments of joy without taking away from student learning.	Teacher creates <b>multiple opportunities</b> in classroom to celebrate individuals and class <b>almost always</b> seizes organic moments of joy in the classroom without taking away from student learning.
2.2F	16. Provides students with opportunities to make choices and to influence the classroom culture	<b>Develops most</b> procedures with the class. Designs procedures that create <b>additional instructional time</b> and <b>conserve the teacher's energy</b> for instructional responsibilities. Designs <b>ongoing plans</b> that <b>teach</b> students independence and <b>invest</b> them in the purpose.	<b>Develops all</b> procedures with the class. Designs procedures that create <b>additional instructional time</b> and <b>conserve the teacher's energy</b> for instructional responsibilities. Designs <b>ongoing plans</b> that <b>teach</b> students independence and <b>invest</b> them in the purpose.
1.2A	17. Seeks feedback and data early and often and adjusts as needed.	Pursues <b>credible and meaningful</b> resources and learning experiences that <b>align</b> with school/regional priorities and/or development goals. Performs action on regular occasions <b>beyond staff-initiated</b> , formal interactions. <b>Maximizes</b> a productive learning experience and <b>masters</b> the pursued knowledge, skill or mindset.	Pursues and/or creates <b>varied and valuable</b> resources and learning experiences (by consulting veteran teachers, reading articles, attending workshops, etc.) that are <b>efficient, targeted, and customized to align</b> with development goals and/or school/regional priorities.  Performs action <b>continuously, without prompting.</b>  <b>Masters</b> the knowledge, skill or mindset sought and <b>extends opportunities</b> to expand learning into other domains and needs.

1.2 B	18. Researches, observes, experiments, shares, and collaborates.	<p>Pursues <b>credible and meaningful</b> resources and learning experiences that <b>align</b> with school/regional priorities and/or development goals. Performs action on regular occasions <b>beyond staff-initiated</b>, formal interactions. <b>Maximizes</b> a productive learning experience and <b>masters</b> the pursued knowledge, skill or mindset.</p>	<p>Pursues and/or creates <b>varied and valuable</b> resources and learning experiences (by consulting veteran teachers, reading articles, attending workshops, etc.) that are <b>efficient, targeted and customized to align</b> with development goals and/or school/regional priorities.</p> <p>Performs action <b>continuously, without prompting.</b></p> <p><b>Masters</b> the knowledge, skill or mindset sought and <b>extends opportunities</b> to expand learning into other domains and needs.</p>
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Appendix B  
Professional Learning Fellowship Chart

<b><i>Professional Learning Fellowship</i></b>		
<p>At the senior and master teacher levels, KIPP NYC Teacher Career Pathways provides support in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in the development and design of high level professional growth and enrichment opportunities               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding to attend relevant conferences, workshops, and courses</li> <li>• Funding to travel to see excellent schools and work with relevant mentors</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
<i>Level</i>	<i>Senior Teacher</i>	<i>Master Teacher (+Senior Teacher Options)</i>
<i>Fellowship Options</i>	Design yearlong fellowship  Participation in highly rated NYC program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Math for America</li> <li>○ SUNY Master Teacher</li> <li>○ Teacher’s College</li> <li>○ New York University</li> <li>○ Math in the City</li> <li>○ American Museum of Natural History</li> <li>○ Facing History</li> </ul>	Design yearlong fellowship, including independent study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ External Conferences (NCTM, NEA, etc.)</li> </ul> Participation in highly rated NYC or national program  1:1 mentoring from nationally recognized educator  Support towards National Board Certification
<i>Teacher Opportunity Fund Amount</i>	\$1500 + \$200 Travel Stipend	\$3500 + \$1000 Travel Stipend
<i>Collaborative Structures</i>	Participation in select KIPP NYC Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment Team meetings  Team Action Research Lab Site Lesson Study Looking at Student Work (LASW) protocols Critical Friends Groups  Mentor new or novice teachers (including Empire Fellows)	Seat on KIPP NYC Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment Leadership Team

## Appendix C

### KIPP Framework for Excellent Teaching (KFET) Overview

#### Student Growth and Achievement

Excellent teaching means students learn, grow, and achieve transformative life outcomes.

*The four elements of excellent teaching are linked through our:*

#### Beliefs and Character

An excellent KIPP teacher is committed to KIPP's mission. She constantly pursues becoming a better person, just as she supports students in this pursuit. She understands that her beliefs and character affect who she is, her impact on and relationships with others, her classroom environment, how she teaches, and what she knows.

*The four elements of excellent teaching are:*

#### Self and Others

Excellent teaching requires understanding of oneself, one's connection to others, and a growth mindset that allows the teacher to take ownership for the success of all KIPPsters.



#### Classroom Culture

In an excellent classroom culture, the teacher focuses on countless tangible and intangible details in the space to create an environment where students are joyfully engaged, meaningfully on-task, and feel ownership for their individual and collective successes in college and in life.



#### The Teaching Cycle

Excellent teaching means planning and executing rigorous, engaging lessons that fit into a logical scope and sequence, as well as using student data to assess mastery of objectives and movement toward big goals for student achievement and growth. Excellent teaching requires a 1/12 mindset, recognizing that even the tiniest details can dramatically impact student mastery.



#### Knowledge

Teaching is an art and science. As the artists and scientists, we are responsible for building our understanding of child development, pedagogy, and content. We are responsible for knowing what we are teaching, how it fits in a PreK-16 continuum, and who we are teaching it to.



## Appendix D

### Knoster's (1991) Complex Change Model

<b>Leading and Managing Complex Change</b>						
Vision +	Consensus +	Skills +	Incentives +	Resources +	Action Plan	= Change
	Consensus +	Skills +	Incentives +	Resources +	Action Plan	= Confusion
Vision +		Skills +	Incentives +	Resources +	Action Plan	= Sabotage
Vision +	Consensus +		Incentives +	Resources +	Action Plan	= Anxiety
Vision +	Consensus +	Skills +		Resources +	Action Plan	= Resistance
Vision +	Consensus +	Skills +	Incentives +		Action Plan	= Frustration
Vision +	Consensus +	Skills +	Incentives +	Resources +		= Treadmill

Adapted from Knoster, T. (1991) Presentation in TASH Conference. Washington, D.C.  
Adapted by Knoster from Enterprise Group, Ltd.