

ASK THE TEAM

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Teachers-in-Residence: New Pathways Into the Profession

Question From the Field

How are states and districts creating teacher residency programs that develop and retain highly effective teachers?

Teacher residency programs are a relatively new method for building stronger teacher pipelines. Research assessing the impact of these programs is still limited, but some early reports suggest that residency programs hold promise for improving teacher effectiveness and retention rates (Barrett, Hovde, Hahn, & Rosqueta, 2011; Papay, West, Fullerton, & Kane, 2011). Lacking comprehensive information on program performance, we used quality benchmarks¹ established by experts in the field to identify 14 teacher residency programs for review.² Districts or nonprofit organizations administer 10 of the programs, and universities administer the remaining four programs. Based on our review of these programs, we offer the following considerations and examples to states and districts that are interested in establishing a high-quality teacher residency program.

Tip

What Is a Teacher Residency Program?

Different definitions exist, but for this brief, we define a teacher residency program as any program that combines a one-year, coteaching clinical component with master's-level coursework.

1. SET YOUR PURPOSE

Establish a Clear Vision Focused on Serving High-Need Schools, Subjects, and Students

The primary purpose of teacher residency programs is to establish a pipeline of new, highly effective teachers who serve high-need schools and disadvantaged students. In Philadelphia, for example, fewer than 50 percent of the mathematics and science teachers major in mathematics or science

¹ Specifically, the programs highlighted in this brief were selected using the quality standards and rigorous vetting process of the Urban Teacher Residency United (UTRU) network. UTRU has identified 24 quality standards that address program aspects such as the mission, the vision for effective teaching, the rigorous selection of school sites and mentor teachers, rigorous and aligned coursework for residents, and the strategic placement of graduates. UTRU was founded in 2004 by established and respected urban teacher residency programs to share best practices and develop a uniform set of quality benchmarks for the field.

² For a complete list of all 14 programs and a detailed summary of each, contact us at gtlcenter@air.org.

as an undergraduate student. The *Philadelphia Teacher Residency* recruits residents with content expertise in mathematics and science and trains them to teach in urban schools. New York City's *I-START* (Internationals' School-Based Teacher Apprenticeship, Recruitment and Training) residency program specifically addresses the shortage of teachers for English language learners by offering residencies to teachers in international high schools to serve immigrant students. At the state level, *New Mexico's Land of Enchantment Teacher Quality Partnership* places teachers in rural districts with high populations of Native American and Hispanic students.

2. BE SELECTIVE

Create a Rigorous Process for Selecting Residents and Mentors

High-quality residency programs institute a rigorous selection process for residents and mentors to ensure a strong fit with the program. To select residents, consider the following options:

- Require resident candidates to submit a written application and attend an in-person interview day, which could include performance tasks, such as teaching a sample lesson.
- Include writing assessments, group activities, and problem-solving sessions during the interview process to get a broader view of candidate skills and competencies.
- Provide candidates with opportunities to meet current residents and develop a strong understanding of both the residency program's vision and day-to-day demands.

Program Spotlight

The *Academy for Urban School Leadership* (AUSL) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve student achievement in chronically failing schools, primarily in Chicago, through its disciplined transformation process built on a foundation of specially trained AUSL teachers. Graduates of the program commit to teach in a high-need Chicago public school for at least four years.

- **Benefits.** Residents receive financial support of \$30,000 during their training year (\$40,000 for mathematics teachers), earn a master's degree from National Louis University, and are eligible to receive an Illinois teaching certification.
- **Training.** Training begins with full-time master's degree coursework during the summer. During the school year, residents train in the classroom of an experienced mentor teacher four days per week and attend university classes on Fridays. AUSL also provides ongoing coaching and development for the first few years as a teacher in an AUSL-managed elementary or high school.
- **Selection process.** Applicants complete an online application. Candidates without a bachelor's degree in education must pass the Illinois teacher certification content tests. Finalists are invited to a half-day selection session, including a five-minute sample lesson, and practice receiving and responding to coaching.

Source: *Chicago Teacher Residency* (<http://auslchicago.org/residency>)

Equally important—and often more challenging—is identifying and selecting mentors. Successful residency experiences heavily depend on the quality of feedback and support that new teachers receive in the classroom from highly effective mentor teachers. However, matching residents with mentors can be a challenge for several reasons:

- Systems to identify truly effective teachers are still being developed (e.g., rigorous and fair evaluation systems). Even when schools can identify highly effective teachers, they may not have the systems and the expertise to determine whether these excellent teachers also would be strong mentors.
- Highly effective teachers are less likely to teach in the high-need schools that residency programs aim to serve (Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, & Wheeler, 2007; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002).
- Few incentives exist for effective teachers to assume additional responsibilities beyond the teaching demands that they already face (Sawchuk, 2011).

Consider the following options for improving mentor selection processes:

- Implement or redesign your teacher evaluation system to identify highly effective teachers. Tailor the system to ensure that you can identify teachers with the skills and the knowledge that high-need schools or disadvantaged students require.
- Screen potential mentors based on high standards of excellence for both teaching effectiveness and the capacity to mentor.
- Offer schools incentives and flexibility to incorporate residents into staffing models that allow residents to work on teams led by highly effective teachers and learn from a variety of peers (Public Impact, n.d.).
- Encourage highly effective teachers to assume a mentorship role by providing financially sustainable stipends.
- Provide training for mentors in adult leadership, coaching, and other qualities needed for success in the mentor role.
- Evaluate individual mentors' contributions to residents' teaching effectiveness and retention. Use evaluation data to inform decisions about the continuation of individuals' mentorship roles as well as improve the long-term selection and support of mentors.
- To ensure a strong match, use a “speed dating” process, in which the mentor and his or her assigned resident meet each other briefly to explore whether they seem compatible.

Tip

Need an example of a rigorous mentor teacher selection process? Check out the Escambia County Public Schools' (Florida) process featured in *Leveraging Teacher Talent: Peer Observation in Educator Evaluation*, p. 4.

3. DESIGN FOR EFFECTIVENESS

Ensure That Training and Curriculum Are Rigorous and Aligned

During the residency year, provide residents with a mixture of rigorous and aligned coursework and intensive classroom teaching experiences coupled with frequent feedback and support:

- **Rigorous and aligned coursework.** Offer master's-level coursework that is closely aligned to the program's vision and residents' classroom experiences. Residents typically spend most of their days at their school sites and attend classes in the evenings or on selected days each week. Several of the UTRU network residencies have a schedule in which residents spend four out of five days in the classroom and the fifth day in graduate courses or other training sessions (Berry et al., 2008). Several residency programs also provide intensive summer training courses that last up to two months prior to the start of the first school year.
- **Supported teaching.** Residents' teaching roles in classrooms vary by program, but most programs are designed to gradually increase the responsibility of residents under the mentor teacher as the year progresses. Residents of *Project Inspire* in Chattanooga, Tennessee, spend an entire semester observing their mentors before transitioning into a lead teacher role, with heavy guidance from mentors. Other programs, such as *Project METRO* (Maintaining Effective Teacher Residency Opportunities) in Milwaukee, use a coteaching model through which mentors determine residents' roles and provide opportunities for them to teach students while offering constant support and feedback.
- **Cohort system.** Establishing a cohort system enables residents to meet regularly with their peers to share challenges and successes, attend professional development, and collaboratively problem solve.

Program Spotlight

The *Richmond Teacher Residency* (RTR) cultivates a pipeline of teachers to serve as middle and high school teachers in Richmond (Virginia) Public Schools (RPS). Residents commit to three years in an RPS classroom after their residency year.

- **Benefits.** Residents receive a \$20,000 stipend during their residency year. Mathematics and science teachers receive an additional \$10,000. Residents earn a master's degree in teaching and receive free enrollment in a National Board Certification support program at the end of their commitment.
- **Teaching.** Residents coteach four days per week, with responsibilities gradually increasing from a supporting role to independent teaching. In the late winter, residents teach alone for at least one month without the mentor teacher in the classroom.
- **Training.** Residents also complete an intensive summer term with graduate courses in education theory and practice. They continue to take courses two afternoons per week and all day one day per week during the residency.
- **Cohort system.** RTR is heavily based on a cohort system, with residents learning, working, and living together in subsidized housing while completing the program.

Source: *Richmond Teacher Residency: Teach for Change* (<http://www.richmondteacherresidency.info/>)

4. BE THERE FOR THE LONG HAUL

Build a Strong Commitment to Postresidency Supports

Residents should expect to make a multiyear commitment (usually three to five years) to the school network, district, or state after the residency year. Most university residency programs require a commitment to teaching in a high-need school in the state. After completing their residency programs, participants become full-time teachers and school employees, receiving full salary and benefits. While serving as full-time teachers in high-need schools, former residents should continue to receive support. Many programs offer ongoing professional development, mentoring, and one-on-one coaching in the first one to three years after residency.

Program Spotlight

The **Boston Teacher Residency (BTR)** asks residents to commit to teaching in the Boston Public Schools (BPS) for three years after graduation. BTR is a member of the AmeriCorps state and national service network.

- **Benefits.** Through its AmeriCorps affiliation, BTR offers residents a \$12,100 stipend during the residency year, as well as health insurance and an education award that can be applied toward tuition. Residents earn a master's degree in education and receive a Massachusetts Initial Teaching License, an AmeriCorps Education Award, and tuition remission after completing the three-year commitment.
- **Teaching.** Responsibilities are slowly increased during the course of the residency; by the spring of the first year, residents are expected to teach 50 percent of the full teaching load in the classroom.
- **Training.** Residents take an intensive two-month summer course during their first summer and continue taking classes one day and one evening per week during the school year.
- **Postresidency.** During the three-year postresidency, graduates are provided targeted courses and seminars, content-focused coaching groups, school-based coaching, and placement in collaborative clusters within schools.

Source: *Boston Teacher Residency* (<http://www.bostonteacherresidency.org/>)

5. LOOK FOR CONNECTIONS

Align Other Human Capital Management Policies to Support the Program

Teacher residency programs are just one pathway for creating a strong, sustainable teacher pipeline. Retaining a strong teacher workforce also is impacted by numerous other human capital management policies, particularly laws related to dismissals and reductions in force.

Laws that base teacher dismissal solely on seniority may have an unintended consequence: states and districts risk losing their return on investment for new

Food for Thought

Less than one year after Pittsburgh partnered with TNTP (formerly known as The New Teacher Project) to launch a new alternative certification residency program, the state legislature voted to implement teacher furloughs requiring that “the last hired be the first fired.” Consequently, the program lost its \$75,000 to \$100,000 investment per resident, and funders abandoned the program (Headden, 2012).

teachers trained through high-quality residency programs if dismissal laws require “the last hired be the first fired.” To avoid this situation, examine state policies to ensure that furlough or dismissal decisions reflect a more comprehensive definition of teacher effectiveness.

6. PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Create a Sustainable Funding Plan Beyond External Sources

The costs for a teacher residency program—including recruiting, applicant screening, and training and development prior to and during the residency year; stipends for mentor teachers and residents; and tuition reimbursement grants or loans—can be quite high. Too often, residency programs rely on philanthropic and federal funds, such as the Teacher Quality Partnership, Race to the Top, and AmeriCorps, which are not sustainable (Berry et al., 2008).

Food for Thought

Teacher residency programs are a significant human capital investment. Current programs generally spend between \$30,000 and \$50,000 per resident (Weber, 2012).

To develop a sustainable funding model, consider the following action steps:

- Reallocate funds reserved for teacher professional development, alternative certification, and teacher preparation to make long-term investments in residency programs. For example, although philanthropy covered most of the initial costs of BTR, BPS eventually reallocated professional development funds from local, state, and federal sources to become the program’s majority funder (Berry et al., 2008).
- Offer modest financial incentives to teacher preparation programs willing to implement and fund residency programs and be held accountable for the results (Berry et al., 2008).
- Encourage districts to commit to using regular per-pupil funds to pay for residency programs within two or three years by adopting new staffing models, such as the model being piloted in the Nashville (Tennessee) Public Schools during the 2013–14 school year (Public Impact, 2012). Give districts the funding and staffing flexibility needed to carry out such reallocations.



I WANT TO KNOW MORE

Resources

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For more examples or information on this topic, please e-mail gtlcenter@air.org.

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