IMPROVING THE PIPELINE

Strategies for Recruiting Teacher Residency Candidates

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Region 5 Comprehensive Center

The Region 5 Comprehensive Center (R5CC) is one of 20 technical assistance centers supported under the U.S. Department of Education's Comprehensive Centers program from 2019 to 2024. The R5CC serves the needs of Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia by building capacity to develop policies and programs to increase student performance.

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Introduction

Much of the country has been experiencing teacher shortages over the past half decade. Most education experts agree the shortage is less a national shortage, but rather one that impacts certain geographic regions and teacher positions more than others, particularly rural and urban school districts and certification areas such as math, science, and special education (Jacobs 2021). West Virginia has not been immune to shortages. Data from the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) show county school systems needed to hire 1,544 noncertified teachers for the 2022-23 school year to staff their classrooms, up nearly 30 percent from last year (Johnson 2022).

Evidence suggests the teacher shortage is being driven both by high turnover rates and a decline in the pool of individuals entering the educator professions, as evidenced by the declining number of students enrolling in teacher preparation programs (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education 2022). West Virginia has taken numerous steps to address the supply side of the equation by strengthening its teacher preparation system and encouraging more individuals to seek teacher certification. These include revising its teaching standards, requiring Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP) or Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) accreditation for all approved educator preparation programs (EPPs), and increasing the duration of candidates' clinical experiences. State efforts to increase outreach and access to the teaching profession include

» implementation of its pilot grow your own program, the Grow Your Own West Virginia Teaching Pathway, for encouraging and supporting high school students to pursue a career in teaching;

» the TeachWV website for providing comprehensive information about pathways into teaching;

» the U.S. Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship Teaching Pathway to teacher preparation that allows students to enroll in a paid apprenticeship beginning in their junior year of high school as they work toward a teaching license; and

» the statewide West Virginia Residency Model as the required undergraduate pathway for earning teacher licensure.

Each of these initiatives should contribute to the state's goal of increasing the number of individuals pursuing teacher certification by making information on entering pathways into the profession more accessible, making the certification process more affordable, increasing supports available to candidates as they go through preparation, and ensuring they are ready for the day they first walk into a classroom.

This report is intended to provide a review of the research and best practices related to recruiting candidates into the teaching profession. In addition to summarizing the research literature related to effective candidate recruitment, the information presented here also includes the recruiting practices found effective by three established residency programs located in other states who were interviewed for this study. While the focus of the report is on recruitment into the state's teacher residency program, the strategies and practices presented apply to recruitment into any type of

teacher preparation program. Many of these approaches have also been shown to be effective for attracting more diverse candidates into teaching.

The report begins with a brief overview of the causes of the teacher shortage from the perspective of recruiting candidates into the profession. Then, four broad strategy areas for improving recruitment practices highlighted in the literature are summarized. These four strategies consist of:

1. Developing data systems needed to support data-driven recruiting practices and establishing effective partnerships between EPPs and local school systems.

2. Expanding recruitment efforts to include a broader, more diverse range of individuals.

3. Adopting intensive "high-touch" recruiting practices for maintaining connections and supports with candidates through successful enrollment in preparation programs.

4. Providing supports, including financial, for making EPPs more accessible to a diverse pool of candidates.

Challenges to Recruiting Individuals to the Teaching Profession

The evidence and experiences of school district human resources departments suggest the ongoing teacher shortage continues to affect many school districts' ability to place qualified and effective teachers in classrooms. However, the data also show the shortage is less a generalized, nationwide shortage than one affecting some states or school districts and certain teaching positions more than others (Jacobs 2021; National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2020). Because teacher labor markets tend to be highly localized, the reasons for teacher shortages may vary from community to community (National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2020). Consequently, no one solution is likely to resolve shortages for all school districts, even among districts within the same state. Instead, states and school districts must consistently monitor which teaching positions experience shortages, in which schools, and for what reasons (Garcia and Weiss 2020). Among the common causes of shortages frequently mentioned in the literature are the costs of earning a teaching license combined with low teacher wages, making it more difficult to repay student debt; poor working conditions, particularly in high-need schools; high stress levels; and the perceived diminished prestige and respect toward the profession (Nguyen et al. 2020). All of these factors impact efforts both at recruiting individuals into the profession and retaining them once they are in the classroom. They also have a greater effect on the decisions of persons of color than their White peers when considering whether to become a teacher (Ingersoll 2001; National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2020).

Other factors influencing recruitment into teacher preparation programs are requirements in most states for candidates to pass basic skills tests for admission to a teacher preparation program and content specific tests for licensure at the end of the program. Fewer than half of all candidates pass their first attempt at taking their states' licensure tests, and between a quarter and a third opt not to retake the test but instead drop out of their preparation program (National Council on Teacher

Quality 2021a). Concern over low passage rates are heightened by the fact that research on the relationship between doing well on licensure tests and teaching effectiveness is mixed (Goldhaber 2007). A recent survey of high school graduates who indicated an interest in becoming a teacher also point to a lack of ongoing support and mentoring within preparation programs as a barrier to enrolling in or completing a teacher preparation program. Again, persons of color are disproportionately affected by these factors (Schwartz 2018).

The final report of West Virginia's Education Preparation Task Force echoes these concerns, noting two significant barriers to becoming a teacher in the state. The first is the high cost of earning teacher certification through traditional college-based preparation programs paired with the state's low teacher salaries. The second is the low pass rates on tests required for licensure, with only 39 percent passing the elementary licensure test on their first attempt, and 20 percent of candidates requiring three or more attempts to pass the most difficult subtests on the Praxis II content exams used by the state (Education Preparation Task Force 2021).

Establishing Data Systems and Local Partnerships

A strong first step toward improving the efficiency and effectiveness of candidate recruitment into teacher residency or other teacher preparation programs, is implementing effective data systems at the state and school district levels for tracking teacher supply and demand. Effectively using teacher supply and demand data at the local level also requires establishing close partnerships between EPPs and school district partners to enable the collection and exchange of data on hiring needs and the number and types of candidates completing EPPs' licensure programs. Too often there is a mismatch between the certification area needs of school districts and teacher candidates produced by EPPs. For example, EPPs tend to produce more elementary teachers than openings available in districts while underproducing candidates in hard-to-staff subjects such as science, math, technology, and special education (National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2020).

School districts should develop data collection systems for tracking and predicting the number of upcoming vacancies and where they occur. These data should track vacancies by month and year, identify in which schools and licensure areas vacancies occurred, and in which areas expected shortages will occur (The New Teacher Project 2023). A study by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) found that sharing these data with EPP partners is an important strategy for addressing teacher shortages and increasing recruitment of teacher candidates of color (Goe and Roth 2019).

Strong partnerships between EPPs and school districts serve multiple purposes for improving recruitment of teacher candidates, including allowing EPPs to develop a firm understanding of their partner districts' teacher workforce needs in terms of the type and number of teachers needed, ideally in both the present and projections for the future. This approach provides datapoints for guiding the EPPs' recruitment efforts and ensures districts a pipeline for providing the teachers they need. Another benefit of strong partnerships is providing candidates with more opportunities

for classroom experiences, giving them greater exposure to the classroom environment and hands-on instructional experience. By districts offering more opportunities for EPP faculty to work in its schools with teachers and students, this also leads to a greater alignment between the districts' instructional model and the EPPs' curriculum, resulting in teacher candidates prepared to teach in the district from their first day in the classroom (Goe and Roth 2019).

An evaluation of 30 teacher residency programs that were recipients of federal Teacher Quality Partnership grants by the Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education, found the majority of the residency programs worked closely with their partner school districts to guide the residencies' student recruitment efforts. Data from their partner districts were used to determine the number of candidates recruited into the programs, the certification areas targeted, teachers needed for hard-to-staff subject areas, and demographics such as race/ethnicity and gender. Districts also expressed preferences for candidates who reflected the communities in which districts were located, such as communities of color or rural communities (Silva et al. 2014).

At the state level, a statewide data system is needed to collect vacancy data from local school systems, including information on the number of vacancies and their licensure areas. The system should also collect data on the number of EPP completers by licensure area so that analyses may be carried out to determine how well state EPPs are meeting the staffing needs of school districts (National Council on Teacher Quality 2021b). The system should also be able to highlight licensure areas in which EPPs are producing an over- or undersupply of completers. Building a longitudinal database will allow the state to track trends over time and potentially highlight looming overage or shortage areas (National Council on Teacher Quality 2021b). Ideally, using current and projected data on student enrollment, the age and years of experience of the current teacher workforce, and the characteristics of teachers leaving and entering the teacher workforce, states may also develop models for predicting shortage areas (Reichardt et al. 2020).

Expanding the Pool of Qualified Candidates

One approach EPPs are turning to for increasing the number of candidates entering teacher preparation programs is expanding the pool of potential candidates from which to recruit (National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2020). This strategy takes many forms, from recruiting within EEPs' broader university student population, increasing recruitment of professionals seeking a career change, focusing targeted marketing campaigns on underrepresented communities, to "Grow Your Own" programs that start the recruiting process in middle and high school.

Recruiting From Within

Some EPPs are enhancing their efforts to look within their own universities for recruits. This approach often involves holding informational sessions or making presentations on becoming a teacher in other schools within the university, such as letters and science, mathematics, or the

sciences. Some EPPs are also reaching out to community colleges for recruits and, in some cases, establishing formal articulation agreements (Konoske-Graf, Partelow, and Benner 2016).

For example, the Math Immersion Program, a collaboration between New York City Schools and several of its partner EPPs, recruits promising candidates in math-related undergraduate programs such as economics or the sciences for their secondary math teacher preparation programs. The program now supplies nearly half of the city's middle and high school math teachers (Boyd et al. 2012).

Encouraging Changing to a Career in Teaching

A related strategy is to seek out individuals who are interested in changing careers. These potential recruits, who often hold Bachelor's degrees in other fields, are recruited into graduate level teacher certification programs. The Mississippi Teacher Corps, an alternative preparation program at the University of Mississippi, offers top college graduates a full scholarship for earning a Master of Arts in Teaching degree along with a secondary teacher certification. Candidates work as teachers, receiving full pay and benefits as they complete the program. The program seeks to prepare candidates for teaching in high-need schools, reflecting its mission of serving high-need school systems in the region (National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2020; University of Mississippi n.d.).

Tapping Into Underrepresented Communities

Preparation programs are increasingly focusing their recruitment efforts on underrepresented communities, often in collaboration with partner school districts. This type of campaign strives to reach out to typically underserved communities by identifying media outlets serving the communities, holding local job fairs, and accessing the networks of faculty, current and former students, and staff from partner school districts with connections to these communities (Silva et al. 2014). Effective recruiting also involves using multiple media sources, particularly social media, but also including broad based and community focused publications and radio stations. Partnering with local community organizations also helps EPPs to increase their reach into communities of color and other underserved communities (National Center for Teacher Residencies 2014). The Denver Teacher Residency has been successful with its recruiting using these techniques. It advertises in city-wide, neighborhood, and special language media, holds community-level job fairs, and actively seeks referrals from current and former residents, as well as from paraprofessionals from partner schools (National Center for Teacher Residencies 2014).

Grow Your Own Programs

EPPs are also using Grow Your Own programs to encourage students in middle and high school to consider a career in teaching. Programs such as the Oregon Teacher Pathways Program identify students interested in becoming a teacher and offer coursework in education topics—often college credit earning courses provided by collaborating schools of education—along with classroom-base

field experiences such as tutoring elementary students (Eastern Oregon University n.d.; Steiner et al. 2022). California high school students attending participating high schools may enroll in California Partnership Academies, a 3-year program for students in grades 10 through 12 following a "school-within-a-school" model where students are immersed in a specialized curriculum aligned with a specific career area, including teaching. These partnership academies incorporate dual enrollment courses with local universities and field experiences in partner school districts. California currently has 30 academies with an education and child development focus (California Department of Education n.d.). West Virginia has its own Grow Your Own program, the GYO WV Teaching Pathway. The GYO WV Teaching Pathway program allows high school students to explore the teaching profession, earn college credits through dual enrollment courses, and engage in classroom-based experiences. Upon graduation from high school, students enroll in college as a sophomore and earn certification within 3 years (TeachWV 2022). Educators Rising is a nationwide career and technical student organization featuring intra-curricular learning opportunities integrated into existing education and training programs. Educators Rising is a community-based movement that provides Grow Your Own programming through the Educators Rising Curriculum and supporting student activities. With a presence in all 50 states, chapters are provided classroom resources along with the opportunity to attend the National Conference where members, teacher leaders, and educators from around the nation come together to showcase the skills they have gained in their education and training programs (Educators Rising 2022).

High-Touch Recruiting Practices

In addition to developing an expanded pool from which to recruit candidates, EPPs must apply effective recruiting methods to attract potential candidates to their programs. Studies of EPPs recruiting practices have identified "high-touch" recruiting strategies that are targeted toward candidates who may be interested in teaching in subject areas experiencing teacher shortages, and personalized in ways that continue to engage and support them. Preparation programs should also make use of varying recruiting approaches most appropriate to the candidate demographic they are targeting (Steiner et al. 2022).

Personalized, Targeted Recruiting

High-touch recruiting involves personalized practices such as ongoing, extended contact with recruits to help familiarize them with the program and provide supports as needed to ease their path into the program. Supports may range from individual or group information sessions to share information about program costs, potential financial support, or career opportunities; to preprogram mentoring or clinical experiences. For example, Minneapolis Public Schools employs high-touch recruitment methods, particularly for persons of color, that involve actively following up with applicants, holding information sessions, and building relationships with the community (Steiner et al. 2022).

Programs successful at recruiting also tailor their recruiting approaches to best target the types of recruits required to meet their partner districts' staffing needs. For example, programs looking to recruit candidates of color may target communities of color by working with Black or Hispanic affinity organizations, advertising in minority media outlets, or using the networks of their current and former students of color (Scott and Alexander 2019).

The teacher residency programs interviewed for this study provided examples of recruiting approaches they found effective. One urban program employs a full-time recruiter who engages a range of recruiting approaches. They make extensive use of social media to reach out to a younger audience and feed local news stations and papers with stories about its teacher residents. The program participates at numerous area career fairs and regularly makes recruiting visits to other local universities and community colleges. It also offers a $400 incentive payment to program alumni who successfully make a referral to the program. A rural residency program serving multiple partner school districts designs its marketing campaigns to appeal to young Generation Z candidates. This involves making significant use of social media platforms. Much of its recruitment is targeted at current students attending area universities. Working with department chairs, the residency goes into classrooms to make short presentations on the teaching profession and becoming a teacher, often targeting high-need courses such as math and the sciences. The program also regularly advertises in campus student unions.

Inspiring Potential Teachers

In an effort to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession, some states and EPPs are implementing promotional campaigns designed to highlight the rewards that may be realized from a career in teaching. The Oklahoma State Department of Education has produced a series of ShapED My Life videos designed to inspire individuals to become teachers. Each video presents a positive story by a notable Oklahoman about how teachers influenced their lives. The Department also produced a series of talks called EDxOK Elevating the Profession, that features teachers talking about their love of teaching (Heubeck 2020).[1]

Teacher Residencies

Teacher residencies provide another strategy for enhancing recruitment, particularly among persons of color. Candidates find teacher residencies attractive due to the longer field experiences offered, which they perceive will lead to higher quality preparation, and the stipends residencies pay for their field experiences, increasing the affordability of the preparation process (Madhani, Shand, and Austin 2022; Steiner et al. 2022).

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[1] Examples of ShapED My Life videos may be found at
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLxypWLbZY_Xc1DyG9rWeqhdlWPsD9voNn.

An example of an EDxOK talk may be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=971NQakBAvc.

The federal evaluation of 30 teacher residency programs receiving Teacher Quality Partnership grants surveyed enrolled residents about their reasons for enrolling in a residency program. The five reasons candidates reported as most important to their decision to enroll were:

1. The year-long residency field experience component.

2. An opportunity to earn a Master's degree.

3. Mentor support after becoming a teacher.

4. Coursework that is integrated with fieldwork.

5. The program's out-of-pocket costs (Silva et al. 2014).

Increasing Candidate Accessibility and Support

The initial steps of recruiting involve finding the right candidates and generating interest in a preparation program. The final step is moving them from being interested to enrolling in the program. Barriers to enrollment can make this step a challenge, particularly for low-income candidates and candidates of color. Studies point to several supports EPPs may use to help candidates overcome these barriers. These include making preparation programs more affordable, providing options to basic skills and licensure tests for assessing candidate quality, and offering additional supports to underserved communities.

Program Costs and Student Debt

First and foremost is cost. The high cost of tuition can be a challenge, even for students from middle class backgrounds. But, for low-income students, which disproportionately includes candidates of color, this, coupled with low starting teachers' salaries, causes many candidates to hesitate taking out costly student loans, ultimately putting preparation programs out of their reach (Scott and Alexander 2019). Several studies looking at the road blocks to entry into the teaching profession point to finances as the leading impediment. Concerns about costs include not only tuition and debt concerns, but also the potential costs of participating in clinical experiences (including transportation, instructional materials, and loss of income due to the difficulty of maintaining part-time work during fieldwork), and the costs of taking basic skills tests for entry into programs and licensure tests upon program completion (Madhani et al. 2022; Steiner et al. 2022).

Strategies exist for addressing financial barriers to program entry, but they require additional resources on the part of EPPs. For example, a survey of K-12 teachers found the number one approach to making teacher preparation programs more accessible was to offer college debt forgiveness and increase teacher pay (Steiner et al. 2022). Research has identified other financial incentives that could entice more individuals, especially persons of color, to consider enrolling in teacher preparation programs. These include:

» greater access to scholarships and debt forgiveness programs;

» payment of student stipends, especially during clinical experiences; and

» subsidies for the cost of basic skills and licensure tests.

As of 2019, 35 states have implemented statewide scholarship, grant, or loan forgiveness programs. For example, the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority Alliance loan subsidy program is one example of state strategy to address tuition and debt concerns. This program subsidizes the student debt of teacher candidates who agree to teach in high-need public schools in the state. A program completer with a 10-year, $25,000 private loan would save about $15,000 over the life of the loan under this program (Steiner et al. 2022).

An increasing number of states have implemented statewide scholarship programs to incentivize high school graduates to enroll in teacher preparation programs. For example, the Maryland Teaching Fellows program offers scholarships to high school graduates in the top 25 percent of their classes if they earn a teacher license and teach for at least 2 years in a Maryland public school with at least 50 percent free and reduced-price lunch students. The scholarship amount equals 100 percent of tuition, fees, and room and board in a Maryland public university or up to 50 percent of tuition, fees, and room and board at private institutions (Maryland Higher Education Commission 2023). Nevada's Teach Nevada Scholarship program offers students enrolling in Nevada teacher preparation programs up to $24,000 in scholarships. The program prioritizes students from underrepresented populations and students enrolling in high-need areas such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), special education, and English learner programs (Nevada Department of Education n.d.).

Some states have also implemented programs to help offset the cost of teacher licensure tests. Connecticut is appropriating $1 million per year for EPPs to help with the cost of the state's licensure tests. The funds may be used to pay for test fees or the costs of background checks and fingerprinting. Indiana will cover the cost of retaking licensure tests for candidates who failed the test on their first try and meet certain other criteria. Other states offering some form of licensure testing subsidy include Florida, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Oregon (Putman 2022).

Implementing residency programs that pay stipends approaching the amount of first-year teachers during the 1-year clinical experience is another approach to making teacher preparation more affordable. Research shows that residencies, with their longer, more extensive clinical period, also help with retention—another factor in alleviating teacher shortages (Huguet et al. 2021).

Basic Skills and Licensure Tests

Many states require incoming teacher candidates to pass a basic skills assessment for entry into teacher preparation programs. Nearly all states require teacher candidates to pass a subject area content test, such as the Praxis content tests, in at least some subject areas, for licensure (National Council on Teacher Quality 2019a, 2019b). West Virginia requires passage of both of these tests with some exceptions. However, many candidates, especially candidates of color, often require multiple attempts to pass these tests. Others become discouraged after failure to pass after one or

two attempts and drop out of the program without achieving licensure (Learning Policy Institute and Public Leadership Institute 2022). Factors affecting passing rates include the quality of candidates' K-12 school systems and, in the case of candidates of color, potential cultural bias in the test (Learning Policy Institute and Public Leadership Institute 2022; Walsh 2020). Multiple attempts at passing these tests also have a financial impact, with a per administration cost of $150 for the computer-assisted software engineering (CASE) basic skills test and the cost of content tests ranging from $50 to $209 per administration with additional fees charged in some cases as well (ETS Praxis 2023).

Many EPPs have developed strategies to assist candidates who struggle to pass these tests. For example, in some states candidates may be exempt from passing basic skills tests if they have achieved a minimum grade point average exceeding a threshold value, such as 3.0, or if their score on college entrance examinations such as the ACT, SAT, or GRE exceeds a benchmark value. In some states candidates may also be exempt from the content area testing requirement if they meet certain conditions such as holding a Master's degree in the subject area or a valid teaching license from another state in the subject area (Learning Policy Institute and Public Leadership Institute 2022). West Virginia regulations incorporate several of these testing exemptions, such as allowing candidates to teach under a temporary license as they prepare to retake the test. (Bissett 2023; West Virginia Department of Education 2022).

Other strategies EPPs have implemented to help candidates who struggle with standardized test such as the Praxis line of assessments include providing intensive supports, such as tutoring, for candidates in who have failed or are in danger of failing the test (National Center for Teacher Residencies 2014). If sanctioned by the state, EPPs may also use performance assessments in place of standardized assessments such as the Praxis. Performance assessments offer a viable testing alternative for candidates who struggle to perform well on standardized tests. Research shows that performance assessments, such as the Teacher Performance Assessment, help teacher candidates develop their teaching skills while performance on the test reliably predicts their students' performance on state assessments once candidates enter the classroom (Carver-Thomas 2018).

Support for Underserved Communities

Persons of color and those from other underserved communities may eschew a career in teaching due to a lack of role models and a feeling of exclusion and unfamiliarity with the culture of teacher preparation and teaching. Many of these students may be the first in their families to contemplate attending college. Others may have never encountered a teacher of the same racial or ethnic background (Madhani et al. 2022). EPPs can work to ease their entry into the higher education experience by building support structures. These may include hiring more faculty of color and creating campus groups or networks specifically for candidates of color. (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2020; Huguet et al. 2021). Some EPPs assign candidates mentors and pair them with cooperating teachers from the same affinity group (Huguet et al. 2021). Programs may also adopt culturally relevant curriculum (Huguet et al. 2021). Such approaches are

supported by surveys of teachers of color, who report that working with other staff of color and nurturing positive collegial relationships leads to a more positive preparation and teaching experience and could also lead to greater retention once they begin their teaching career (Steiner et al. 2022).

Conclusion

This report highlights strategies for more effectively recruiting candidates for teacher residency and other forms of teacher preparation programs. These include using data-driven strategies and establishing strong partnerships with school systems, expanding the pool of potential candidates by focusing recruiting efforts on a wider variety of candidates and more diverse communities, and providing a wide range of supports to help candidates negotiate program enrollment, completion, and job placement. However, research shows that today's high school graduates are less interested in pursuing a teaching career than in the past for reasons beyond the control of teacher preparation programs. For example, low teacher salaries raise concerns among potential candidates about whether they can afford the cost of earning certification and the student debt that may entail. Other factors include concerns about poor working conditions and high stress levels, especially for teachers working in high-need schools, and a perceived lack of prestige and respect for the teaching profession on the part of the general public. Until states and school systems address these larger issues, the challenge of both recruiting and retaining quality teachers will likely continue.

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