



OPEN THE DOOR TO DIVERSITY

TEACHER RESIDENCIES IN URBAN SCHOOLS BOOST RETENTION AND ACHIEVEMENT

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The progression of teacher learning from aspiring educator to accomplished practitioner is multifaceted and complex. Selecting a teacher preparation program is a critical point in this journey, but it is by no means the end. Strengthening teacher pipelines requires aligned systems that not only open diverse entry points and provide initial preparation but also

create opportunities for ongoing growth and development.

Teacher residencies are a model for coherent teacher development from preservice to teacher induction and beyond, through structured collaboration between universities and districts. Effective residencies are learning spaces that connect theory and practice in ways that center student and teacher learning.

Residencies initiate and nurture professional learning communities that center shared values, critical reflection, powerful pedagogies, and networks of sustained, ongoing development and support. Contrary to some educators' assumptions, residencies are far more complex than simply increasing time in student teaching placements.

An effective teacher residency depends on the hard work,

commitment, and trust of partner institutions. UCLA-IMPACT (Inspiring Minds through a Professional Alliance of Community Teachers) is such a partnership between the UCLA Teacher Education Program and the Los Angeles Unified School District.

UCLA-IMPACT is a post-graduate residency model that embeds a credential and a master's of education degree. The program's partners collaborated to construct and implement teacher preparation structures that laid a strong foundation for equity-focused STEM teaching and student learning in high-need partner schools. We focused on STEM because there are acute shortages of and attrition among STEM teachers, especially in urban Title I schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

The partnership between UCLA-IMPACT and Los Angeles schools has taught us important lessons about how to better prepare STEM teachers to engage and persist in high-poverty urban spaces. As we describe here, we've seen how this model can improve teacher diversity and retention and even transform the culture and learning structures of schools.

BENEFITS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Residencies prepare resilient and robust teachers in a way that reflects authentic field experiences and challenges, and they develop teachers' holistic understanding of school structures that affect teaching and learning (Guha et al., 2016). They have multiple benefits, including diversifying the teacher workforce, leading to higher teacher retention, and improving student achievement.

It has been well-documented that students benefit from exposure to teachers who reflect their own identities (Partelow et al., 2017). Teachers of color who teach students of color generally have higher expectations of students and can act as cultural brokers between the school and the community (Partelow et al., 2017). But across the

FUNDING FOR TEACHER RESIDENCIES

Funding for teacher residencies has increased both at the federal level over the last 12 years and in some states more recently.

The U.S. Department of Education's Teacher Quality Partnership Program has invested mightily to teacher residencies over the past 12 years. Within the last three years in California, Governor Gavin Newsom committed \$900

million to improve the quality of teaching and learning in California schools, including \$75 million specifically earmarked for teacher residencies.

This represents the largest financial commitment of any state (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2018). However, the state funding might be in peril due to recent events related to COVID-19 and the subsequent budget impacts on state coffers.

U.S., only 19% of teacher candidates are from minority groups (Carver-Thomas, 2018).

Teacher residency programs are helping make teaching a more accessible profession for candidates of color. Forty-five percent of U.S. teacher residencies' candidates come from minority backgrounds (Guha et al., 2016), and over 80% of candidates in our program are aspiring teachers of color.

One of the ways residencies encourage a more diverse pool of candidates is by providing a living stipend while facilitating a full year of experience in a school site. The stipend is particularly critical for aspiring teachers from socioeconomically challenging backgrounds.

In a recent convening of local teacher residencies in Los Angeles, we were struck by how an alumnus of UCLA-IMPACT shared his financial hardships, coming from a low-income community and also having to help support his family. Unfortunately, he and his family lost their lease midway through the program and had to find a new space to live. He said the funding was critical in allowing him to enter a teacher preparation program, adding that reaching out to the directors and advisors was pivotal in helping him navigate that very stressful situation.

Residencies have also demonstrated promise in teacher retention. Nationwide, on average 20% to 30% of

teachers do not complete their fifth year of teaching. In high-poverty districts, teachers are 50% more likely to leave (Ingersoll, 2003). Papay et al. (2012) report that 55% of teachers in urban school districts leave their district and 70% leave their school.

In contrast, teachers who completed residencies demonstrate a retention rate of 80% to 90% in the same district within three years and 70% to 80% within five years (Guha et al., 2016). UCLA-IMPACT, which has placed 240 teachers in Title I schools that predominantly serve students of color, demonstrates over 86% retention after three years in the same district and five-year retention rates of 76%.

There is also evidence that residencies improve student achievement in classrooms led by new teachers. Both the Boston Teacher Residency and the Memphis Teacher Residency programs showed greater student achievement gains on standardized test scores when compared to new and veteran teachers (Papay et al., 2012; Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 2014).

Further, the New Visions Hunter College Urban Teacher Residency Program in New York City saw greater K-12 student student achievement gains when compared to novice teachers prepared in more traditional pathways (Sloan & Blazevski, 2015).

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BENEFITS FOR SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION

In addition to supporting individual teacher candidates, residencies have the potential for transformative school change. The partnership between universities and school districts can develop a rich learning community.

At the school sites, mentor teachers, preservice teachers, and administrators form an ecology for change and shift the thinking from preparing high-quality teachers for urban settings in isolated schools to supporting a community of educators at a school site and continued teacher development that can foster better outcomes.

At UCLA-IMPACT, we developed a cohort model that asks administrators to accept multiple teacher candidates at their school as student teachers. The cohort model exists as a built-in socio-emotional and pedagogical support within a shared context for both the student teachers and guiding teachers and thus serves as a vital support for teacher retention. For student teachers, it gives them peers to learn with and support through the experiences they share at the same school site.

The transformation that is possible through this approach is exemplified by this quote from a principal at a school site where the majority of science and math teachers are graduates of UCLA-IMPACT: “Our relationship with UCLA-IMPACT has been nothing short of transformative. If you look at our math department and science department, they are directly impacted ... there is a commitment to social justice, there’s a commitment to equity and access. There’s a commitment to the shifts in Common Core standards. The leadership that’s come out of those two departments ... really has changed who we are.”

This cohort approach is also beneficial for mentors, or guiding teachers, because it provides them with colleagues to share in the journey of developing as a mentor for student

teachers and teacher leader for the school.

Mentors are an important part of supporting teacher candidates and transforming the school culture. Without the investment in mentor development, the residency is more susceptible to being characterized by only increased field hours and funding and more dependent on the individual guiding teacher alone, rather than a community of practice. A community of practice has the potential to foster reflection on theory and practice that might lead to improved teaching.

The mentors also represent the residency’s commitment to continuing teachers’ development throughout the pipeline because the mentoring opportunities allow them to develop in their own careers. After several years of UCLA-IMPACT, we noticed that the mentors stayed, suggesting that they valued this career development opportunity.

As one principal said: “Another wonderful attribute of the UCLA IMPACT program is that they’ve built great relationships at awesome schools and identified really strong partner teachers and then really fostered those relationships. So you see partner teachers taking on their third, fourth, or fifth student teacher because it is a mutually beneficial experience.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS

A core value of the program is that teacher development is a shared responsibility. This means that district-university partners work together to recruit, select, prepare, hire, and support program teacher candidates and alumni. This ensures the kind of robust arc of professional learning that strengthens the teacher pipeline.

Because the Los Angeles district has been a partner for many years, we have both grown from better understanding our respective contexts, goals, and needs. This cohesion, dialogue, and trust with partners supports teacher candidates and their ability to persist

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and navigate some of the challenges that may arise.

For example, we have intentionally partnered with the Los Angeles district’s new teacher induction program so that our teacher candidates can embed some of the work necessary for their master of education degree into the district’s induction program. After working together for many years, the district’s induction coaches now better understand our work and vice versa. This allows UCLA-IMPACT faculty to better address issues that may arise and address emerging needs for candidates in a more timely and responsive manner, and it creates a more consistent approach across preservice and ongoing professional learning.

Based on our experience, we have identified three action steps for districts and schools that can support the development of mutually beneficial university-district partnerships and improve recruitment and retention of teachers.

Welcome student teachers from a local university teacher education program into your classrooms — in cohorts, if possible. Having student teachers means that there will be a second adult (i.e. student teacher) to provide instructional support in some of your classes. Student teachers can also become part of the school community participating in clubs, tutoring, professional development and staff meetings.

Enculturating them into the school helps them build relationships with students and faculty and provides the school with additional adults to provide support and enrichment services to students. In addition, in opening your school to student teachers, you build a

cohort of mentor teachers that will get support from the university and further equip them to provide leadership and guidance to the rest of your staff.

Hire a cohort of new teacher graduates from your local university teacher education program. Hiring a cluster of teachers from your local university will create an important socio-emotional support system for your newly hired teachers during the difficult first year of teaching. When feasible, hiring teachers who were placed at your school during student teaching brings an added advantage: Those teachers are already familiar with the policies and procedures of the school, have developed relationships with the students, their families and the community, and have participated in the professional community at the school with the faculty and staff.

When the teachers described above are at midcareer (four to 10 years), encourage them to become a new cohort of guiding teachers. This cycle of preparing student teachers, supporting new teachers, and developing teacher leaders is a way to build schoolwide leadership capacity. Partnering with the university opens the door for veteran teachers to engage in professional learning with university faculty and to have university experts lead professional learning with the entire school faculty.

STRONGER TOGETHER

This work does not happen in isolation — institutions are better when they work together. We can develop a common language and overlapping visions toward change as we engage in the construction of knowledge and action through time and space, with a

theoretical foundation and examination of self, biases, affordances, positionality.

As one preservice teacher said, “As I learn more about teaching and build experience with students, I am realizing the extent to which building relationships and seeing students as human is vital to my own personal pedagogy and practice. More than anything (including content goals and visions for social justice and change), I believe that my responsibility as an educator is to treat my students as fully human and build their own capacities to fight for their rights to self-actualize and realize their own vision(s) for themselves.”

Ultimately, for us, it is about humanizing pedagogy, seeing each other and supporting each other through and in the work by engaging in critical reflection on theory and practice. We begin to see ourselves as part of a larger community and as a part of our students’ journey.

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