

South Carolina Teacher Residency Programs: Characteristics, Outcomes & Recommendations

MAY 2019 WORKING PAPER SERIES I

During the past several years, school districts, non-profit organizations, and colleges/universities have collaborated in establishing teacher residency programs (TRPs). These programs are notable for providing teacher candidates with an extended clinical experience (one year) in the classroom of a master teacher. Another innovative aspect of TRPs is their focus on recruiting teacher candidates for critical-needs subject areas and/or for low-performing schools/school districts. TRP-designed programs also increase the pool of teachers of color; the burden of college debt may be significantly lower due to financial incentives provided to teacher candidates by TRPs; and those who serve as TRP mentors frequently become better teachers themselves because of their work with TRPs. Early evidence suggests that TRPs are successful at attracting more highly qualified candidates and are more likely to keep teachers in the classroom. Research data also indicate TRP graduates have consistently strong teaching evaluations and a positive impact on student learning. In South Carolina, there are several established and emerging programs that incorporate various components of TRPs, making them a promising development in the ongoing attempt to improve the state's public schools.

+ SOUTH CAROLINA

- In South Carolina, at least six colleges or universities with teacher education programs have incorporated variations of year-long residencies in some or all of their teacher preparation tracks. On the undergraduate level, Winthrop University was the first traditional teacher education program in the state to implement a year-long student teaching (clinical practice) requirement—a core characteristic of TRPs—coupled with a strong history of partnerships with Professional Development Schools (PDS). Lander University shifted to a year-long student teaching residency in 2018 and is focusing on partner placements with rural schools. Columbia College has an innovative Alternative Pathways Educator Certification (APEC) program that models a TRP. The program, targeting partner school district employees (excluding currently certified teachers) and career changers, leads to certification within two years and a bachelor's degree for those who do not hold a bachelor's degree.
- Although the implementation of TRP characteristics varies, South Carolina's three TRPs with master's degree components have a majority of the characteristics described at length in the accompanying working paper. Two of these programs lead to M.A.T. degrees, one through a B.A. to fifth year M.A.T (Clemson University) and one that requires a bachelor's degree in education or another degree as an admission requirement (Coastal Carolina University). Both of these programs are in their first or second year of operation. The third program, in its 19th year, is a bachelor's degree to fifth year leading to an M.A. in Education (Furman University).
- Visit sc-teacher.org to retrieve the full-length working paper on SC Teacher Residency Programs.

+ RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Focus on lessons learned from data gleaned from year-long residency models to better predict success and enhance preparation of candidates**
 - School leaders describe residencies as a way to get to know potential teachers who will likely stay in the classroom longer.
 - TRP candidates have multiple opportunities to reflect on practice at a more in-depth level due to an increased number of days in full-time teaching prior to program completion.
 - Data show increased retention of TRP graduates.
- **Forge stronger partnerships between TRP providers and school districts, making them more responsive to district needs**
 - Student teaching/residencies are with school district partners that identify short- and long-term hiring needs and use residency candidates to fill those needs.
 - Teachers hired by partner schools tend to stay longer than those hired by a non-partner schools.
 - Educator Preparation Providers (EPPs) can capture beneficial outcomes if partnerships have this goal in mind.
- **Engage in stronger recruitment efforts for increasing the diversity of teacher candidates**
 - More than half of TRP graduates are people of color (NCTR).
 - TRP candidates should be offered additional incentives to offset costs (see 5th recommendation).
 - Recruitment strategies should address increasing male candidates as well as targeting specific subject areas of greatest need.
- **Offer more cohort housing arrangements and co-curricular requirements for community engagement**
 - Knowledge of community settings can help educators better teach and communicate with their students.
 - Candidates have more opportunity to get to know and understand the people and communities in their placement settings and the settings and the settings of their potential teaching positions.
 - This practice may also encourage community engagement as a lifelong teacher practice.
- **Prioritize public and private funding to address teacher recruitment and retention challenges**
 - Funding could include (not be limited to) assistance for financial and other incentives associated with TRP participants' enrollment and/or subsidies for mentors assisting TRP participants and/or subsidies and/or induction teachers to offset costs.
 - EPPs should seek additional funding through private and public sources as several TRPs studied have done.
 - Teams for teacher residency collaborations between EPPs and partner school districts should seek joint funding.
- **Expand access to data for EPPs related to teacher recruitment, preparation, and retention**
 - The SC Department of Education could provide additional data related to teacher recruitment, preparation, and retention. Such data include annual hiring, movement, and retention of completers, as well as student growth measures, surveys of principals/students, and evaluations of completers' teaching.
 - EPPs should simultaneously collect data, which will allow EPPs to determine the effectiveness of TRPs which aim to strengthen the recruitment and preparation of South Carolina's prospective teachers.

“The current situation in South Carolina mirrors (and in some cases exceeds) national trends in teacher recruitment and retention.”

-Evatt & Henderson

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