

The Power of Teacher Residency Programs

***Building Strong Partnerships
to Cultivate Well-Prepared
Justice-Oriented Educators***

Introduction to Special Issue

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In this special issue of *Issues in Teacher Education*, we examine the significant impact teacher residency programs have on the preparation of pre-service educators. This apprenticeship approach to teacher preparation has significantly increased in popularity due to the positive impact it is having on pre-service educators and their respective students. According to the United States Department of Education, there were at least 50 teacher residency programs across the United States in 2016, and that number is exponentially increasing with significant gains reaped by pre-service educators and their respective students (Hirschboeck et al., 2022). The National Center for Teacher Residencies (NCTR) defines teacher residencies as a blending of “a rigorous full-year classroom apprenticeship for pre-service teachers with academic coursework that is closely aligned with the classroom experience” (National Center for Teacher Residencies, 2023). As preservice educators work closely with highly qualified mentor teachers in the district they will eventually be employed with, they not only have the

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opportunity to work with K-12 students and receive critical feedback from mentors, but also have the advantage of district specific training, providing a smooth transition into their own classrooms after their residency year. Through this parallel district and residency training, pre-service educators receive extensive, district specific job preparation that provides the necessary link between theory and practice to advance their overall understanding and development of their skills as they prepare to enter their own classroom spaces.

While teacher residency programs provide additional time in the classroom and more district specific job training when compared to traditional educator preparation programs, there is also a developing body of research that points to teacher residency programs yielding higher success rates in regards to preparation and retention of credential candidates when compared to traditional teacher preparation program tracks (Papay et al., 2012; REL Mid-Atlantic, n.d.; Whipp & Genome, 2017). Additionally, one particular theme that is emerging within residency work is the creation of teacher residency program partnerships with hard to staff school districts (Papay et al., 2012). As evidenced by the collection of articles within this issue, teacher residencies have bloomed in rural and urban spaces alike to assist with the effort to prepare and retain highly qualified educators. Through this effort, university and district partners alike are working to attract highly qualified preservice educators who have a passion to support these specific populations. Interestingly enough, through these efforts, teacher residency programs are attracting and supporting more teachers of color than traditional educator preparation programs (Papay et al., 2012; Marks, in press). The intentional focus on culturally responsive and sustaining practices built within teacher residency models is yielding promising preliminary results. The growing body of research on teacher residency programs demonstrates that the profound impact teacher residencies have on credential candidates and teacher preparation at large is broadly attributed to five critical components as areas of focus, which include culturally responsive recruitment and equitable selection, rigorous selection and support of teacher mentors, intensive pre-service preparation focused on the specific needs of teachers in high-need schools, aligned induction support, and strategic hiring of graduates (Our Residency Model, 2023).

With positive impact and significant benefits to this model of teacher preparation, there has been an influx of increased funding—some states designating millions of dollars—to promote the creation and sustainment of teacher residency programs (Hirschboeck et al., 2022). Being deemed “the most effective pathway to the teaching profession,”

(Our Residency Model, 2023) we find that not only is this special issue relevant, but also timely. As such, the focus of this special issue is to explore how teacher residency programs are working to redesign the teacher preparation process and education system at large (Whipp & Geronime, 2017). As more higher education institutions and districts alike begin to develop or refine their pathways towards residency work and in an effort to better understand residency work, we called upon those engaged in this work to share their experiences and hardships to gain a better understanding of how to most effectively implement this model of teacher preparation. In an effort to support the development, launching, and acceleration of teacher residency efforts, the following collection of articles will explore the complexities that come with the creation and sustainment of teacher residency programs, recruitment and retention efforts, establishment and sustainment of partnership and stakeholder relationships, and the support and intention given to breaking down barriers for future teachers and students of color.

In their article, “Establishing Partnerships in the Central Valley to Expand the Teacher Residency Model,” Robin Valente, Jaclyn Tejwani, and Valentin Pedroza share their experiences partnering with rural school districts to design and implement a teacher residency model for aspiring educators as a means to meet urgent needs. The study focuses on exploring the variety of data collection methods implemented to measure effectiveness of the residency model used with three rural school districts. Through this collaborative effort, district and university stakeholders were able to design and implement a paid residency model that prioritizes STEM teaching and learning, while also demonstrating the promise for retention to not only offset teacher shortages, but intentionally attract and retain a more diverse teacher workforce.

Carrienne Schieb, Catherine Snyder, and Marjori Krebs, in their article “Using Data to Enhance the Teacher Residency Model: Exploring What, How, and Why Data are Used within a National Network of Teacher Residencies,” explore the role of data-driven efforts to improve the quality of teacher residency programs. Attempting to answer the question ‘What data is collected by teacher residency programs and a network of teacher residency programs’ and ‘How faculty and The Teacher Residency Center use this data to advance both individual programs and the teacher residency model nationally,’ the authors examine the ways in which teacher residency programs can individually and as a collective network use a collection of data to inform continuous improvements and ongoing adjustments in the structure and implementation of the teacher residency model. This article gives

particular insights as to how to create and foster strong, effective partnerships between higher education institutions, districts, and community stakeholders.

As previously mentioned, teacher residency programs can offer support to the diversification of the educator pipeline and strengthen social justice oriented efforts with diverse populations of students. In her article, “UTR Models, Teacher Shortages, and Equity,” Katherine Herman explores the ways teacher shortages are amplified in urban areas to the detriment of the diverse students served. While teacher shortages are rampant across the country, urban areas are the most greatly affected. Herman offers the teacher residency model as a solution to assist in the recruitment and retention of highly qualified educators in urban settings. Using the teacher residency model as an apprenticeship alternative to teacher education, Herman explores best practices implemented within an urban teacher residency model, while also describing the ways in which the teacher residency model can work to fill gaps in teacher preparation and retention.

In the article “Teacher Residencies as an Approach to Teacher Diversity: Promising Strategies for Recruiting and Retaining Black Educators,” Robert Shand, Naureen Madhani, and Kimberly Austin, along with Caroline Connolly, Nicholas Milinkovich, Patrice Korede Oseni, Joanna Pisceone, and Enioluwada Oluwafnto Popoola examine the ways in which teacher residency programs work to address existing barriers for Black educators. Exploring the unique set of obstacles future Black educators face when entering the teaching profession, Shand et al. share how the Black Educator Initiative (BEI) Grant has provided an investment in the recruitment, preparation, and retention of Black educators as a means to diversify the educator pipeline. The mixed methods study presented examines the effectiveness of BEI efforts across 8 residency programs across the country.

The final article, “When Equity and Justice are Front and Center: Building a Teacher Residency that Walks the Walk on Antiracism, Equity, and Justice,” explores recruitment, preparation, and retention efforts in underfunded schools. In an effort to not only talk the talk, but also walk the walk, Diana B. Turk, Stacie Brensilver Berman, Christine Gentry, Rachel Traxler, and Sabrina Caldwell examine the ways in which teacher residency programs can offer a culturally responsive and social justice oriented teacher preparation program. In an effort to design programmatic structures with equitable outcomes, the authors examine and provide insights as to the various facets of their teacher residency program which include the admissions process and other programmatic structures, the role of equity and justice across

the curriculum and assessments, and equity and justice elements at partnership school sites.

As we continue to examine the teacher residency model and its effectiveness in recruitment, preparation, and retention of highly qualified educators, we acknowledge the complexity, partnerships, and dedication needed to construct and sustain teacher residency programs. Recognizing that teacher residency programs offer effective frameworks for culturally responsive and social justice oriented teacher preparation, we hope that this collection of articles can provide various insights into not only the complexities of the work and opportunities for critical reflection, but the benefits and joys of teacher residency programs (Marks, in press).

As we conclude, we would like to take a moment to thank *Issues in Teacher Education* for allowing us the honor and opportunity to edit this special issue highlighting teacher residency work, and also thank all of the reviewers who provided their service to our field by providing constructive feedback for the manuscripts submitted. We hope that you enjoy this collection of articles as much as we have.

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