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Mentors in the Urban Teacher Residency Model

Selectivity and Performance Data from UTRU Network
Impact Reports



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In this brief, Urban Teacher Residency United (UTRU) will discuss the roles and responsibilities of mentors in an Urban Teacher Residency (UTR) program, share new qualitative data from UTRU Network surveys about the experience of program mentors, and share data from two UTRU Network impact studies about program mentors.

Summary

- Mentors are a critical component of the UTR model.
- UTRs are selecting highly effective teachers as mentors.
- The mentor role in a UTR provides effective educators with a unique teacher-leader opportunity.
- Mentor feedback illustrates a very positive, professional experience in UTRs.
- Student learning and mentor performance are not negatively impacted by the yearlong presence of a teacher resident in the classroom.

Mentors in an Urban Teacher Residency

In a UTR, the classroom-based clinical experience is instrumental for new teachers to learn, practice, and execute the strategies that lead to improved student learning. The UTR clinical experience is unique; a pre-service teacher is placed in a yearlong apprenticeship with a rigorously chosen mentor who demonstrates effectiveness in instructing students and adults. UTR mentors possess the skills to provide coaching and feedback to the resident; use teacher performance data to inform strategic interventions and to improve teacher effectiveness; align classroom instructional practice with coursework in educational theory and content; and, gradually release responsibility to residents to provide them with multiple, ongoing experiences to lead the classroom. Mentors must actively construct experiences to facilitate resident learning and development of the knowledge, skills and dispositions that effective teachers possess. The role is demanding but professionally rewarding, and gives mentors shared responsibility in developing the next generation of teachers.

Mentor Roles and Responsibilities

As a teacher-educator, the mentor takes on various roles within the UTR to support resident learning and growth. While not all UTR mentors enter the program able to effectively assume each of these roles and responsibilities on day one, UTRU Network Programs offer intensive

orientation, ongoing professional development, and onsite support from UTR program staff to ensure high-quality program implementation and to develop mentor effectiveness along a continuum of practice.

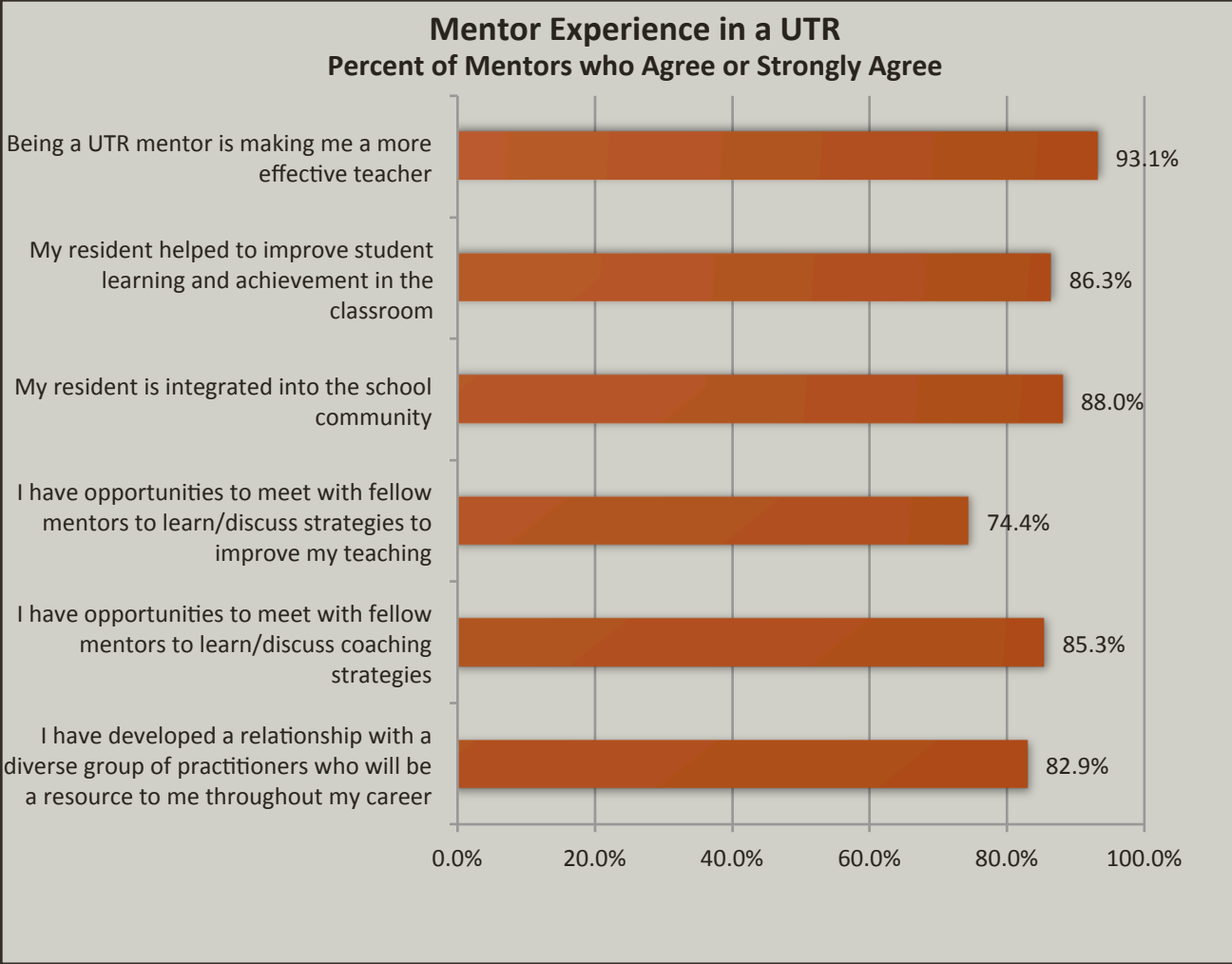
Clinical faculty	Provides practical instruction on how to apply theoretical knowledge in the classroom setting.
Effective teacher	Focused on student learning and student outcomes, effective at producing high levels of student achievement, understands theoretical foundations of effective practice, models good teaching practice, engaged in district curricular initiatives.
Coach	Purpose-driven, facilitative, collaborative, instructive, resourceful, and knowledgeable about mentoring moves. Proficient with use of data collection tools for providing constructive feedback and opportunities for reflection. Ability to make thinking and teaching transparent.
Assessor	Evaluative, constructive.
Learner	Reflective, open to dialogue and examination of their own practice both as mentor and as teacher.
Teacher leader	Participates in professional learning communities within and across school sites, committed to school reform.

Mentor Qualitative Data from UTRU Network Surveys

In 2012, UTRU surveyed mentors across our national network of teacher residency programs and found they had an overwhelmingly positive experience. UTR mentors indicate that they belong to an active learning community of coaches, feel challenged by serving in the mentor role, and contribute to the success of new teachers in the residency program while becoming stronger teachers themselves.

I have learned much more about how to be an effective teacher, and widened the number and variety of strategies I use in the classroom. I have solidified the planning and implementation of things I already did well, and I have improved in areas that were not strengths before. –UTR Mentor

Mentoring forced me to be even more reflective and metacognitive about my own teaching practices. It gave me the opportunity to consistently ask the question, "How does [this practice] support my students in becoming college ready?" I spent a huge amount of time questioning my own practices and making sure that the reasons for all of my instructional decisions got back to the core of making my students prepared to get to—and through—college and beyond. –UTR Mentor



UTRU Network Impact Data

Boston Teacher Residency

In 2011, the Harvard Center for Education Policy Research released the first results from an evaluation of the Boston Teacher Residency (BTR)¹. The study was commissioned by BTR beginning in 2006 and is ongoing.

As part of a larger study of BTR graduate effectiveness, the study applied value added methods to examine the effectiveness of BTR mentors to raise student achievement in comparison to other BPS teachers.

I feel that it has pushed me to be a more effective teacher and has helped me to constantly reflect on my own practice and find areas for growth. I have learned alongside my resident and we have both increased our effectiveness in many areas of our teaching practice!
 –UTR Mentor

¹ Boston Study: Papay, J. et al. (2011) *Does Practice-Based Teacher Preparation Increase Student Achievement? Early Evidence From the Boston Teacher Residency*. Center for Education Policy Research. National Bureau of Economic Research. NBER Working Paper #17646.

According to the researchers, the mentor data allows for exploration of “another possible mechanism through which BTR could impact student achievement, by affecting the mentors directly.” The study found that:

Mentoring (coaching) has been an essential part of my growth as a teacher and a leader both in and out of the classroom. My work with my resident has helped sharpen me as an instructor and has made me become more reflective, which has in turn strengthened my professional practice.
-UTR Mentor

- BTR Mentors are considerably more effective than other BPS teachers, even controlling for experience, in both math and ELA.
- There is no statistically significant difference in the mentor’s contributions to raising student test scores in the mentor year and their contributions in years without a resident in their classroom.

Memphis Teacher Residency

In July 2010, the state of Tennessee was awarded \$500 million from the federal Race to the Top competition. Memphis City Schools (MCS) and Memphis Teacher Residency (MTR) were awarded grant funds to expand MTR, and a provision of the grant requires they conduct an annual evaluation report².

The report concluded that:

- Memphis Teacher Residency is doing a good job of: 1) choosing quality mentor teachers for its residents to apprentice under, and 2) turning out quality graduates who have become effective classroom teachers.
- MTR Mentor’s average Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) score is 0.85 points higher than the district average. The difference is both statistically significant and substantial; 0.85 points is nearly an entire effectiveness level.
- The MTR program selects mentors who are indeed effective teachers, thus ensuring that MTR residents apprentice under mentors who are solid practitioners of their craft.

Mean 2011-2012 TVAAS Averages: MTR Mentors vs. District		
	Mean TVAAS Average *	N
MTR Mentors	4.23**	21
Rest of District	3.38**	2,127
* unweighted average of each teacher’ scores for all tested subjects		
**statistically significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)		

² Memphis Study: *Memphis Teacher Residency: A Look at 2011-2012 Teacher Effect Data*. Memphis City Schools REASI Evaluation Report, July 2012.

Conclusion

Mentors are a critical component of the UTR model. The feedback from current and former UTR mentors confirms that it is a meaningful professional development experience that recognizes and rewards teacher-leaders with increased responsibility and compensation. UTRs successfully select highly effective teachers as mentors, and the presence of residents in their classrooms does not negatively impact their performance or student learning. Excellent teachers stay excellent, and gain the personal and professional recognition of being leaders in their schools, as well as access to a rich professional learning community of fellow teacher-leaders.

As UTRs continue to grow and reach more high need schools, an increasing need exists for excellent classroom teachers to become mentors. Additional district and state support would provide more teachers an opportunity to serve in this essential role.

About UTRU

UTRU supports the development of high-quality, effective Urban Teacher Residency programs that prepare teachers to work in high-need schools – with a focus on improving student achievement. Through technical assistance and a national network of teacher residency programs, UTRU works to launch, scale, and sustain UTRs, focusing on the key elements of high quality, clinical-based teacher preparation, including: strategic recruitment; clinical preparation; new teacher support through mentoring and induction; and partnership building with districts to target placement in high-need subject areas and schools.

For more information on UTRU and our Network, please visit www.utruncated.org, or contact Tamara Azar, Director of External Relations at tazar@utruncated.org or 703-981-8074.