



Teacher Residencies as a Vehicle to Recruit Teachers of Color

Tamara Azar, Erica Hines, and Carrienne Scheib



The National Center for Teacher Residencies (NCTR) is the only organization in the country dedicated to developing, launching, supporting, and accelerating the impact of teacher residency programs. Through school-based clinical preparation that is tailored to partner districts' context, teacher residencies are a proven strategy to increase teacher diversity, effectiveness, and retention.

For more information about NCTR, please visit www.nctresidencies.org

Teacher Residencies as a Vehicle to Recruit Teachers of Color

Tamara Azar
Erica Hines
Carrienne Scheib

NATIONAL CENTER FOR

**TEACHER
RESIDENCIES**

Currently, less than 18 percent of teachers identify as persons of color, failing to reflect an increasingly diverse student population. Research indicates that students experience a myriad of benefits when they are taught by teachers who share their backgrounds, and teachers of color have been shown to confer benefits to all students, not only those of color. Teacher residencies offer an effective vehicle to attract and retain teachers of color. The teacher residencies that are part of the National Center for Teacher Residencies (NCTR) Network currently feature a teacher candidate pool in which 55 percent of teacher candidates, or residents, and 42 percent of mentors identify as persons of color. This report draws upon a subset of residency programs from within NCTR's network that demonstrate positive outcomes in recruiting teachers of color. The programs were examined to identify the most effective recruitment strategies and three key themes emerged:

- 1. Residency programs recruited for and from a particular community.**
- 2. The programs all employed culturally responsive strategies to recruit candidates.**
- 3. The programs were designed intentionally around diversity, equity, and inclusion.**

These themes represent key components of the residency model, demonstrating that residencies are a unique and effective vehicle in the recruitment of teachers of color.

Residencies are
a unique and
effective vehicle
in the
recruitment of
teachers of
color.

NCTR's Black Educators Initiative

NCTR's Black Educators Initiative will improve student outcomes by increasing student access to effective, diverse teachers. NCTR launched the initiative in September 2019 after receiving a five-year, \$20-million grant to recruit, develop, and retain 750 new Black teachers through our national Network of teacher residency partners. This funding allows NCTR to invest in residency programs that are improving diversity through new and innovative strategies. NCTR's grantee partner residencies are developing a suite of support services for Black teacher candidates, such as scholarships, living stipends, racial affinity groups, and emergency funds. They are also strengthening the preparation candidates receive throughout the residency year by examining the design of their programs. Grantees participate in a professional learning community where they share insights and knowledge with each other and hear from national experts. This collective learning informs new research and support for all of NCTR's Network partners, and it helps the teacher preparation field better understand how to prepare a diverse and effective teacher workforce.



Shelby Poindexter is a resident at Memphis Teacher Residency. Photo taken at Martin Luther King, Jr. College Preparatory High School in Memphis, Tennessee.

Introduction

For the last 20 years, American classrooms have been undergoing a drastic demographic transformation. From 2000 to 2015, the percent of students enrolled in public schools who identify as students of color increased from 39 percent to over 50 percent (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). This transformation has led to new and thorny challenges for teachers, schools, and districts. But even as the students occupying our classrooms grow more diverse, the teachers in front of them remain overwhelmingly homogeneous.

In fact, the most recent statistics available show that more than 80 percent of public school teachers are white (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service, 2016). In some places the teaching force is entirely white: last year it was reported that over half of the schools in Pennsylvania employ no teachers of color at all (Liu & Mezzacappa, 2018).

These statistics are troubling given the growing and compelling body of research showing

that students of color learn more and have better life outcomes when they are taught by diverse teachers. African American students who have even one African American teacher in elementary school are more likely to graduate from high school and consider college than those who had none (Gershenson, Hart, Lindsay, & Papageorge, 2017). Research has also shown that African American students experience less exclusionary discipline and fewer office referrals when they are taught by an African American teacher (Lindsay & Hart, 2017). In both instances, the results are most notable among African American males.

But it is not just Black students who benefit from being taught by diverse teachers. Teachers of color confer benefits to all students: research using data from the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET, 2013) study has found that all students, across racial groups, view African American and Latino teachers more favorably than White teachers, and African American students were significantly more positive about African American teachers (Cherng & Halpin, 2016). The research on this is increasingly clear and unambiguous, making teacher diversity a priority in statehouses around the country, as well as the topic of a growing national conversation.



Faith Ambrose is a resident at Memphis Teacher Residency. Photo taken at Treadwell Elementary School, Memphis, Tennessee.



Shannon Gray is a resident at Memphis Teacher Residency. Photo taken at Cornerstone Prep, Memphis, Tennessee.

This evidence has advocates, policymakers and educators looking to expand and improve their talent pipelines as a lever to diversify the current teacher workforce. Teacher Residencies have proven effective in expanding teacher talent pipelines, with an extensive track record of developing diverse, effective, classroom-ready teachers for the schools and students that need them most. The National Center for Teacher Residencies (NCTR) has helped launch and grow more than 50 teacher residency programs nationwide. NCTR currently features a teacher candidate pool in which 55 percent of the teachers-in-training identify as persons of color – more than twice the diversity rate of teachers nationally. Moreover, 42 percent of the people training them – mentor teachers – are also people of color.

Teacher Residencies have proven effective in expanding teacher talent pipelines, with an extensive track record of developing diverse, effective, classroom-ready teachers.

To explore why teacher residency programs are so effective at recruiting and developing committed teachers of color, NCTR conducted a qualitative research survey and interviewed program managers, staff, and residency graduates from five residency programs serving high-need urban school districts. NCTR wanted to learn more about how these programs identified and recruited diverse teacher candidates.

Findings

The results revealed three approaches to teacher recruitment and development that, while unique to residencies, could be adopted by traditional teacher preparation programs:

- Targeting specific communities to recruit diverse candidates
- Employing culturally responsive supports for recruits before and after they enroll
- Intentionally designing programs to promote and value diversity, equity, and inclusion mindsets and structures

By utilizing these three overarching strategies, the residency programs in this study have been able to overcome institutional barriers that typically dissuade candidates of color from entering the teaching profession. As a result, these programs successfully recruit diverse candidates and prepare them to be effective teachers in high-need classrooms. These strategies comprise key components of the residency model which, as demonstrated in this research, offers a unique and effective vehicle to recruit teachers of color.

**These programs
successfully recruit diverse
candidates and prepare
them to be effective
teachers in high-need
classrooms.**

Recruiting for Diverse Candidates

Overall, community emerged as a prominent theme among the residency programs that participated in this study. Because the residencies we looked at were established to serve a specific community or school district, concerted efforts were made to recruit people from the community associated with them. These programs recruit teachers who share the backgrounds of their students, reflect their communities, and are committed to serving them. In effect, these programs are recruiting for

retention by recruiting candidates from and reflective of their communities.

Both staff and graduates from each program explicitly noted that the opportunity to teach students of color was appealing to them and was a factor in their decision to enter the residency program. The research literature already suggests that teachers of color have a “role model effect” for their students, leading to positive benefits particularly for students of color (Gershenson, Hart, Hyman, Lindsay, & Papageorge, 2018). The results of this study, however, indicate that this effect is also a strong factor in the recruitment of teachers of color.



Maya Alston is a resident at Memphis Teacher Residency. Photo taken at Grizzlies Preparatory Charter School, Memphis, Tennessee.



Armani Alexander is a resident at Memphis Teacher Residency. Photo taken at Treadwell Elementary School, Memphis, Tennessee.

Culturally Responsive Support

Building on the comprehensive work of Ladson-Billings (1995), Gay (2000), Hollie (2015), and Alim & Paris (2011), recruitment strategies that validate the strengths of teachers of color, build inclusive communities, empower members from historically marginalized communities, and focus on the holistic needs of teacher candidates can be defined as culturally responsive. In these programs, program staff viewed culturally responsive support as a way to recruit quality candidates and to help them overcome barriers to the profession. Culturally responsive approaches included a variety of tactics, such as calling candidates directly to encourage them to apply, following-up with strong candidates to help them meet the application deadline, and reaching out to individual candidates referred by a principal or alumni.

Once candidates enrolled, the programs continued this culturally responsive support. For example, programs offered their recruits assistance, coaching, and preparation to ensure they would pass licensure exams, a common stumbling block for many prospective teachers of color. Among the most comprehensive culturally responsive strategies employed by these programs is the “cohort model” in which teacher residents take their higher education classes as a group while also teaching in the same school. Program graduates specifically noted the importance of the cohort model for helping them feel supported and accepted. One program director noted that the cohort model is crucial for their residents to feel comfortable engaging in honest dialogue around issues of diversity and equity.



Alexis Singleton is a resident at Memphis Teacher Residency. Photo taken at Westhaven Elementary School, Memphis, Tennessee.

The cohort model was a strong feature for showing candidates the program's commitment to supporting their training as well as situating them in a community of similar learners. This differentiates residencies from other teacher preparation routes.

Designed for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The residencies that participated in this study were designed with the core concepts of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in mind. Their mission and values emphasize a commitment to an underserved population, or to ensuring that teachers reflect the students they serve. In addition, four of the five programs hired diverse program staff to better attract the candidates they wanted to recruit, and

they closely monitored program progress toward diversity goals in the residency recruitment process.

Additionally, these programs also addressed the financial barriers to entering the teaching profession that candidates of color often face. Offering stipends, working with partner colleges to lower tuition, and employing strategies such as waiving application fees and tests also proved to be effective in helping to recruit diverse teacher candidates for these programs.

These [Residencies'] mission and values emphasize a commitment to an underserved population, or to ensuring that teachers reflect the students they serve.

Implications

This research highlights key strategies of the residency model that serve as levers for recruiting more teachers of color into the profession. The themes explored in this research—the community-based approach, culturally responsive support, and DEI commitment—do not have to be exclusive to teacher residencies. Indeed, these concepts and strategies can be applied at any teacher preparation program to potentially increase the number and rate of diverse teachers entering the profession. However, the teacher residency model—with its embedded supports, integrated clinical and academic experiences, and commitment to serving high-need communities—is particularly well positioned to provide a steady supply of high-quality, diverse teachers that states and districts so desperately need. All that is missing is a commitment and investment in residencies to ensure they become financially sustainable and ready to meet this growing demand.

References

Alim, H. S. & Paris, D. (2017). "What is culturally sustaining pedagogy and why does it matter?" In *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for educational justice*, edited by Django Paris and H. Samy Alim, 157–74. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.

Cherng, H. S., & Halpin, P. F. (2016). *The importance of minority teachers*. *Educational Researcher*, 45(7), 407–420. doi:10.3102/0013189x16671718

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, & practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Gershenson, S., Hart, C.M., Hyman, J., Lindsay, C., & Papageorge, N.W. (2018, November). *The long run impacts of same-race teachers* (NBER Working Paper No. 25254). Retrieved from the National Bureau of Economic Research website: <https://www.nber.org/papers/w25254.pdf>

Hollie, Sharroky. (2015). *Strategies for culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning*. Huntington Beach, CA: Shell Education.

Kane, T., McCaffrey, D. F., Miller, T., Staiger, D.O. (2013). *Have we identified effective teachers? Validating measures of effective teaching using random assignment*. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Retrieved from http://k12education.gatesfoundation.org/download/?Num=2676&filename=MET_Validating_Using_Random_Assignment_Research_Paper.pdf

Ladson, G. (2005). *Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy*. *American Educational Research Journal*, (32), 3, 465–491.

Lindsay, C. A., & Hart, C. M. (2017). *Exposure to same-race teachers and students disciplinary outcomes for black students in North Carolina*. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 39(3), 485–510.

Liu, L., & Mezzacappa, D. (2018, October 30). More than half of Pa. public schools do not have a teacher of color. Retrieved from <https://whyy.org/articles/more-than-half-of-pa-public-schools-do-not-have-a-teacher-of-color/>

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary and Secondary Education," 2000–01 and 2015–16; and National Elementary and Secondary Enrollment Projection Model, 1972 through 2027. See Digest of Education Statistics 2017, table 203.50.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service. (2016). *The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce*. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/highered/racial-diversity/state-racial-diversity-workforce.pdf>

Photo Details

Front Cover-Cynthia Fitz-Wilson is a resident at Dallas Teacher Residency. She is pictured with her mentor, Chaslyn Reynolds. Photo taken at Ben Milam Elementary School, Dallas, Texas.

Page 3- Le Marquee Le Flora is a resident at Memphis Teacher Residency. Photo taken at Kingsbury High School, Memphis, Tennessee.

NATIONAL CENTER FOR

**TEACHER
RESIDENCIES**

1332 N. Halsted St., Suite 304
Chicago, IL 60642
312.397.8878
www.nctresidencies.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This case study was researched and written by former NCTR Chief External Relations Officer Tamara Azar, Network Director Erica Hines, and Director of Data and Impact Carrienne Scheib.

A very special thank you to the dedicated graduates and staff at Alder Graduate School of Education, East Harlem Teaching Residency (EHTR), New Visions for Public Schools, St. Paul Urban Teacher Residency (SUTR), and the University of Chicago's Urban Teacher Education Program (UTEP) for sharing their time and insights.

Special thanks to the residents at the Memphis Teacher Residency whose photos were prominently featured in this publication.

MISSION

NCTR disrupts historical educational inequities by advancing the teacher residency movement to prepare effective, diverse, culturally responsive educators.