National Center for Teacher Residencies

Core Components of Highly Effective Teacher Residency Programs

National Center for Teacher Residencies
Founded in 2007, the National Center for Teacher Residencies (NCTR) is the only organization in the nation dedicated to developing, launching, supporting, and accelerating the impact of teacher residency programs. NCTR partners with school districts, charter management organizations, institutions of higher education, not-for-profits, and states to develop teacher residency programs as quality pipelines of effective and diverse new teachers.

NCTR supports more than 20 Network partner residency programs that are preparing over 600 residents with more than 3,400 graduates teaching across the country in high-need schools. Data from the NCTR Network indicates that the residency model increases student achievement; prepares teachers for the rigors of high need schools; increases teacher retention (3-year and 5-year teacher retention rates of 85% and 82%, respectively); generates high principal satisfaction rates; and increases the diversity of the local teacher corps (Measuring NCTR Network Program Impact, 2015).

Overview
High quality teacher residencies are typically a partnership between a school district or charter management organization, an institution of higher education (IHE) or other teacher-certifying agent, and often a non-profit organization. The residency is a teacher preparation program that builds on the medical residency model of intense clinical practice with expert instruction and supervision, and draws from the strengths of traditional as well as alternative approaches to teacher selection, preparation, and support. Residencies incorporate:

• Partnership between a high need school district(s), institution of higher education, and other stakeholders
• Data-based recruitment and selection of residents to serve a district need, with a living stipend or salary to attract high potential candidates
• Selection process for mentor teachers based on multiple criteria that includes demonstrated effective classroom practice and the skills to coach adult learners
• Rigorous, full-year classroom apprenticeship alongside a well-trained mentor teacher that integrates coursework and theory in a school-based environment
• Ongoing learning, feedback, and evaluation cycles
• Placement and/or hiring assistance coupled with a resident’s commitment to teach in the district for 3 to 5 years
• Minimum of two years of induction support for graduates
The Teacher Residency Model
The residency approach to teacher preparation incorporates a district-serving, data-driven, and capacity-building perspective not seen in most other teacher preparation programs. Residencies are built to:

1) Raise recruitment and selection standards to attract high potential candidates, and select and prepare new teachers with the specific skillsets necessary to work in high need schools and subject areas;
2) Revamp teacher preparation curriculum to put teacher practice and improvement at the center of preparation, wrapping coursework and theory around the classroom-focused learning experiences;
3) Capitalize on existing assets in schools, leveraging effective classroom teachers as mentors, and supporting those experienced educators in their own classroom performance and professional development;
4) Give new teachers the strongest start possible through a yearlong apprenticeship before they enter as a teacher of record, then support them with ongoing, targeted induction throughout their first two years to ensure they are on track to grow professionally, resulting in highly effective teachers who stay; and,
5) Create a long-term, sustainable pipeline of highly effective new teachers who positively impact student learning and school success.

NCTR and our partners strongly believe that to select, train and retain effective teachers for high-need schools, pre-service teachers must participate in a teacher preparation model that centers on a rigorous, school-based clinical experience, teaching and learning alongside a master teacher, and ongoing mentoring, including observations, feedback and coaching based on teacher and student performance data.

Research clearly shows that teachers are the leverage point for improving student learning. Traditional teacher quality indicators such as post-graduate schooling and passing scores on licensing exams are becoming obsolete. Gauging quality now rests more than ever before on a teacher’s ability to increase student achievement and learning (Schools of Education Learning Collaborative, 2011; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010; Tyler, Kane, Taylor, Wooten, 2010), and this paradigm shift holds teacher preparation programs accountable for selecting and training candidates who can show measurable improvement in the knowledge and skill sets of their students.

Research-based Core Components
Teacher residencies are teacher preparation programs based on the medical residency model. Teacher residencies offer intensive, clinical-based preparation and are typically created by a partnership between a high-need school district and an institution of higher education, and may also include other partners such as teachers’ associations and nonprofit and community based organizations. In the residency model, teacher residents spend a full year learning alongside an excellent, experienced mentor teacher. Residents often take coursework in the
summer and during evenings or one day per week during the school year. Residencies provide pre-service teacher preparation; candidates who complete the program earn certification before they become a teacher of record in the partnering school district, and most complete their Master’s degree within 18 months.

High quality residencies provide residents a yearlong clinical teaching experience that requires approximately 1200 hours of teaching and learning at the host school site. Recent studies find that in general, novice teachers entering the profession through routes that prioritize clinical practice are often effective from their first day in the classroom (Humphrey & Weschler, 2008). Clinical teaching experience can range from zero hours, 40-50 hours in Teach For America to the year long, approximately 1200 hours in a NCTR network residency program. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) does not require a minimum school based student teaching commitment while National Center for Teacher Quality (NCTQ) recommends a minimum of 10 weeks (Greenberg, Pomerance & Walsh, 2011). Graduates of education programs common criticism of their program is for “more, longer, earlier and better-integrated field work experiences.” (p. 41, Levine)

High quality residencies match residents with effective teachers who mentor residents. A study on a variety of alternative preparation programs found that programs rarely take care to guarantee the quality and effectiveness of their mentoring support (Humphry & Weschler, 2008). Residency programs seek to eliminate this variability by engaging in rigorous mentor recruitment, selection, and development. In the clinically rich residency model, mentors are themselves teacher educators (Bartunek, 1990; Carroll, 2007; Feiman-Nemser, 1998) who make decisions and problem-solve within the context of the guided classroom apprenticeship. Adopting the stance of educative mentoring, (Feiman-Nemser, 1998; Feiman-Nemser & Beasley, 2007), mentors go beyond a focus on the technical aspects of teaching to cultivate a disposition of inquiry, focus attention on student thinking and understanding, and foster disciplined talk about problems of practice (Feiman Nemser, 2001). Unlike more traditional mentoring relationships that focus on survival, educative mentoring is based on a broader conception that prioritizes reflection and continued growth (Bradbury, 2010).

High quality residencies align theory and practice through the explicit articulation of teacher performance indicators in the gradual release of teaching responsibility calendar. The gradual release of teaching responsibility calendar provides monthly and weekly teaching and learning targets for the resident and mentor. The teaching and learning targets are the summative performance outcomes that align to educational theory that is studied in coursework. This model for learning to teach pushes Residents to go beyond abstract understandings of theories to develop flexible “knowledge-in-practice, of-practice, and for-practice” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) that is deeply embedded in the context of the classroom, school, and district in which the apprenticeship takes place.
High quality residencies align systems of preparation, continuing education, assessment, and accountability from pre-service to practice and beyond. This approach allows residencies to build upon and strengthen teacher knowledge and effectiveness, and positively impact student achievement, in each phase of a teacher’s career. A study of one long-standing residency program’s graduates experienced statistically significant increases in student achievement in comparison to other teachers in their district, demonstrating the validity of the residency model in growing a highly effective teacher workforce for high-needs schools (The Evaluation Center, 2010).

**Looking Forward**
The national conversation around teacher preparation is turning to teacher residencies. Teacher residency programs are at the heart of student-focused teacher preparation, and ensure that all new teachers enter the classroom prepared to teach from day one. Residencies are ideal for creating a dedicated pipeline of excellent teachers for our highest need schools, and the strategies employed to select, train, and support new teachers emphasize the ideal for how every new teacher should be prepared.

In just the past 4 years, numerous prominent stakeholders in education have emphasized the strengths of teacher residency programs as a high quality pathway grounded in rigorous clinical preparation. Done in partnership with local school districts, residencies ensure that new teachers are prepared with a mastery of content, depth of practice, and deep understanding of the students and communities where they work. This level of attention shows that we are building momentum as a movement. In the individual programs of the NCTR Network, and as the only national network of teacher residency programs, we are one of the leading examples that local, state, and national policymakers are referencing as they deeply examine the current state of teacher preparation.