

Transformative Educator Preparation Through Teacher Residency Programs

Conclusion to Special Issue

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The construction and operation of an effective residency is complex and multi-faceted, as evidenced by the previous articles. While creating the foundation for an effective residency program can be overwhelming at times, this investment in time works to create a solid foundation that ensures the successful preparation of future teacher candidates. Additionally, successful residency programs have a growth mindset ingrained in the foundation of their programs, continually seeking opportunities for growth and improvement.

When developing a residency program, it is important for the partnership stakeholders to jointly identify a specific set of guidelines and characteristics that align with the desired result. The California Department of Education and the California Teacher Residency Lab, with support from the Trellis Association, have developed a set of characteristics that offer both foundational aspects to consider as well as aspirational goals for all teacher preparation programs. Through years of research on residencies, they jointly developed 10 primary charac-

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teristics for both new and seasoned residency programs to utilize as a tool to measure effectiveness and growth. The characteristics included in this framework include the following (CDE, 2021):

- ◆ Equity and justice are defined and advanced at all levels of residency work
- ◆ Authentic partnerships between local educational agencies (LEAs), accredited credentialing institutions, Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs), & other organizations exist
- ◆ The residency system is financially sustainable
- ◆ Formative and outcome data are collected, analyzed, and used for continuous
- ◆ Specific hiring needs are defined and filled each year with the recruitment of resident candidates who reflect the LEA's and community's unique diversity
- ◆ Coursework and professional learning opportunities are tightly integrated with clinical practice
- ◆ All residents are mentored by accomplished mentor teachers who reflect their district's and community's unique diversity
- ◆ Clusters of mentors and residents support and learn from one another at residency partner Teaching School
- ◆ Residency graduates are supported to continue their professional learning and develop as leaders.

The characteristics of an effective residency program as outlined above are developed with an embedded scaffold, allowing space and guidance for further growth and development. While equity and justice are explicitly identified as the first characteristic, it is important to note that equity and justice are also embedded within each of the other characteristics.

Within the framework presented, the top item in each category operates as a first step towards addressing or meeting the category characteristic. The ongoing framework provides guidance to further these basic tenets for optimal effectiveness as the expectations become more in-depth. Additionally, as residency leadership continues to further develop and refine their programs, this set of characteristics can operate as a self-assessment tool to identify opportunities for growth.

Frameworks Considerations

Residency programs are designed to provide contextualized, district specific teacher education training to those seeking entrance into the field. As these programs strive to cultivate educators who are well

versed in issues of equity and are prepared to support diverse populations of students, equity and justice oriented themes permeated residency programs and spaces. As such, the first characteristic demonstrates various ways that equity and justice may be centered in a residency program. Shand et al. address many of the sub-characteristics by providing examples of how this might be done, starting with recruitment efforts and filtering throughout the residency program as a whole. Turk et al.'s article addresses how residency programs can create "formal, consistent, and institutionalized spaces to discuss equity and justice work" by examining the ways that curriculum and assessment practices can be focused on equity and justice. Herman's article also works to illustrate how many of these subcategories can be implemented, emphasizing the importance of equity and justice as a cornerstone of solid residency programs.

1. Equity and justice are defined and advanced at all levels of residency work.

- a. Mission, vision, and theory of change make explicit commitments to equity and justice.
- b. Short- and long-term residency goals include evidence of equity and justice.
- c. Recruitment and retention targets include specific numbers of mentors and teachers reflecting the LEA's and community's unique diversity.
- d. Formal, consistent, and institutionalized spaces to discuss equity and justice work.
- e. Institutionalized affinity spaces created and led by and for residency community members.
- f. Action research centered on addressing equity focused opportunities of practice.

The second characteristic hones in on the importance of partnerships. As previously discussed, successful partnerships are multi-faceted and layered between districts, universities, faculty, mentors and residents in order to fully be successful. Schieb et al. goes into specific detail discussing who should be a part of various partnerships, and what ought to occur in those relationships. Shand et al. discusses the power of partnerships for retention purposes. Turk et al. discuss how their partnerships shape their actions, while Valente et al. center partnerships in their article. The following descriptions outline the ideas budding and existing residency programs alike should consider when examining their own partnerships:

2. Authentic partnerships between local educational agencies (LEAs), accredited credentialing institutions, Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs), & other organizations exist.

- a. Residency teams include leaders and decision-makers from IHEs, LEAs, schools, collective bargaining entities, and local communities.
- b. MOU or Partnership agreements between or among all residency partners.
- c. Shared mission, vision and theory of change for the residency.
- d. Entire residency team—especially decision-makers—reflect the LEA's and community's unique diversity.
- e. IHEs have the capacity (or a clear plan to develop the capacity) to meet LEA hiring needs.
- f. Staffing, roles, and responsibilities are delineated across the residency.
- g. Established norms for collaboration and decision-making.
- h. Collaboratively defined and data-based residency goals and milestones that are revisited over time.

Financial support is an important aspect to supporting residents, and particularly to supporting residents who may be first generation college students, or under-represented in our teaching pool. In order to ask students to commit to a year-long student-teaching program, it is important that we remove as many barriers as possible to allow teacher candidates or pre-service teachers to fully commit to the program. While there are a number of grant sources becoming available, as legislative bodies recognize the power of residencies, many of them require a solid budget plan that may be sustained after grant funding runs out, Scheib et al. provides one example of a sustainable funding cycle in their article. These also include points to make when approaching a school district to ask them to financially support this program.

3. The residency system is financially sustainable.

- a. Program costs include resources and personnel necessary for effective implementation.
- b. Incentives (i.e. resident, mentor stipends) are defined and tied to the value of the residency program to the LEA.
- c. 3-5 year strategic plan exists, tied to mission, vision, theory of change, and long-term budget.
- d. Long-term budget projection is defined, including increasing cost savings to the LEA.
- e. Long-term commitment by all partners to contribute the necessary resources to operationalize the program.
- f. All available funding sources are examined and accessed.

g. Revenue sources are diverse.

Informed decision making is crucial to the ongoing growth and success of a residency program, as evidenced by Scheib et al., along with Valente et al., in their explanation of the types of data they collect, and the subsequently implemented program revisions made to their residencies. It is important that both partners are working together to identify the type of data they want to collect, in addition to how they will use the collected information.

While much of the data collection is done from a leadership role, the value of using information to make decisions should also happen at the classroom level. Mentors who are able to model and support their residents in collecting data that informs their teaching practice will help develop residents who are making decisions with their students at the center of their thinking. The following characteristics outline specific considerations programs will want to make as they move forward with data collection.

4. Formative and outcome data are collected, analyzed, and used for continuous improvement.

- a. Data-sharing agreement between stakeholders.
- b. Program assessment and evaluation plan with multiple measures that are all tied to the Characteristics and Evidence of an Effective California Teacher Residency Program.
- c. Protocols to communicate about and share data.
- d. Regular meetings scheduled to analyze data across stakeholder groups.
- e. Data used in real-time to make revisions to residency program.
- f. Mentors model how to collect, disaggregate, and make evidence-based analyses that inform their teaching practice

As we work to both diversify the teaching workforce in order to better meet the needs of students, as well as to get qualified teachers into the classroom, there are several considerations residencies must remember. Shand et al.'s article provides some solid guidelines and rationales about how and why you might do this work. While their article was explicitly about supporting Black educators, their suggestions and ideas are easily applicable to other under-represented groups you might be trying to recruit in order to better support the K-12 students in your community. Turk also explores the importance of interview processes in selecting residents who are a good fit, while Valente discusses the need of residencies to adapt to the community they are serving.

5. Specific hiring needs are defined and filled each year with the recruitment of resident candidates who reflect the LEA's and community's unique diversity.

- a. Resident recruitment targets set based on LEA need and student demographics.
- b. Recruitment efforts target and prioritize candidates who reflect the students they will serve.
- c. Resident recruitment strategy includes explicit tactics to recruit candidates who reflect the students they will serve.
- d. Resident and program expectations shared with candidates.
- e. Recruitment processes include differentiated support for candidates who reflect the students they will serve (e.g., testing support or waivers, flexible deadlines to apply).
- f. Resident selection strategy screens and vets potential residents using multiple measures (e.g., paper application, interview, model lesson, group tasks).
- g. Resident selection strategy includes assessment of candidate awareness of the impact of identity and institutionalized racism on teaching and learning in California.
- h. Resident recruitment and selection utilizes and lifts up the work of current residents, mentors, principals and partners.

A robust clinical practice is central to the idea of a residency program. Several of our authors, including Shand et al., Valente et al., and Herman, have identified the power of a relevant clinical practice in generating strong teachers who stay in the classroom over time. The following characteristic gives some specific descriptions of what successful clinical practice looks like. Not only does the practice last for at least one year, but the feedback provided during that clinical experience comes from myriad sources and is aligned with the coursework, making the experience more impactful.

6. Residents engage in a full year of clinical practice teaching alongside an accomplished mentor teacher.

- a. Resident co-teaches alongside a mentor teacher for no less than one full school year.
- b. Resident gradually takes on teaching responsibilities throughout the school year.
- c. Resident has consistent opportunities to observe other mentors and debrief observations at the school site.

- d. Residents are coached, assessed and given regular feedback by mentors, teacher educators, and program staff.
- e. IHE coursework and other professional learning opportunities are designed or adjusted to support and align with clinical practice.

Although there is a great deal of importance placed upon items that are explicitly linked to the school district such as the clinical practice and mentors, the integrated coursework can be a critical piece of student success. Turk dives into the way that residents construct their curriculum throughout their programs, as Shand et al. explores how residents might shift the curriculum to be more relevant to the students they serve. Herman also examines the ways that residencies typically link traditional content with specific contexts that teacher candidates will experience in urban settings. This coursework is often most successfully integrated when there is a strong partnership between the university and school districts.

7. Coursework and professional learning opportunities are tightly integrated with clinical practice.

- a. Coursework, professional learning opportunities, and clinical experiences are aligned through a set of prioritized skills or day 1 ready skills.
- b. A shared observation rubric/framework is used to assess residents on agreed-upon performance benchmarks.
- c. Scope and sequence of coursework and professional opportunities allows residents to practice and receive feedback on skills before being applied and assessed.
- d. All teacher educators and mentors (across coursework, professional learning opportunities, and clinical practice) effectively employ the shared observation rubric/framework to support and track resident growth.
- e. Residents understand that teaching is an act of social justice and that examining (in)justices must inform their teaching practice.
- f. Residents reflect on the growth and impact of their teaching practice.

One of the most critical aspects of a successful placement is the mentor. The mentor needs to be not only a successful educator in their own classroom, but they must also demonstrate the mindset the school and community are hoping to foster in the residents. Valente, and Shand et al. both discuss joint selection opportunities so both the university and the school district are able to choose appropriate mentors. Herman, Turk et al., and Valente also write about ongoing, continuous

training, which will help to ensure further development of mentors for the program. As demonstrated by the following characteristic's multi-layered levels, mentorship is truly an always-developing factor in strong residency programs.

8. All residents are mentored by accomplished mentor teachers who reflect their district's and community's unique diversity.

- a. Mentors have at least three years of teaching experience and a clear credential.
- b. Mentors have a record of successful teaching, growth mindset, receptiveness to feedback, and willingness to disrupt problematic and racist actions.
- c. Mentors reflect the teachers and students they serve.
- d. Mentor selection strategy screens and vets potential mentors using multiple measures (e.g., paper application, interview, model lesson, debrief session, colleague recommendation, etc.).
- e. Mentor selection strategy includes assessment of a potential mentor's awareness of the impact of identity and institutionalized racism on teaching and learning in California.
- f. Mentors receive specific training for the mentor teacher role.
- g. Mentors receive ongoing professional development tied to resident learning and need.
- h. Professional development builds capacity to mentor during and around TK-12 instructional time.
- i. Mentors use knowledge of equity principles and culturally responsive pedagogy to support their resident to address issues of equity, bias, and access to standards-based curriculum.
- j. Mentors use mentoring stances strategically to engage their resident in collaborative problem-solving and reflection.
- k. Mentors develop the resident's abilities to self-assess and co-assess practice based on evidence, to set professional goals, and monitor progress.
- l. Mentors support residents to ground the critical analysis of teaching practice in student experience and learning.

The idea of a teaching school can provide support for both residents and mentors and is often an ultimate goal for residencies, although components of the descriptors can be incorporated across school buildings. Shand et al., Valente et al., and Turk all discuss the ways that these intentions and this community might be built across different

school sites. It is important to note that the residents are intentionally placed in school sites that immerse them in the community they are likely to teach in, as well as provide them with resources to set them up for success as teachers. It is equally important that each school site exemplifies the descriptors below in terms of equity and justice in order for residents to fully thrive.

9. Clusters of mentors and residents support and learn from one another at residency partner Teaching Schools.

- a. Recruitment or tactical outreach plan for potential Teaching Schools.
- b. Teaching School administrators prioritize residents in hiring processes.
- c. Teaching School selection criteria and process defined and prioritizes schools whose students reflect the LEA's and community's diversity.
- d. Some/all coursework and professional learning opportunities take place on site in Teaching School classrooms.
- e. Professional learning communities at each Teaching School include administrators, mentors, and residents.
- f. Administrators, mentors, residency graduates and residents examine ways in which white supremacy shows up in grading systems, perpetuates and masks inequities, and discredits improvements made by students over time.

The final step in any residency is to get the residents hired into the district or community in which they were trained to serve. 86 % of teachers who went through residencies return for a third year, (NCTR, 2023), which is higher than the 50-60% of teachers who are retained nationally (Cells et al., 2023). Shand et al. and Turk et al., discuss some specific ways that their residents are supported throughout their hiring processes. When hiring, districts and universities should take into consideration all items below.

10. Residency graduates are supported to continue their professional learning and develop as leaders.

- a. Residents are prioritized in partner LEA hiring.
- b. Formal induction support is provided to all graduates.
- c. Professional learning includes guaranteed and opt-in opportunities for graduates to continue to learn, grow and develop as leaders.
- d. Apprentice mentor opportunities.
- e. Post-induction professional opportunities (e.g., Master's Degree, National Board Certification).

Ultimately, running a residency program is hugely impactful and powerful, and allows for significant, transformative educator preparation to occur. There are many day to day requirements and hurdles that can tug at the truly powerful fabric of a residency. These characteristics and articles will hopefully provide fodder for continued growth, after laying a strong foundation, years down the line.

As residencies continue to increase in popularity throughout the country, the Department of Labor has also declared educational clinical practice as an apprenticeship (State of California, 2023). This adds another layer that we encourage our readers to research as we move forward with residencies. Understanding that there is still a teacher shortage and there are several costly components that some partnerships are still working through with residencies, we still need to consider how to solve any other concerns to help establish and retain residencies across the United States. We also recognize that staffing and leadership changes as time goes on, and we encourage readers to consider the needs to continue to improve upon or retain relationships with districts and universities.

We want to thank the authors who contributed their wisdom and knowledge to this article, and we are grateful to have learned so much from each of them. Knowing that there are individuals who are as vested in teacher preparation as these authors, the future of education looks bright, indeed!

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