OECD Initial Teacher Preparation study

Promising practices

Teacher residencies featuring the Centre for Inspired Teaching
This case study describes a “Promising practice” drawn from an OECD review of Initial Teacher Preparation in the United States on 25-28 October 2016.

The OECD review team identified a number of “Promising practices” in each country. These practices may not be widespread or representative, but seen in the context of other challenges, they represent a strength or opportunity to improve the country’s initial teacher preparation system – and for other countries to learn from them.

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Promising practice 1.
Teacher residencies featuring the Centre for Inspired Teaching

Context

A teacher residency, modelled on a medical training residency, usually involves a full year of practical training in schools guided by an expert mentor teacher, and coursework from a partnering university that is tightly integrated with practice. Residents generally work full-time in schools and take some night classes. Residency programmes can be targeted to specific instructional models and needs of the schools they serve, and usually incorporate rigorous selection processes to ensure residents are suited to the context of the residency school.

Although research on their effectiveness continues to be scarce and sometimes contradictory, the model of residencies is promising (Libetti and Trinidad, 2018[3]). For example, residencies can improve teacher retention in hard-to-staff schools and reduce the gaps between theory and practice that occur in some traditional programmes (Guha, Hyler and Darling-Hammond, 2016[1]). In the United States, the residency programmes that are part of the National Centre for Teacher Residencies (NTCS) are relatively selective with their candidates – reporting that on average only 11% of applicants are admitted into their programmes. Moreover, graduates tend to remain in teaching at relatively high rates some have reached a 5-year retention rate of 82% of teachers. In addition, some research has shown that teachers graduating from residency programmes can outperform similar teachers of the same level of experience trained in traditional Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) by the fourth and fifth years (DeMonte, 2017[2]).

What do residencies in Inspired Teaching involve?

Founded in Washington DC in 1995, Inspired Teaching trains educators at all stages of their career, including new teachers. Inspired Teaching fellows (teacher candidates) participate in a 24-month teaching residency programme to gain their Master of Arts in Teaching and teacher certification. Fellows attend coursework at a partner university and apprentice in a classroom.

The Inspired Teaching model aims at promoting student academic, social, and emotional success while it educates beginning teachers through clinical-practice-based teacher education. Therefore, it places a strong importance in the adoption of engagement-based education to foster lasting and meaningful learning (Inspired Teaching, 2018[4]). Based on extensive research, the Centre for Inspired Teaching model is grounded in five principles:

- Teachers should be trained the way they will teach students.
- Classroom and school environments should support mutual respect.
- Play is essential to the learning experience.
- Students’ work must reflect students’ life.
- The school experience should build intrinsic motivation.

Inspired Teaching works closely with their own charter demonstration school, the Capital City Public Charter School, and credentialing partner, Trinity Washington University to
design and implement a residency programme that aligns theory and practice, and enables novice teachers to gain deep classroom competencies. In their first year in the classroom, Inspired Teaching fellows work under the supervision of a lead teacher, and gradually take responsibility for teaching students. In their second year, fellows are responsible for their own class and receive support and coaching from a mentor teacher. Throughout the programme, fellows attend evening courses at university and professional development with fellow teachers, which helps to connect learning during pre-service with learning during in-service teaching. Box 1 shows the key stages and timeline of the Inspired Teaching residency.

Box 1. Inspired Teaching Residency Timeline

1. **Summer institute**: a critical community building experience that works as an introduction to Inspired Teaching’s instructional model.
2. **AmeriCorps**: fellows are called to join a national network of individuals ready to serve their communities, although it is not a prerequisite.
3. **Residency year**: fellows immerse in the day-to-day realities of the classroom for a full year. In the spring semester, they start the coursework at university in the evenings to connect education theories and their experiences in schools.
4. **Summer teaching practicum**: fellow co-teach summer school classes to implement innovative approaches.
5. **Fellowship year**: fellows receive increased mentoring to smooth the transition to being a teacher while creating classrooms grounded in instructional best practices and strong relationships with students. During this second year, fellows continue and complete the requirements for their Masters of Arts in Teaching.
6. **Alumni teaching commitment**: graduates are requested to make a minimum teaching commitment of two years beyond program completion. Inspired Teaching staff make periodic visit to their classroom for program evaluation purposes.
7. **Network of Change makers**: throughout the second year, fellows are given opportunities to attend special events, workshops, access resources, and connect with other influencing and innovative teachers.


According to the annual report of 2017 (Inspired Teaching, 2017[6]), between 93% and 95% of fellows were confident that the training received has helped them build their skills in teaching and in creating a positive classroom climate. Further, an average of 90% of fellows still work as a classroom teacher after 4 years.

**Why is it a strength?**

The OECD review team in its review of the US in October 2016 concluded that the residency approach to preparing teachers was a strength in that it:

- *Improves the quality of clinical experience.* Residency programmes provide teacher candidates with extended clinical experience that is guided by an expert teacher, and coursework that is tightly aligned with what candidates do in classrooms. The model enables candidate’s learning to be customised to their individual learning...
progression and candidates can gradually increase their teaching responsibilities in consultation with their mentor teacher.

- Creates stronger links between preparation, induction and ongoing professional development. Some residencies create a seamless link between preparation, induction and early career professional development as residents are based in the same school for two to four years and participate in professional development with senior teachers during their residency.

How could it be improved?

The OECD review team also noted that residencies face challenges in relation to:

- The level of content knowledge of candidates and amount of theoretical training. Too many candidates enter programmes without the requisite level of content knowledge. Programmes face enormous challenges to rapidly build content knowledge, especially those required for new curriculum approaches. Some residencies are especially challenged by this lack of content knowledge, as they tend to have less time available for theoretical training than traditional preparation programmes.

- Investing in the evaluation of residency models. Over the past 15 years, residency models have spread across the United States and there are now 50 different models. However, research on the effectiveness of these models is still scarce. Programmes such as Inspired Teaching should allocate the necessary resources to build a rigorous evaluation process and strengthen the relationships with other initiatives to improve the available data.

For more information


