Preparing Diverse, Effective Teachers through Residencies and Induction

By Don Long

Many states are raising expectations that every student will be college, career, and civic ready before they graduate from high school. These higher student expectations based on an equity and research-grounded vision of student learning are driving state and district leaders to also rethink how to recruit, develop, support, and retain diverse, effective teachers.1 While touching all points of teacher pipelines is essential, states such as Louisiana and Hawaii are discovering that policies on residencies and induction are especially high-leverage strategies for meeting this challenge.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) gives states new opportunities for improving educator development. ESSA requires each state and district to publish a report card that spotlights actionable information to address disparities in access to effective teaching. Districts are also required to demonstrate how their strategies “improved teacher, principal, or other school leader effectiveness.” (Title II § 2104(a)(1)).

Workforce diversity fosters creativity, productivity, and continuous improvement in all organizations. It is especially vital for schools.2 Schools where all students have effective teachers of the same and different race, ethnicity, and culture improve learning outcomes and strengthen democratic values of inclusion, civility, and social trust. A more diverse teacher workforce can “supplement training in the culturally sensitive practices most effective with today’s student populations.”3

Far from being separate goals, teacher diversity and excellence can be mutually reinforcing. Between 2006 and 2014, nine states—Alabama, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Texas—increased the selectivity of their entrance exams into teacher preparation programs, and the diversity of their undergraduate education majors simultaneously grew.4

Teacher preparation program approval standards and performance-based assessments for licensure are also important policy levers.5 But for meeting rising student expectations, the most promising strategies for advancing teacher diversity and effectiveness are teacher residencies and induction programs that match evolving district needs, school environments, and classroom practices with the emerging research consensus on how students learn.6

Realizing a twinned vision of student learning and a diverse, effective teacher workforce is a monumental challenge. The U.S. student population has grown more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse while the teacher workforce has not. Students of color now exceed half of the total student population. Teachers of color represent 18 percent of the profession.

These gaps vary significantly across states (see figure 1). Recent analysis shows they may become even more acute and can only be closed over long time horizons.7 States should use data to highlight the gaps and require districts to set aggressive goals for closing them.8

Filling diversity gaps, however, means more than increasing numbers of students entering preparation programs. District and school leaders must follow up with ongoing efforts to address long-standing concerns from current teachers of color that they lack equitable opportunities for support, growth, and accountability leading toward mastery and leadership roles.9

Teacher residencies are effective in enrolling and placing diverse candidates.10 They lead to high-retention pathways and include strong induction, ongoing mentoring, and coaching.11 They can change the relationships, working conditions, and culture in schools to strengthen career progressions for all teachers.

Similarly, developing effective teachers means going beyond regional and local labor market data that show critical but specific shortages of teachers with certifications in hard-to-staff subjects such as science, technology, and math; in special education; in schools in high-poverty and rural areas; and in schools serving students of color. While these are important priorities, states and districts must set a higher aim of measuring shortages against a definition of effective teachers that is not the same as “certified” and includes a teacher’s impact on student learning.12 In brief, to meet higher student expectations, effective teachers must teach and exemplify the values they desire in their students such as deeper learning, cultural competency, and social emotional learning.

**RESIDENCIES**

Teacher preparation is notoriously slow to change and disconnected from schools and rising expectations for student learning. In addition, changes in teacher preparation have less immediate impact than profession-
Figure 1. Racial Diversity of Teachers and Students by State
(latest year data are available)

Residencies prioritize a close match between student learning and teaching practice, in which coursework is tailored to district contexts. Prospective teachers enter a learning community of collaboration, reflection, evaluation, and continuous improvement. This partnership creates feedback loops between teacher preparation programs and K-12 schools and districts that help improve prep programs’ coursework, instruction, and faculty.

When well designed, a residency program can also be effective in recruiting and developing teachers of color and low-income teachers, often to serve in high-need schools. In Boston’s well-regarded residency program, for example, 49 percent of entrants are candidates of color.20

While their enrollments are much smaller than traditional university-based programs, teacher residencies have a multiplier effect that can lead to broader system change. For example, faculty in university teacher preparation programs benefit by rotating through teacher residencies, improving their practice through this clinical experience.21 Residencies catalyze the reflection and improvement of experienced teachers and thereby enrich professional learning and mentoring, especially when teachers are organized into effective professional learning communities.

Sixteen states make residency programs a priority.22 I focus on three—Louisiana, Illinois, and Tennessee—whose innovation in teacher preparation exemplifies good governance and policymaking practices such as shared leadership and collaboration and partnerships with districts and higher education.

### Louisiana

In 2016, the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted regulations to increase the number of yearlong residencies and the availability of competency-based curricula statewide. The goal was for all teacher preparation programs in the state to include a yearlong residency by July 2018. It approved a $7.3 million three-year transitional funding package to support a transition to new teacher preparation guidelines in support of these regulations and stipends for undergraduate residents and their mentors.

**With our 2025 plan, we are raising our expectations for Louisiana’s K-12 students.**

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Teacher residency programs have been called the “most comprehensive model of educator preparation in the nation.”18 Residencies are centered on a vision of strong teaching and rigorous full-year apprenticeships. Teacher residents learn by doing, working alongside a mentor teacher in the district in which they will teach. Residencies thus accelerate the development of candidates and mentors alike. Residency graduates have been found to be more effective than teachers without residencies in classroom instruction and pedagogy, data use, establishing a classroom learning environment, culturally responsive teaching, professionalism, and leadership.19

### Figure 1. Racial Diversity of Teachers and Students by State


al learning in schools.13 But when it is transformed through sustained habits of shared state and district leadership and stakeholder engagement, it can focus the entire teacher pipeline on maximizing teachers’ impact on student outcomes beginning on day one in the classroom.14 Research shows that when prospective teachers receive strong pedagogical training, they are twice as likely to stay beyond their first year than are their less well-trained peers.15

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That makes it even more important that our new teachers enter the classroom well prepared on day one,” said Jim Garvey, Board of Elementary and Secondary Education president.23 Louisiana’s ESSA plan leverages Title II, Part A funds for further development and expansion of these residencies to “provide aspiring teachers more time to practice under the tutelage of expert mentors.” These funds will cover stipends and support for mentor teachers and support for education preparation providers.

Louisiana’s efforts to create a culture of shared leadership and collaboration across K-12 and higher education have been a critical element of its educator preparation reform. Its Believe and Prepare Educator Grant Program, begun in 2016, has already trained more than 800 teacher candidates in 62 Louisiana school districts. Many of these districts partner with preparation programs to train mentor teachers who work with teachers in residencies or apprenticeships. The Believe and Prepare program also targets high-need subject areas and hard-to-staff positions, such as special education and rural schools.24 Because 70 percent of teachers trained in Louisiana go on to teach in Louisiana schools, the state expects to see a strong return on these investments, according to its ESSA state plan.

The development of Louisiana’s residency program also exemplifies a strong commitment to continuous improvement through engaging educators and stakeholders in a cycle of planning, implementation, review, and adjustment. The state is also piloting a program, based on the inspectorate model used in the United Kingdom since 1985, for 10 of their 27 teacher preparation providers. In this onsite inspection, four to five trained evaluators work for three to four days examining program features and providing actionable feedback.

ILlinois. Likewise, Illinois plans to expand use of residencies through a grant program. Citing in its plan the decline in enrollments in university-based teacher preparation programs, Illinois considers residency programs an added means of giving individuals a sense of calling and connection to communities. Specifically, the state’s ESSA plan commits the Illinois State Board of Education to explore strategies, including statutory changes, to develop and sustain a statewide teacher residency program. According to the plan, the board will develop a competitive grant program to fund districts and institutions of higher education with approved teacher preparation programs so they might “partner and develop innovative approaches to fieldwork requirements to provide candidates rich and extended opportunities to work with, learn from, and practice their developing craft with practicing teachers.”

Tennessee. The Tennessee Department of Education is leveraging federal and state funding, including Title II, Part A statewide funds and optional set-asides, to support teacher residencies in high-need districts, according to its ESSA state plan. Other strategies to address critical shortage areas and the lack of teacher diversity in urban districts include differentiated pay plans, human capital data reports, and targeted web-based recruitment.

In addition, the Tennessee State Board of Education produces the Teacher Preparation Report Card annually for all programs in the state. It encompasses student growth, candidate profiles, placement and retention rates, observation scores, and effectiveness. Memphis Teacher Residency received the highest ratings for preparation programs in Tennessee in 2016 based in part on graduate impact on student learning.

INDUCTION

Induction is a systematic program for new teachers that includes mentoring, support teams, curricula and training, and evaluation. New teachers, especially those in schools serving traditionally underserved students, often experience the compounded problems of being on their own in their first classroom, the isolated culture of many schools, and inadequate supports and resources. As a result, half leave teaching within five years.

Induction models attempt to fix this problem. The New Teacher Center’s model features vetted full-time mentors located onsite in district offices. They receive more than 100 hours of training annually in institutes and thorough in-field support from lead coaches. Mentors support first- and second-year teachers across multiple schools with carefully designed curricula and formative assessment tools. They generally work with 15 new teachers apiece. A national independent evaluation found this induction model increases student learning in grades 4 through 8 by an additional two to four months in English language arts and reading and an additional two to five months in math. In addition, comprehensive, multiyear induction programs reduce new teacher attrition, accelerate learning and professional growth, provide a positive return on investment, and improve student learning.25 Good school working conditions and the strength of the leadership and teaching community are important factors for achieving these outcomes.

Hawaii. In August 2011, Hawaii established the Hawaii Teacher Induction Center in partnership with the New Teacher Center to implement a statewide, three-year induction program. This partnership combines local context knowledge and expertise with the center’s understanding of research and best practices. According to surveys by the state’s education department, its program has improved new teacher practice, efficacy, school culture, and student outcomes; reduced teacher turnover; and closed the student achievement gap. In its ESSA plan, Hawaii has said it will use Title II, Part A funds to continue providing induction, professional development, and advancement opportunities to support educators—from beginning teachers to school principals to state and complex-area educational leaders.

As outlined in the state’s induction program standards, support for beginning teachers includes working with a highly skilled, trained instructional mentor. About 20 percent of Hawaii’s teachers are in their first three years of teaching, and many have been placed in high-need schools. Moreover, 25 percent of these teachers are starting their careers before they earn a professional teaching license. Hawaii’s induction program is critical for placing these new teachers on a progression toward mastery and teacher leadership and thereby increasing retention. An unexpected benefit has been identifying excellent teachers for future leadership opportunities. Their participation as mentors equips them to be teacher leaders and to advocate for equitable teaching and learning conditions. Induction is also a critical feature in the first tier of their three-tiered model of support for school improvement.

Connecticut. Connecticut, along with Delaware and Iowa, were the only states in 2016 to require multiyear induction programs.
for a professional license. Illustrative of their long-standing commitment to stakeholder engagement, Connecticut brought together a broad range of stakeholders to reimagine educator preparation. The Education Preparation Advisory Council began meeting regularly in 2012, conducted research, developed policies to transform educator preparation, and planned for statewide implementation.26

The Connecticut State Board of Education, in close collaboration with the Connecticut Department of Education, is targeting Title II, Part A funds to build on this work. Connecticut has a three-tiered continuum of certification—initial, provisional, and professional—in which a candidate must complete the statewide Teacher Education and Mentoring induction program to move from an initial to a provisional license. Effective July 2016, teachers also need a master’s degree to obtain a professional license, which is valid for five years.

North Carolina. North Carolina will also use ESSA Title II, Part A funds to strengthen its induction program, Beginning Teacher Support Program. It is required for teachers in the first three years of their career. The state’s ESSA plan highlights collaborative work groups, peer reviews, and regional technical assistance as part of the program, to which the state commits direct support, resources, templates, and examples for local districts and charter schools. The program emphasizes teachers’ progressions toward greater mastery and leadership through multitiered licensure and through the Multi-Tiered System of Support, which helps educators understand student needs, improve working conditions, and evaluate teachers against five domains (in addition to student growth): leadership, creating a respectful environment, content knowledge, pedagogy, and reflection.

CONCLUSION

Teacher preparation is the most difficult part of the teacher pipeline to change, but state boards can build momentum for it by mapping policy changes to an overall vision for student learning that is grounded in research and aims for equity. Teacher residencies and strong induction programs can help create a diverse, effective workforce. Such programs signal high expectations and stature for teachers and can transform the entire system of teacher preparation.

State boards should work at multiple entry points along the teacher pipeline and commit to long-term systems change that can lead to a diverse, effective teacher workforce. They should continue to engage state and local leaders, educators, and stakeholders in monitoring the implementation of their residency and induction programs.

State boards should also develop peer networks among district leaders to foster collaboration and the sharing of best practices in teacher preparation and induction. These networks can build district capacity and expertise and can promote access to effective teaching for all students by targeting rural and high-need schools.

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NOTES

1 For example, see “The Portrait of a Virginia Graduate” adopted by the Virginia State Board of Education, based largely on deeper learning research sponsored by the Hewlett Foundation. This work usefully guides the board’s efforts toward statewide equity.


16 Stephanie Johnson, “These States Are Leveraging Title II of ESSA to Modernize and Elevate the Teaching Profession” blog post (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, February 5, 2018).


27 Metz and Socol, “Tackling Gaps.”