



October 2022

Strategic Staffing for Paid Teacher Residencies: Early Learnings and Lessons

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This brief presents findings from the first year of an evaluation of strategic staffing for paid teacher residencies. We discuss district, educator preparation program, and technical assistance providers' aspirational goals in implementing paid teacher residencies, the various models being implemented, and the creation of partnerships. These findings indicate that all partners hope to improve the training, and ultimately effectiveness, of teacher candidates as well as to expand access to and diversify the teaching profession. Partners stressed the importance of flexibility and adaptability as they worked to design and implement models that fit their specific needs and contexts and described the challenges of navigating immediate district needs while planning towards long-term solutions. This brief can inform policymakers and practitioners seeking to diversify the teaching workforce and improve teacher/student outcomes out of the possibilities that lie within paid teacher residencies and the conditions necessary to successfully design and plan for implementation.

Introduction

Districts often face immediate, critical challenges, such as teacher vacancies or the need for short- and long-term substitutes. These challenges are urgent and pressing, as illustrated here by a K-12 district who is collaborating to build Strategic Staffing for Paid Teacher Residencies (SSPTR):

“The analogy that I use is that we’re remodeling the house, but the kitchen’s on fire. That is really what we’re dealing with when we’re talking about today’s education space. Our kitchen’s on fire, but we do need to remodel the house, but we also have to put the fire out or it doesn’t matter if we remodel the house. So, how do we navigate both” (Ed First K-12 District)?

The field of teacher education and the K-12 schools where teacher candidates learn to teach are facing unprecedented

challenges. These include the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, falling enrollments in university-based educator preparation programs (EPPs), and shortages of teachers, especially in certain regions, schools, and subject-areas. Barriers to accessing the teaching profession, such as requirements for unpaid student teaching, have also contributed to a stark lack of diversity among those studying to teach. These challenges, alongside the disheartening learning outcomes for K-12 students, strengthen the need for a well-trained, effective, and diverse teacher workforce.

One approach to address these challenges is Strategic Staffing for Paid Teacher Residencies (SSPTR). SSPTR is an initiative in which technical assistance (TA) providers partner with EPPs and K-12 school districts to create models for compensating teacher candidates while they complete a yearlong student teaching/residency experience. In these models, teacher

Background

The following TA providers are partnering with EPIC in this evaluation: US PREP, Public Impact (PI), Arizona State University (ASU), Bank Street, ERS, and EdFirst. The second year of the evaluation will include Texas Education Service Centers (ESCs) who will serve as TA providers for their respective regions. EPIC conducted nine interviews with TA providers. Table 1 summarizes the number of interviews conducted and related response rates. Additionally, the evaluation team conducted interviews with EPP and K-12 districts electing to participate in SSPTR (hereafter referred to as “partners”) as well as a small subset of EPPs and districts who elected not to participate in the initiative (hereafter referred to as “non-partners”). In total, EPIC conducted 15 partner interviews (8 K-12 districts and 7 EPPs) and 4 non-partner interviews (2 K-12 districts and 2 EPPs).

Interviews with TA providers and their partners averaged one hour. All interviews were conducted by two-person interview teams, which included one lead interviewer and a secondary interviewer for support and notetaking. All interview data were transcribed and coded in Dedoose, a web-based qualitative analysis software program that enables synchronous coding and analysis by research teams. The evaluation team created a codebook inductively, refining the codebook several times until it captured all relevant themes in the data. At least two coders coded each TA provider transcript and reconciled codes for accuracy as part of codebook norming. This process was repeated for five randomly selected K-12 district & EPP transcripts. After reconciling codes and ensuring consistent understanding and application across coders, the remaining K-12 district and EPP transcripts were divided across four individual coders on the evaluation team. Members of the research team met frequently to discuss emerging themes, draw comparisons across TA providers, and identify major findings. We then created an analysis for individual groups informed by conversations with TA providers, K-12 district and EPP partners and non-partners, and TA provider documents (described below).

candidates receive compensation during their student teaching and have opportunities for high-quality preparation through authentic, practice-based learning in K-12 schools. Teacher candidates, in turn, fill key school-level instructional roles—e.g. substitute teachers, tutors, paraprofessionals—deepening schools' relationships with teacher candidates and their EPPs. TA providers convene EPPs and K-12 districts to design SSPTR plans, help resolve challenges during planning and initial implementation, and keep both EPPs and K-12 districts focused on sustainably funding paid residency positions. SSPTR presents an opportunity to reduce barriers to high-quality preparation, diversity the teacher workforce, strengthen the teacher pipeline, and deepen partnerships between EPPs and K-12 districts.

In this brief we report learnings from the first year of our SSPTR evaluation. During year one we reviewed documents and conducted interviews with a range of TA providers, EPPs, and K-12 districts. Our focus in this initial work was to understand the various SSPTR models, the motivations of partners, the creation of partnerships, and the potential impacts of SSPTR. Specifically, we answer the following questions in this brief: (1) What are the core goals and motivations of those working on SSPTR? (2) What is involved in the work of building and sustaining partnerships for SSPTR? (3) How might SSPTR support candidates' opportunities to learn to teach? and, (4) How might SSPTR impact equity and access?

Investigating these questions, we consistently heard TA providers, EPPs, and K-12 districts highlight their belief in the power and possibility of clinical practice; argue for the need for flexibility and differentiation in SSPTR plans and models; and describe the challenges of meeting immediate needs while working towards long-term solutions. We hope our findings from this brief and future evaluation work benefit the planning and implementation of SSPTR and its impacts on teacher candidates, EPPs, and K-12 districts, schools, and students.

Table 1: Interview data: TA providers and their EPP and K-12 partner and non-partners

	K-12 DISTRICTS	EPPS
Partners	8 partner district interviews (15 interviewees)	7 partner EPP interviews (14 interviewees)
Non-partners¹	2 non-partner district interviews (2 interviewees)	2 non-partner EPP interviews (2 interviewees)

Note: Interviews with TA providers were conducted between October and December 2021. Interviews with K-12 districts and EPPs were conducted between January and April 2022.

¹ Throughout this brief we refer to “partners” and “non-partners.” Partners are EPPs and K-12 districts who have joined TA providers in standing up SSPTR while “non-partners” are those who were invited to join TA providers but have decided, at least for the time being, not to work on SSPTR.

The research team also analyzed a broad set of documents detailing TA providers’ models, goals, and designs. These included inward and/or outward facing documents that detail TA providers’ SSPTR models, along with any additional documents that participants felt would illuminate the characteristics of their model. The research team sorted and tagged documents based on their content, and then identified documents that exemplified the TA providers’ theory of action for SSPTR. We analyzed these documents for central questions; essential elements; elaboration of short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes; and the model’s design. Once this information was gathered into a matrix, we looked across TA providers and analyzed similarities and differences in goals (specific to Theory of Action and other program documents), design and model, and equity and diversity.

Finally, we created a cross-TA provider matrix analysis in which we triangulated document and interview data and identified

key themes. To identify these themes, we used an established analytical approach, saturation, that reflects the frequency of a concept across multiple data sources. This is essentially the qualitative analog to quantitative validity checks, where multiple people have identified a common theme across multiple data sources. In this brief we include illustrative quotes from TA providers, EPPs, and K-12 districts that hit on the essence of these themes.

What are the core goals and motivations of those working on SSPTR?

Establishing paid, year-long, sustainable teacher residencies was a goal shared across TA providers and their partners. However, these entities discussed a constellation of other desired

Table 2: Core goals of SSPTR models across K-12 Districts, EPPs, and TA providers

THEME	ELABORATED DESCRIPTION	ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTE
Grow teacher pipeline – effective and community reflective	Increase the number of high quality teacher candidates from the communities where they will teach	“We have continued to move into a direction where we can have a sustainable pipeline for teacher candidates, the opportunity to grow teacher candidates in our own area who have grown up here, who are connected to our community, connected to our students, so our focus has been our pipeline and high-quality talent” (Bank Street, K-12 District).
Teacher effectiveness	Level of confidence teachers feel in their ability to deliver content	“...goal for teacher residents is to obtain the skills they need under a high-quality performing teacher to run their own effective classroom year one when they’re on their own as a teacher” (Public Impact, K-12 District).
Change Structure and Organization of Teaching Profession	Building systems and supports to meet regional and state needs, including addressing workforce challenges and state-level constraints, such as the limitations of credentialing or collective bargaining.	“A redesign of the job of teacher is ultimately what we want it to achieve. The idea of, maybe we don’t have a pipeline problem, but we have a workforce design problem. So, how can we design a workforce that people want to be a part of and then once they become a part of it, that they stay in” (Ed First, K-12 District).
Disrupting silos	Requiring units or entities that traditionally work in isolation to work collaboratively	“This is going to require multiple silos within a district coming together and developing a coherent plan. So there are district and campus implications [...] There are principal supervisors and principals who are going to need to take a clear stance on their level of ownership over these...models. [...] Their HR department needs to understand [how residents are being recruited, selected, paid]. [This work] really necessitates some cross-team collaboration at district leadership and capacity building at the principal level” (Texas Education Agency).
Diversifying the teacher workforce	Expanding access to the teaching profession so candidates from underrepresented backgrounds can obtain high quality training	“We believe that residencies are really effective ways of entering the teaching profession in a responsible way and that we need to provide that opportunity to more students, potential teachers, and current students. In order to do that, and if we’re serious about equity and diversifying the teacher workforce, we need to make sure that those experiences are not systematically denying people the opportunity to participate in this way of coming into the profession” (ASU).
Cultivating partnerships	Building and sustaining partnerships between TA providers and EPP/K-12 District partners	“One of the things is the sustainability and strengthening of their partnership [EPPs’ partnership with K-12 Districts]. So like [name] said, that the strategic staffing comes along later. They [EPP] got into this work at the beginning because they [EPP] really believed in having a strong partnership with local districts and being able to train teachers who would be strong in those districts in their communities. So, by reallocating funds and doing this work alongside the districts, they’re [EPPs and K-12 Districts] just deepening and strengthening those relationships by doing the work together” (US PREP).

outcomes that also motivated their approach to SSPTR. As illustrated below, there are both key similarities and distinct differences in these additional goals and motivations. On-going attention to differences in design and contextual factors will help to disentangle the ways that variations in these goals and motivations affect outcomes for teacher candidates and K-12 students. Table 2 presents the six key themes and patterns that emerged in the data analysis, elaborated descriptions of these themes, and exemplar quotes from the field.

Similarities in goals and motivations across SSPTR designs: Consistent across K-12 district, EPP, and TA providers' goals for their work on SSPTR is their efforts to support substantive partnerships across historically siloed spaces of teacher preparation. Specifically, TA providers and partners seek to work across program(s) within EPPs in support of paid, yearlong teacher residencies. TA providers, EPP, and K-12 district personnel also named the importance of designing SSPTR programs that would be sustainable – i.e. could be sustained past the stage of philanthropic support. There was also a pervasive emphasis, across interviewees, on equity, access, and diversity as key SSPTR goals. Importantly, equity, access, and diversity were operationalized in different ways with different emphasis on racial, ethnic, ability/disability, and language and with different attention to equity in access for K-12 students and/or for teacher candidates.

Tensions and Nuance in SSPTR Goals: While many named the power of yearlong residency to prepare candidates so that they are “day 1 ready” it is important to note that there exist different understandings of what is necessary to achieve this goal. These differences occur in attention to the teacher education curriculum, the training and support of mentor teachers and coaches, and the type of assignments and responsibilities teacher candidates (TCs) have in their clinical settings. Further, there are other notable differences across SSPTR designs, including the extent to which the designs are EPP or district “facing,” the importance of prior relationships between K-12 districts and EPPs and TA providers, and the sharpness of the TA providers' attention to and conception of teaching practice. For example, only one TA provider, Bank Street, explicitly centers culturally responsive teaching in their SSPTR design. Ongoing evaluation work will investigate how differences in design, structure, and context impact the outcomes of SSPTR.

What is the work of building and sustaining partnerships for SSPTR?

During this initial phase of the evaluation, most TA providers were working to secure EPP and K-12 district partners for SSPTR. A key finding during this phase of the work was the

conditions that enabled partnerships as well as those conditions that made it more difficult to cultivate and secure partners.

Across TA providers, EPPs, and K-12 districts, participants emphasized the importance of communication and responsiveness when attempting to cultivate and sustain partnerships. However, EPPs and K-12 districts spoke more readily about the tensions in collaborative SSPTR planning and design and the delicate balance between meeting the needs of K-12 districts and students versus EPPs and teacher residents. In many instances this tension manifested not as a set of competing priorities, but instead, as differences in foci between which priorities were in the foreground and which were more in the background. This delicate balance did not represent valuations of worth, but instead, a complicated calculus of emphasis and priorities. In the implementation of SSPTR, where candidates are also employees of the K-12 district, district challenges around teacher vacancies and the needs for short- and long-term substitutes can conflict with what EPPs see as necessary structures to ensure candidates have adequate opportunity to build their teaching practice.

Factors Facilitating and Complicating Partnership: TA providers identified several enabling and inhibiting conditions of cultivating partnerships. These include pre-existing structures designed to support planning and design of SSPTR, readiness criteria for potential K-12 district and/or EPP partners, extant relationships (between TA providers and EPPs/K-12 districts or between EPPs and K-12 districts) and buy-in from EPP and K-12 district partners. Another enabling factor that was identified was “empowered flexibility,” whereby agreed upon guidelines for how SSPTR will function gives partners the freedom or flexibility to work within them. In these instances, shared understandings, goals, and structures enabled partners to exert flexibility in their enactment within a particular set of guard-rails or safeguards. For example, a US PREP EPP stated: “Baseline, they [teacher candidates] have to be in the classroom with a mentor teacher three of those four days a week. We're not adjusting that or adapting that. three of the four days, they have to be in the classroom with a mentor teacher. They have one day where they can potentially play a different role that helps meet the needs of the district and so, there are pretty clear parameters around the model. The flexibility comes in that one day. What is it that the district needs? What could residents do that would help them meet those needs and then what do they have the resources that they could eventually reallocate to pay resident stipends.” Here, there is flexibility in what a resident might be asked to do, but not full flexibility. The standards agreed upon for the residency itself provide important constraints on that flexibility.

Conditions that TA providers felt constrained partnerships included K-12 district- and state-level policies, change/initiative fatigue, a perceived lack of flexibility in SSPTR models, disconnects between district needs and SSPTR as a solution, and

SSPTR being seen as a short-term fix, rather than a long-term solution, for district challenges. These are examples of the ways in which short- and long-term goals are in tension in the work of teaching and K-12 education and emblematic of a K-12 district quote that “*The kitchen is on fire, but the house needs to be remodeled.*”

How might SSPTR support candidates’ opportunities to learn to teach?

Across TA providers and their partners, participants expressed consistent, shared views regarding how SSPTR might support teacher candidates’ opportunities to learn to teach. Table 3 presents key themes, which we elaborate on here.

Interviewees argued that the financial stipend would free candidates from having to work second jobs and would enable them to focus their attention on honing their skills as teachers. Interviewees imagined that this would open up access, enabling candidates who might not have otherwise had the financial resources to dedicate themselves to a full year residency. “*We are making becoming a teacher possible when some of our participants in the program never thought this was an option. Now, we’re contributing to their tuition, allowing them to continue to work when we know that some of our families don’t have that option*” (Bank Street K-12 District). Further, EPP faculty noted that when teacher candidates previously managed to work additional jobs during their school placements, that resulted in significant “hardships” that would “*negatively affect their performance in the classroom or their [teacher preparation] coursework.*” Ultimately, then, “*the ability of the district to use SSPTR to provide a salary to the teacher residents, even if it’s not a very big salary, it does help because it offsets the cost of tuition, etc. and provides a living wage at least for our students so that they’re able to engage in it*” (US PREP EPP).

In addition to the stipend, TA providers also sought to support efforts to train highly effective teachers by offering year-long experiences with strong mentor teachers. Commitments to the quality of mentor teachers matter, as research consistently shows that both mentors’ instructional ability and their ability to coach and develop others predicts the effectiveness of beginning teachers. Although the goal of expanding opportunities to learn to teach was shared across TA providers and EPP/K-12 district partners, the precise ways that models hoped to support the development of robust coaching varied across programs. Across settings, EPP and K-12 district partners spoke about the opportunities for teacher candidates to shadow and work with teachers in extended, year-long, and practice embedded ways. For example, one K-12 district staff person named that “*(Residents) can shadow that teacher throughout faculty meetings, after school activities, anything that it takes to be a teacher, and so being with us that full year, it really helps grow that candidate instead of your regular student*

teaching, which is just one semester” (Public Impact K-12 District partner). On-going attention to the moments when mentor-candidate matches are not “perfect” and when mentors need additional coaching or support in scaffolding teacher candidates’ opportunities to learn will likely continue to be critical. This implies that TA providers should continue to prioritize EPP and K-12 district partners focusing on mentor teacher quality.

TA providers also sought to strengthen efforts to support candidates’ opportunities to learn to teach by providing strong guidelines and assessments during teacher preparation. Here, the goal is to construct greater coherence across clinical and non-clinical experiences. This coherence would support the development of teacher candidates and enable K-12 districts and EPPs to monitor and assess the efficacy of teacher preparation on candidate outcomes and K-12 students’ learning. For example, one EPP faculty member shared that “*One of the key pieces that we would be looking at would be through the performance assessments that we have set up each month as they’re engaging in that and providing some very clear structures for our team to review progress through those structures and looking at what that translates into in terms of our program. It gives us a really great opportunity through this model to analyze how our coursework over the course of a candidate’s preparation year really translates into classroom experience and success in the classroom and delivery of components of the lesson plan, classroom management, working with students with diverse needs. In addition, we would be looking at student performance over time as well*” (Bank Street EPP). By bringing systematic attention to the coherence of learning opportunities, interviewees argued that teacher candidates’ opportunities to learn would be scaffolded and streamlined, that K-12 students’ learning opportunities could be consistently monitored, and that the designs themselves could be assessed and modified recursively.

While these three themes emerged across interviewees regarding the ways that SSPTR might support teacher candidates’ opportunities to teach, there remain differences in the design for, and, likely in the enactment of these goals. For example, TA providers and their partners agree about the importance of a strong mentor teacher, but the choice of that mentor teacher rests with different agents across models, sometimes resting more with the EPPs and other times with districts and principals. When an EPP has more say on these pairings, for example, they might choose to cohort candidates in schools so as to minimize field coordinators’ travel and to maximize candidates’ access to each other. Yet, when K-12 districts have more say in the placement of teacher candidates, they might prefer, as we saw in some instances, to spread candidates across schools in a district to maximize access to teacher candidates’ support across schools. Each of these approaches would result in a different distribution of teacher candidates within a district.

Further differences regarding candidates’ opportunities to learn to teach include the attention TA providers bring to the scope

Table 3: How strategic staffing might support opportunities to learn to teach

THEME	ELABORATED DESCRIPTION	ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTE
Year-long residency with strong mentor/ in-service teacher	Greater coherence across clinical and non-clinical experiences; more robust, more authentic clinical experience, maximizing impact of mentor teachers	“My team and I actually sat down and we mapped out our teacher resident scope and sequence and looked at what that looks like for the teacher resident year, what it looks like for the internship teacher year, which would essentially be year 2 and any adjustments that we needed to make. So, what we did then is we did...it doesn't add or subtract any content or curriculum. What it does though is we have some minor rearrangements in terms of when these resident teachers would participate in specific certification test preparation and when they would take certain specific summer courses, so we did create a more structured scope and sequence” (Bank Street EPP).
Relief of Financial burden	SSPTR models offset expenses and cost of tuition, allowing students to focus more fully on learning to teach without the “hardship” of working an additional job.	“..funding and serving ‘vulnerable populations’ is the core of it, the core of our work from when we were the sustainable funding project was removing financial barriers to accessing quality teacher preparation, which disproportionately impacts these vulnerable populations, so it feels like that’s the core of the work and that’s the lens that I’ve always held through all of the aspects of the work is removing these financial barriers, recognizing who’s impacted the most by them” (Bank Street).
Safeguards around Student Teaching Experience	Participants sought to build safeguards to ensure that candidates are prepared to fulfill the duties of SSPTR. These included structural guidelines and clear learning expectations for teacher candidates.	“There’s flexibility at all levels, but we want to be very conscious of the fact that we’re still accomplishing our objectives. By having that flexibility, we’re not designing something that doesn’t meet the goals that we’ve laid out that are the cornerstones of what we do” (US PREP).
Teacher Effectiveness	Highly trained, better prepared first-year teachers; investing in residents so that they invest in their students; improving teacher retention by providing high quality training and support; democratizing access to highly prepared teachers; greater diversity in teacher pipeline.	“When you have people who are trained and who really understand what it takes to be a high-quality educator. When we invest in that resident and then hire them on, what they’re going to in turn do is invest in our students” (Public Impact K-12 District).

and sequencing of clinical and pre-clinical experiences. Some models attended more than others to these experiences. These differences reflect tensions in priorities, as well as different perceptions regarding which safeguards and guardrails in SSPTR designs are necessary. These differences also exist at the same time that EPP and K-12 partners spoke about the ways that SSPTR can support residents’ and K-12 students’ learning and the connectedness of these outcomes. We conclude this section by noting the critical importance of evaluating how SSPTR designs contribute to candidates’ opportunities to teach and the impacts of this for candidates and K-12 students.

How might SSPTR impact equity and access?

“The core of our work [has been] removing financial barriers to accessing quality teacher preparation, which disproportionately impacts vulnerable populations” (Bank Street).

Throughout this brief, we have attended to the ways in which SSPTR might impact and refract upon equity and access. In this section, we open this up more by elaborating on how EPP and K-12 partners and non-partners spoke in extended ways about how SSPTR could impact equity, focusing on equity vis-à-vis residents, K-12 students, and broader societal and communal equity. TA providers echoed these tripartite points, naming that they seek to: disrupt the systematic exclusion of candidates from the teaching profession, weave local contexts and priorities into the design process, and design in schools with the greatest needs first. In Table 4 we illustrate these findings, with exemplar quotes which elaborate and speak to the ways that TA providers, K-12 districts and EPPs are thinking about the possibilities and implications of SSPTR for equity.

Regarding the first theme, equity for residents, we heard from interviewees about the ways in which SSPTR was providing important access to high-quality teacher preparation that had long been out of reach for many, especially first-generation college students. To interviewees, this meant not only accessing

Table 4: Aspirational commitments – Equity in strategic staffing designs

THEME	ELABORATED DESCRIPTION	ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTE
Equity for residents	Goal is to provide residents access to high-quality content and experiences and to attend to the educational opportunities residents themselves had in their own K-12 schooling.	“We want our candidates to have equity of access to the highest quality preparation experiences, but it’s also in the classrooms. Equity of access to the highest quality learning experiences in the classrooms and regardless of the language background...” (US PREP EPP).
Equity for K-12 students	Goal is to get excellent teachers in front of every child and build a system in which every student counts and in which opportunities are distributed and created for both students and teachers.	“One of the things we talk about are mirrors and windows and so, kids having the ability to see teachers like themselves and then actually looking out into a world of diversity. So, teachers that are not like them because our worlds are made up of tons of different kinds of people and so, we purposely think through diversity and inclusion in the hiring processes” (Ed First K-12 District).
Societal/communal equity	Goal is to hire from within/reflect the communities they serve, interrogate systems, correct problems of under- and unemployment	“Our biggest focus on diversity and the biggest impact that we know to our communities, into our families, into our students is that our goal is to have our teaching population strongly reflect that of what our student population is and through that, we know that we’re looking at local talent” (Bank Street K-12 District).

these opportunities, but accessing these opportunities in ways that were scaffolded and supported, with sufficient resources to make good use of the high-quality preparation. To some this meant additional resources – computers, internet access, transportation. For example, an EPP faculty member named that *“a real easy, high-level example would be even access to a laptop or the internet to participate in a meeting like this. We have an individual who just was accepted into our program and she doesn’t have a computer nor does she have internet, so how is she going to attend some of our training sessions? So, we’re working right now on solving that so that we ensure that there is that ability”* (Bank Street EPP). Interviewees expanded on this, elaborating how SSPTR promises to expand and ensure access to high-quality resources. For example, another EPP faculty member noted, *“We’re predominantly a bilingual community and there are still questions and issues around equity of access for our minoritized language learners and our dual language learners and our bilingual students, so equity kind of cuts in lots of different ways in this region. In terms of our program, more than 90% of our teacher candidates are LatinX. If you ask them, they would identify as Mexican or Mexican American or Mexican origin, but broadly speaking, it could be categorized as LatinX. More than 80% are bilingual, not necessarily bilingual educators, but they grew up speaking Spanish, English and potentially went through schooling and are biliterate as well. So, we know the research on students of color and ensuring that we have a high number of teachers of color to serve our students of color for lots of different reasons and I think that’s something that we excel at”* (US PREP EPP).

The thematic findings related to equity and access are also mutually reinforcing. We saw that in many instances EPPs existed in “closed-loop” systems with the K-12 districts they serve, as illustrated in the previous quote. Interviewees named the importance of placing excellent teachers in front of every child in the US public school system, building systems in which every student counts, and in which opportunities are distributed and created for both K-12 students and teacher candidates.

Naming the importance of relational capital and of reflecting the racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds of the children that teachers serve, interviewees brought attention to the ways in which marginalized communities are further marginalized in the institution of public schooling. One EPP faculty member noted that *“If you’re creating great teachers across the board, then that’s not a problem, but if we still let lousy teachers out there, guess what? You know what kids are going to get them? The ones in the low SES schools. That’s the problem. So, we have to produce amazing teachers. When we produce amazing teachers, then every kid gets a teacher they deserve and then the pipeline matches the population. That’s the solution”* (US PREP EPP). In this and in other examples, interviewees talked about the ways in which attending to candidates’ equity and access would refract upon and bolster K-12 students’ equity and access.

Finally, TA providers and their partners spoke about the ways in which SSPTR might be important for societal or communal equity. As such, interviewees spoke about the ways in which SSPTR would: enable K-12 districts to hire from within and reflect the communities they serve; empower districts to hire for equity, emphasizing lived experiences by privileging *“getting diversity of experience from students, industry folks in front of students;”* (EdFirst EPP) and correcting for enduring problems of under- and unemployment in marginalized communities. Doing so, some argued, would enable them to *“be a reflection of the social context of that community. So, strategic in our view...is this creative way of thinking of how do we pay folks to actually get us to move individuals from positions that are self employed or underemployed to a professional position”* (Bank Street K-12 District).

In sum, interviewees spoke about the power and possibility of paid, full-year residencies to address a number of historic inequities that have challenged public education in the US. It will be critical for TA providers, EPPs, and K-12 districts

to continue to ask: how are our choices (i.e., recruitment/selection of candidates, selection of school sites) impacting equity and access?

Discussion

“A redesign of the job of teacher is ultimately what we want it to achieve. The idea of, maybe we don’t have a pipeline problem, but we have a workforce design problem. So, how can we design a workforce that people want to be a part of and then once they become a part of it, that they stay in” (Ed First, K-12 District).

While all the TA providers’ designs for SSPTR named paid, sustainable teacher residencies as the key goal, they also spoke, to varying degrees, about a constellation of additional ambitious hopes and aims. These additional goals are themselves transformative, and include enhancing teacher efficacy; changing the structure and organization of the teaching profession; diversifying the teaching profession through expanding access to high-quality teacher preparation; increasing retention of effective teachers; and building systems and supports that are responsive to regional needs.

As such, those working on SSPTR see themselves as working on SSPTR inasmuch as SSPTR is a vehicle to broader and systemic improvements in the US educational system. This is the nuanced space and the possibility of strategic staffing. It is no small thing that TA providers, EPPs, and K-12 districts are doing this work in historically challenging times. TA providers and their EPP and K-12 partners are bringing important resources to this work. And yet, carrying it off with success, at scale, and in sustainable ways, is dependent upon the factors elaborated below.

First, all those involved need to continue to ask themselves and each other the following: as SSPTR models are designed and implemented, how are enactors ensuring that the resident is still getting a high-quality training experience? An EPP faculty member asked this very question, wondering how they can “protect residents and their access to high-quality teacher preparation.” Keeping this aim in view is more difficult than it might appear, for the day-to-day work of public education in an enduring pandemic is challenging and there are many “fires” that need to be addressed in the immediate period— e.g. empty classrooms with few substitutes available. In this example, pulling a teacher candidate from their assigned role in a mentor teacher’s classroom to serve as a substitute teacher might help the problem of the moment, but we must continue to ask how such a move might disrupt the coherence of the candidate’s learning trajectory.

Second, all those involved in the design and implementation of SSPTR must continue to doggedly understand how those designs impact K-12 students’ learning opportunities. How are K-12 students’ opportunities supported, stretched, and enriched

by SSPTR? Are there ways in which the model is degrading or undermining the K-12 students’ access to consistently high-quality, effective teaching? If there is evidence of this, what are the ways in which TA providers and their partners can quickly re-design and pivot in such a way as to attend to redressing these challenges? This idea was featured again and again by interviewees. For example, one K-12 district professional said that *“We need not just more bodies in the room. We need people that are quality...our kids deserve to have the very best teacher that they can have even if they’re a first year teacher”* (Public Impact K-12 District). Guarding this goal and privileging it is critical to the success of the enterprise.

Third, these first two implications refract in critical ways on issues of equity and access. Those working on SSPTR must continue to ask how their design and implementation choices impact equity and access for candidates, for K-12 students, and for their communities. Every decision: who is recruited into SSPTR and how, the ways in which candidates are selected, the set of criteria and principles used in the selection of school sites, and selection criteria for mentor teachers all matter for equity and access. Interviewees overwhelmingly spoke of the centrality of equity and access to SSPTR and the ways in which they seek to measure the effects of SSPTR. For example, an EPP faculty member noted that they and their partners are building in processes across partnerships for asking: *“...how effective are they as teachers, how long do they stay in the profession, what’s the retention rate, are they hired by the districts where they served their residency? So, we’re looking at those numbers because what we’re hoping and what we expect, honestly, is what we’re going to see as higher retention rate for teacher candidates who went through a yearlong program because they knew what they were doing, they were better trained, they were more equipped to be teachers”* (US PREP EPP). Further, in our evaluation we noted that only one of the TA providers, Bank Street, designs for the support and the development of culturally relevant pedagogy. Given what we know about the importance of high-quality, effective teachers who can see and leverage the brilliance of all the children in their classrooms, more explicit attention to the consistent development of culturally relevant, high-quality teaching is important.

Fourth, we have noted that the partnerships TA providers are working to support between K-12 districts and EPPs are profoundly counter-cultural and necessitate working across historically siloed institutions. As such, nurturing those relationships will necessitate careful attention. Partners should be supported by each other and by their TA providers to continually assess which design decision points are critical. For example, do both partners need to be present for site selection and the creation of the resident job description? What are the consequences when one is missing? Our evaluation uncovered great nuance – nuance that bedevils one-size-fit-all solutions. As such, we note that across partner interview data, conditions can at times be constraining and/or enabling, supportive and/or

limiting. The solution is not that there is no solution, but instead that there is a consistent need for flexibility, communication, and substantive partnering across design and implementation. This necessitates consistently naming what needs to be balanced, including K-12/EPP needs and attending to the likelihood that there might be tension between short- and long-term goals. Solving these tensions comes down to working collaboratively, compromising, and making change. Examples of these flexible approaches abound, including this example, shared by an EPP faculty member: “Long-term, overall, we have the same goal and when we look at the small term, there have been things where they need a warm body to sub in a class and we can allow that to an extent that works out, that’s great, but on the other hand, we have to protect our students, but they understand that, so when there have been issues that have come up, we’ve been able to sit down and work it out together.”

A final implication is that all those involved in SSPTR must continue to ask how a specific solution – no matter how rational or logical – might engender new problems. Across the interviews we heard examples of this, including the following: “I was going to say another challenge I don’t think we’ve talked about is the increased workload for the residents and so, when they start the residency, they’re still taking either 12 or 15 college credit hours when they start working as teacher residents and they’re working a full-time job and so, I think we all know because [name] and I have taught the classes that they’re taking while they’re doing the residency and it’s very stressful for them. It’s a high stress area and they’re working full-time, so I think the challenge that the students face and we’ve had to learn how to try to support them and talk them through it when they’re ready to quit and when they get through it, they see the value in it. They see the value while they’re doing it, but it’s easier for them to get lost in the day to day struggle to get their tasks done. So, recognizing the struggle that the students have and then finding ways to support them has really been a challenge” (US PREP EPP partner). Thinking through and anticipating these challenges is important. Revising and adapting is important as well. Speaking about the way that their partners attended to challenges in early implementation successfully, a K-12 district professional shared: “So, there was a little bit of frustration, but I was super transparent and I don’t have time to mince words. You’re going to know right where you stand- that didn’t work. So, what can we do to make it work? And they (TA provider) were incredible. They listened to that feedback, they took it on the chin. I’m a super straight shooter and they completely, for the design session 2, 3, and now we’re going into 4, completely changed their approach, their preparation, the pre-prep, the meetings between the meetings, making sure that we’re doing what we need to do to stay on the timelines and we have enough information to do what we need to do. So, all that to say, it started out a little shaky and just absolutely is becoming what we thought it was going to be” (EdFirst K-12 partner).

SSPTR enactors hope that their models might diversify and open up access to consistently high-quality teacher preparation that features robust, clinically relevant practice-based opportunities to learn to teach. In this research brief we highlight the immense possibilities and the challenges that need to be managed for these promises to be realized.

Acknowledgments

This work is supported by generous grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Houston Endowment.

For more research on this topic

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