

The Residency Model and Its Impact on Teacher Development: A Seattle-Based Study

Kendall Paine



Abstract: This action research project was designed to explore the residency model of teacher preparation. Drawing on observations, surveys, and interviews, it investigated the impact of one residency program—the Seattle Teacher Residency—on the development of new and mentor teachers. The findings suggest that the program’s rigorous coursework, practicum, and central emphasis on equity are particularly formative in preparing new teachers to serve in high-needs contexts. Meanwhile, mentor teachers also benefit from their participation in the residency program; in particular, the findings suggest that mentors refine their teaching practices, expand their professional network, and experience professional reprieve as a result of participating in the residency program. While further research will be required to corroborate these findings and investigate the long-term effects, this action research project suggests that the residency model could have a profound impact on the development and retention of teachers in urban contexts.

Research Questions

- Which unique aspects of the Seattle Teacher Residency (STR) program are particularly formative in preparing new teachers to serve in high-needs schools?
- What is the effect of participation in the Seattle Teacher Residency (STR) program on the mentors’ development as teachers and teacher leaders?

Methods

- Conducted a case study of one resident-mentor pair, involving daily **observations** and field notes
- Administered three intervals of **inventories** to resident-mentor pair to document changes over time
- Issued a **survey** to eleven mentors
- Recorded **interviews** with six participants (residents, mentors, and instructors)

Findings: Residents

1. The co-teaching model—around which the practicum is designed—gradually builds residents’ capacity to teach full time.
2. Residents benefit from coursework that is rigorous, adaptive, and tailored to the specific needs of the district.
3. STR’s explicit focus on equity and social justice uniquely prepares residents to teach in diverse, high-needs schools.

Findings: Mentors

1. In the process of working with residents, mentors refine teaching practices and clarify their expertise.
2. Mentors have strengthened their professional network with other teachers and teacher leaders as a result of participation in STR.
3. The co-teaching aspect of STR has served as a professional reprieve, minimizing some mentors’ feelings of burnout.

Implications and Future Research

- This research suggests that the residency model is reimagining the way we prepare new teachers for service in urban schools. Meanwhile, there are significant benefits to teachers that mentor with the residency program. Taken cumulatively, these findings indicate that the residency model could hold as much promise for the development and retention of *experienced* teachers as it does for new teachers.
- Future research could explore these impacts among a broader sample of residents and mentors, as well as investigate the model’s long-term impacts on teacher retention and student achievement in Seattle schools.

Contact: kendall.k.paine@gmail.com