

Federal Funding for Aspiring Teachers: An Investment in the Nation's Future

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This document was prepared by *Prepared To Teach*, an initiative out of Bank Street College of Education, as a concept paper to inform policy discussions at the U.S. Department of Education. The ideas here are the culmination of six years of work exclusively dedicated to exploring how teacher preparation in the United States—a loosely coupled system, at best—might be universally transformed so that every student has equitable access to the opportunity to learn from a teacher who is a qualified professional, the definition of which is operationalized here as someone who has received high-quality preparation through a teacher residency. The document is informed by research on teacher preparation and its impacts, aspiring teachers' financial burdens, economic models of other clinical practice professions, shifts across other fields that have created stronger professions, and work with districts and programs across the nation to explore the feasibility of engaging the efforts that will be needed to transform systems.

Delivering on the promise of equitable, high-quality education for every student is, we believe, within reach. The positive impacts of shifting to universal teacher residencies for preparation will be profound and lasting, and costs are feasible, especially with coordinated planning and aligned initiatives at state, local, and federal levels. Beyond the educational case for these investments, moral arguments about equity, legal arguments about government's responsibility to ensure its citizenry can participate in our democracy, and financial arguments about the trillions of dollars that improved education will bring to our economy are all strong. As the nation both struggles with and rebuilds from the pandemic, embracing this vision by understanding the power of quality, affordable preparation can chart a path to a stronger future.

The remainder of this document offers a high-level overview of the interconnected realities that will need to be considered to transform teacher preparation across the country. The first three sections offer key data and rationale we have found important for policymakers to build shared understandings around. The final three sections, starting [here](#), focus on the potential for sustainable funding for teacher residencies.

We welcome discussion about any of these ideas and thank you for your invitation to share them.

Underprepared Teachers: A Root Cause of Educational Inequities

The science of learning and development makes clear what educators have always known: Teaching is a complex profession, and learning to teach takes time. When classroom teachers are underprepared, the students they serve are robbed of the opportunity to learn.

- In 2001 when the No Child Left Behind Act encouraged the development of alternative preparation programs, only 8% of the nation's teachers came through programs that

allowed people to be hired as teachers of record before completing their programs. Now, more than a quarter of aspiring teachers are enrolled in alternative programs, which generally offer a “fast-track” approach to entry into the profession.

- In some states, half to two-thirds of teachers come through such programs.
- Fast-track programs enroll higher proportions of teachers of color than other programs, but teachers of color leave the profession from fast-track programs at even higher rates than their white counterparts from the same pathways.
- Teachers from fast-track pathways are a huge driver of teacher turnover among early career teachers.
- Teachers from fast-track programs disproportionately serve students of color, students from low-income communities, and students with exceptional needs. As a result, student populations who historically have been underserved by our educational system attend schools staffed by underprepared teachers with high turnover rates.
- The revolving door of new, underprepared teachers in school communities serving students of color, students from low-income communities, and students with exceptional needs means that these student populations have year after year of novice teachers at the head of the class.
- Novice teachers are less effective than experienced teachers, so these underserved student populations are not able to benefit from the educational opportunities they deserve.

Financial Barriers: A Root Cause of Underprepared Teachers and Teacher Turnover

Learning to teach well requires high-quality coursework that is integrated with clinical practice and takes place alongside an accomplished teacher. Unfortunately, in most instances, clinical practice is unpaid. Most aspiring teachers need a way to fund their living expenses; they cannot afford to work for free.

- Financial supports are particularly important to aspiring teachers from lower-income backgrounds, helping explain why fast-track programs are able to attract more teachers from historically underrepresented backgrounds.
- Candidates enrolled in teacher preparation programs who are white come from families with \$90,000 incomes; candidates of color come from families with less than half of that income.
- People of color face higher financial obstacles paying off debt, so if they use loans to support themselves during clinical practice, they are likely to be hit with both low teaching salaries and higher and longer debt burdens, compromising their ability to remain in the profession.
- Fast-track programs offer full salaries and benefits, which incentivize individuals away from quality pre-service programs.
- While enrollment in regular pre-service programs has plummeted in the past few years, one of the cheapest, fastest programs in the country has increased enrollment by 10,000 students a year, with 55,000 enrolled students as of the last federal reporting.
- It is important to recognize that becoming a teacher through a fast-track program is a systemically supported option; the issue is not with the individual teachers. They work

heroically hard but are simply not yet prepared with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful.

- The financial benefits of fast-track programs accrue to the individuals who receive a salary and benefits. The costs of their under-preparedness are borne by the students they serve.

Funded Teacher Residency Partnerships Address These Root Causes and More

We know what it takes to prepare teachers who can disrupt educational inequities. Research, successful models across the nation, and examples from other countries' teacher preparation transformations point the way.

- Clinical “residency” programs, designed in deep partnership between P-12 and teacher preparation programs, where candidates work alongside an accomplished teacher for a year while pursuing integrated coursework, routinely graduate effective first-year teachers.
- These graduates are often compared to second-year teachers, helping remove the pervasive first-year challenges for both novice teachers and their students.
- Residency graduates receive stronger evaluations and have strong outcomes compared to teachers from other pathways.
- Graduates of residency programs have the skills they need to succeed, boasting retention rates of 80% to 90% in their fifth years, even in hard-to-staff schools, compared to national averages close to 50%.
- During their year as residents, outcomes for students in the class serving as the clinical practice setting also improve, including both academics and reductions in behavioral referrals—across all subgroups.
- When funded, especially at levels that can compete with the financial incentives of fast-track programs, residencies attract high proportions of candidates of color and others from underrepresented populations—and these candidates stay in the profession.
- Well-designed residency partnerships also engage mid-career and veteran teachers in ways that reignite their commitment to the profession.

Deep P-20 Partnerships Can Braid Resources to Support Residencies

Creating co-constructed, mutually beneficial residency partnerships between P-12 and teacher preparation programs not only strengthens each of the separate systems; it creates affordances that facilitate sustainable funding for resident stipends.

- When residencies are designed to meet district staffing needs, districts realize cost savings through reduced attrition, as it costs between \$10,000 and \$20,000 per teacher to hire, onboard, and support new teachers. Savings from reduced turnover can support resident stipends.
- When stipends for residents are available, programs can recruit and enroll more students, including in cost-efficient cohort models. Increased tuition revenue can be used to support new programming needs and can also result in cohort-based tuition reduction.

- When residents are deeply integrated into the instruction in a school, they provide instructional supports that the school or district can fund through appropriate instructional funds.
- Carefully designed residency models can allow candidates to serve in existing paid instructional roles, for example working as substitutes one day a week, serving as paraprofessionals half of the day and residents half a day, or providing in-school or after-school tutoring.
- Stronger instructional outcomes—both during the residency year and once residents are hired—can reduce the kinds of remediation costs that less effective instruction can result in, such as tutoring, summer school, grade retention, and inappropriate special education referrals. As savings from these cost centers accrue, those dollars can support both the general residency costs and resident stipends.

A Federal Role to Spur and Diffuse Innovation for Funded Residencies

Funding streams for aspirants to study to become teachers do not currently exist either in the P-12 or the higher education systems; they must be developed. In addition, since fast-track programs have become embedded in every state, those funding streams must be competitive with the paid full-time employment option of fast-track programs. The federal government can facilitate those shifts and reap the benefits of a stronger educational system throughout the nation.

- Just as education through the GI Bill was a major driver of post-World War II economic productivity, universal improvement of teacher education will boost outcomes in every school, leading to higher educational attainment and subsequent community, health, workforce, and economic improvements across the nation.
- Investments in workforce development, already a federal priority, offer both a rationale and a model for investing in the teacher workforce
- Other countries have engaged such reforms through their central governments and realized systemic improvements.
- Providing a residency stipend of \$30,000 per year for every needed new teacher in the nation is financially feasible.
- An investment of \$6 billion over three to five years would cover stipends and transform systems across every state and reduce teacher turnover by half; cost-sharing with state and local governments could reduce the federal price tag by at least half.
- Ongoing annual costs for projected new teacher needs would stabilize at roughly \$4 billion, again with cost-sharing reducing federal investment needs.

Key Policy Considerations

Fundamental changes to education are challenging because of the loosely-coupled nature of the system and the fact that states, not the federal government, bear responsibility for their systems. If a residency funding stream is to spur systemic changes across all states, it will require thoughtful policy design that incentivizes shifts in every state and locality without overstepping federal boundaries. The following design principles will, we believe based on our work over the past six years, create such incentives.

- To promote systemic educational changes that serve the public good, a federal program should avoid competitive grant funding mechanisms.
 - Every child in America should be taught by a teacher who is well prepared.
 - Living in a state or locality that did not win a grant should not disadvantage our nation’s youth.
 - While the “winners” of competitive grants feel pride, “losers” become disenchanted because of the inequities that are visited on the children who cannot benefit from the funded educational improvements.
 - Selective processes can further exacerbate a sense of mistrust and division in the land.
- Appropriating dollars proportionately to every state, as programs like the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act does, will allow every state the choice to opt into funded teacher residencies as a means to transform their education systems.
 - The profound need for well-qualified teachers, coupled with a federal program to address the most intransigent issue—candidates’ inability to work for free while learning to teach—will result in near universal interest in this program.
- To access their available appropriation, states should be required to meet federal requirements that will ensure dollars will result in the intended systemic improvements and will become sustainable over time.
 - Program quality standards should reflect what research has demonstrated to be the most promising practices for teacher residencies and should be developed around the implications for education based in the science of learning and development.
 - Long-term sustainability designs that braid resources between the P-12 and teacher preparation systems should be a requirement, as these efforts not only make residencies more economically viable; they also strengthen instruction in schools.
 - States should be required to create new formula-based funding streams for resident stipends
 - States should be required to create and maintain a learning network across their teacher preparation ecosystem to support the diffusion of innovations around residency development and implementation work to promote systemic improvements and a shared commitment to the entire preparation system becoming more integral to P-12 schooling.
- Stipend funding should flow to eligible individuals, defined as persons enrolled in quality residency preparation programs as approved by the state.
 - Such a funding mechanism incentivizes programs to retool to the state’s residency standards, which are higher than standards in other programs, because programs need enrollments as a result of fast-track pathways having decimated their numbers.
 - This mechanism also ensures that regulation of education remains in the purview of the states.