Christa McAuliffe Award

UPDATED FINAL APPLICATION

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**Background**

Teacher training in the United States has traditionally been done by and inside of universities. This approach has consistently minimized the importance of the clinical experience in a teacher’s development, and the capacity of schools to serve effectively in the development process has suffered as a result. The Hunter College School of Education has been focused on this challenging reality over the past years, and it has taken action by designing and creating a suite of programs, including residency programs modeled on the physician-training model, to address this situation. Such partnership programs leverage the power of school networks to build capacity across school communities to make them essential partners in the collaborative training and development of new teachers, and intentionally design the teacher candidate’s academic experience and skills development with this fertile training ground as its foundation and critical context.

Secondary and primary schools are designed to educate students; principals and teachers are held accountable for the effectiveness with which they succeed in this mission. It is not surprising, then, that they are not naturally-prepared locations for the training and mentoring of new teachers. In fact, far too often schools are sorely lacking in the mentoring capabilities and support networks that are critical to the success of new teachers. The New York City public school system has a teacher attrition rate of over one-third in the first five years of teaching, making the traditional need to train effective teachers an expanded one – training effective teachers that endure.

The Hunter College School of Education’s (HCSOE) partnership with New Visions for Public Schools and multiple high schools inside their school-support organization has developed a model of teacher residency that seeks to do just that. In the Urban Teacher Residency (UTR)
program, students not only spend far greater training time in the classroom from day one, they spend that time in schools who have built the capacity to receive and mentor them. This preparation is then paired with a highly refined induction period – activities in a post-degree support network that aid new teachers as they enter their classroom as teachers of record. By developing such a latticed collaboration among the School of Education and New Visions, high schools with mentors, principals, and new teachers, these residency programs exemplify the fundamental connections required for effective, enduring teacher training.

As outlined in detail in our initial application, after four cohorts of the UTR program, independent, outcomes data evaluation results were very promising, indicating that students taught by UTR-trained teachers consistently serve their students effectively. Comparisons of Regents scores and grades, across cohorts, show that students taught by UTR-trained teachers perform as well as or better than their peers, especially on Regents exams. Overall, students in residents’ classrooms (which are supported by a mentor in the room), outperformed comparison-group peers on course grades and Regents exams in every subject. There is also a positive effect of being in a UTR-trained teacher’s class for ELA Regents scores and Living Environment grades among students with IEPs, suggesting this model is also effective in Special Education preparation.

Armed with the important data that this residency model produces superior results for students, Hunter College has embarked on a process to redesign entirely the way we prepare all teacher candidates, with clinical experience and strong school partnerships at the core. We are doing this in multiple ways, including the creation of an Office of Clinical Experience at Hunter. The most visible evidence of this shift, however, are four brand newly-designed program models that build on the lessons of UTR.
**MASTER (Math and Science Teacher Residency):**

Based on the early success of UTR, in 2012, the National Science Foundation awarded HCSOE a $7.6m Math and Science Partnership grant to design a math and science teacher education residency program (MASTER) to prepare STEM educators. Given the particular challenges of finding and retaining excellent teachers in the Math and Science fields and the increasing importance of these subjects in today’s economy, we found it critical to focus on this area with a new, more effective model. MASTER Residents follow the same trajectory as those in UTR, but with specific subject-matter focus. Expert scientists from the New York Hall of Science work with residents to set up and teach inquiry lab modules in their host schools. In the 2013-2014 school year, there were 21 MASTER residents.

**CLASS (Collaborative Leadership to Advance School Success):**

Because effective teachers need effective leadership to succeed, Hunter and New Visions launched the CLASS program in 2013, a two-year, clinically-based leadership development certificate program for experienced certified teachers looking to make an impact in their schools. Graduates complete the program with the skills and knowledge to engage as learners and leaders, ready to supervise and support the professional development of teachers and the management of systems at the building and district levels. Program participants enroll together, take classes together and build their knowledge and skills in partnership with each other, the faculty and their principals and peers. The program features pre-semester “intensives,” credit-bearing seminars that expose them to research and theory-based options for school-improvement work, apprenticeships that grant them release from current responsibilities to learn and practice leadership at their home school, and visits to other participating schools. There are currently 60 participants in the CLASS program across four cohorts.
TALENT (Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Teams):

Launched in Summer 2013, this program brings together teachers and principals for an intensive summer preparation that leads to their placement together as a team in a troubled or new school, ready to make an immediate positive impact on the learning outcomes for the students at those schools. The initial cohort included four teams and a mix of new and struggling schools, and the positive results to date have demonstrated that more engagement between the academe and the schools involved in P-12 education is fundamental to driving higher performing schools.

Hunter Clinically-Rich Cohort:

In the fall of 2013, Hunter admitted its first cohort of 20 childhood education teacher candidates into a “clinically-rich” track. While imbued with all of the same program requirements as our traditional graduate program, the clinically-rich cohort spends two full days per week working inside of an NYC school. Faculty also spend one day a week working in the school, and class material is drawn from teacher candidates’ real-time experiences in the classroom. Initial feedback is immensely positive and we are working to develop similar clinically-rich tracks in our adolescent and early-childhood programs, as well as a suite of certificate programs that allow for teachers to obtain additional licenses, including TESOL and special education, that build off their professional reality of being in-class teachers every day. Professionals learn by doing, and placing that fact at the center of our education programs has been a productive starting point for the work we do.

Conclusion

At the Hunter College School of Education, we have always believed in preparing our teacher candidates for the rigors of the classroom with real-world experience through student
teaching and other opportunities for fieldwork. This work, however, has always been a supplement, or culmination to traditional graduate studies. What we have learned from the Urban Teacher Residency program is that we need to turn our traditional teacher-prep programs on their head, putting clinical experiences and strong partnerships with school-based mentors at the center of a candidate’s experience from day one, and in turn working with host schools to be optimal environments for learning. In this way, we are confident we will continue to make real progress on improving student achievement in significant and sustainable ways. It is why our fundamental shift to clinically-based teacher training across all of our programs – away from the traditional model based on the undergraduate liberal arts experience that graduates teachers without any induction support into their chosen professions – makes the Hunter College School of Education worthy of the Christa McAuliffe award. Data must be rigorously collected and analyzed to inform the design, implementation, and assessment of our programs, and it has clearly told us that a transformational change is required. Our work has already begun and is showing dividends in the classrooms of New York City, proudly exemplifying the impact that dedicated teacher education programs can – and must – still have in improving P-12 student performance.