

Consortium for  
Educational  
Research and  
Evaluation—  
North  
Carolina

*Executive Summary of*

## North Carolina Teacher Corps

### Year One Implementation Report

*Authors:*

Robert Maser, Avril Smart, Trip Stallings, Daniel Stanhope, and  
LaTricia Townsend

The Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, North Carolina  
State University

*Contributors:*

Malinda Faber

The Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, North Carolina  
State University

Katherine Dufford-Melendez and Eric Howard

SERVE Center, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

November 2013

Consortium for  
Educational  
Research and  
Evaluation—  
North  
Carolina



# **NORTH CAROLINA TEACHER CORPS: YEAR ONE IMPLEMENTATION REPORT**

## **Executive Summary**

One of the most important goals of North Carolina's Race to the Top (RttT) proposal is to increase the access of students in the state's most challenging and lowest-achieving schools to effective teachers. The Consortium for Educational Research and Evaluation–North Carolina is evaluating North Carolina's use of RttT funds to develop a North Carolina Teacher Corps (NCTC) and to expand the presence of Teach for America (TFA) in the state. The evaluation's goals are to assess the extent to which these programs contribute to an increase in the presence of effective teachers in the high-need schools and Local Education Agencies (LEAs—North Carolina's term for traditional school districts and charter schools) targeted in the RttT proposal. This second report includes an analysis of quantitative and qualitative data gathered during the first year of the NCTC initiative and provides formative feedback to NCTC in support of its growth and improvement. Data related to the RttT-supported expansion of TFA in eastern North Carolina for school year 2012-13 were included in the previous report, and TFA data for school year 2013-14 will be included in the final report.

## ***Updated Observations and Findings: North Carolina Teacher Corps Recruitment, Training, and Employment***

### *Recruitment*

- In 2013, 1,010 people expressed interest in NCTC (up from 481 in 2012), and 226 submitted applications (up from 113). Of those 226, 108 were accepted (up from 42).
- Of the 108 selected, 84 completed the summer training and were eligible for employment—up from the 2012 total of 30 eligible for employment. Including five corps members enrolled mid-year (in Spring 2013, in between the 2012 and 2013 Summer Institutes), the total number of corps members for 2013-14 who were not in the original cohort is 89.
- Though recruitment numbers were up for the second cohort, NCTC still fell short of the stated goal in the revised North Carolina RttT scope of work to place 150 new teachers in high-need public schools by the start of the 2013-14 academic year.

### *Training and Ongoing Professional Development*

- Summer Institute training events about which Corps members were most positive included the in-class teaching experiences and small-group breakout sessions.
- Corps members recommended four changes for Summer Institute: (a) increasing the entire training period; (b) providing some in-class experiences ahead of the information-driven segments of their training, to provide context; (c) placing corps members in more challenging classrooms during training; and (d) including a segment on interviewing for teaching jobs.
- Non-corps member teachers and principals in employing schools generally were positive about the preparation levels of the corps members.

- Corps members unequivocally agreed that the ongoing support provided by NCTC leadership after they found employment was strong and responsive. In particular, they highlighted leadership's constructive feedback, resource provision, dedication, motivation, and overall positive attitude.
- Interviewed principals noted that several avenues of school-based support also are available for corps members, but corps member feedback about these support systems was mixed.

#### *Employment, Distribution, and Retention of Corps Members*

- Eleven of the 30 inaugural cohort corps members left the program either before securing employment or before completing their first year of teaching; however, five new corps members were brought on mid-year, and NCTC responded to the early departures with several new retention procedures.
- The number of eligible LEAs has grown from 17 to 30, and for 2013-14, 96 corps members (23 second-year and 73 first-year) are employed in 80 schools across 23 LEAs.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Initial Learnings: Reflections on the Inaugural Cohort Experience*

##### *Isolation*

- The rural and remote setting of some employing schools contributed to some corps members' feelings of isolation. Several corps members—as well as some early-career non-corps members—commuted so that they could live in less rural areas and/or closer to family.
- Corps members in smaller schools had fewer mentoring options, which left them feeling isolated and without support.
- Corps members in LEAs that employed more than one corps member indicated that such clustering helped reduce feelings of isolation and supported collaboration; one caveat, though, is that evidence from TFA experiences with clustering in eastern North Carolina (detailed in the first report) suggest that large school-level clusters (e.g., more than five corps members in the same school) may reduce corps member efforts to integrate.

##### *Integration*

- Several veteran teachers worked actively to support corps members' success in their schools, serving as mentors and providing both moral and teaching support.
- Several corps members connected easily with peers, students, and parents; however, a few were their schools' last hires, limiting opportunities to integrate into the school and community.
- Some corps members indicated that another challenging aspect of school integration was finding receptive audiences as new, lateral entry teachers for their ideas about teaching, particularly among veteran teachers.

---

<sup>1</sup> Figures updated through September 30, 2013; additional Cohort II corps members may have found employment for School Year 2013-14 after that date. Four of the LEAs in which corps members are employed for school year 2013-14 are not on NCTC's official eligibility list (Alleghany, Henderson, Lexington City, and Northampton).

*Teacher Quality*

- Principals from NCTC host schools generally agreed that classroom management was the most challenging aspect of instruction for corps members. Corps members concurred; they contended that their difficulties with behavior management were compounded by teaching in high-need schools and the complexities of incorporating differentiated teaching strategies. Early-career non-corps teachers in the same schools noted that the corps members with the most behavior management success were those who established highly-organized work environments.
- Most principals were hesitant to assess formally their corps members' instructional improvement across the year relative to the improvement of other beginning teachers, noting that it was still too early in their careers to provide accurate assessments. Many principals and non-corps teachers did note, however, that they were impressed by corps members' knowledge and their improvement in areas such as instructional strategies and delivery.

*Retention*

- Qualitative data suggest that one critical element for retention is a system of formal support networks. Specifically, corps members identified (a) employment in schools with encouraging and supportive environments and (b) the support and encouragement provided by NCTC staff as important components of this network.
- Several corps members indicated that the financial support NCTC provides corps members to complete their licensure programs also served as retention incentives.
- A few cohort members emphasized that ongoing uncertainty about their contracts and job security could negatively influence their decisions to stay.<sup>2</sup>

***Recommendations and Suggested Best Practices for North Carolina Teacher Corps***

Analysis of data from NCTC's first year suggests that several recommendations from the first report (Appendix I, main text) remain valid as NCTC enters its second year. This report includes extensions of and updates to those formative recommendations.

*Recruitment*

- *Make data-based refinements to the recruitment process:*
  - *Develop a stronger web-based presence.* For the second cohort, by far the largest group of employable corps members came from candidates who learned about NCTC via the Internet. NCTC should seek out ways to increase traffic to its web page—whether through creation of parallel social media websites, efforts to optimize search engine results for terms related to NCTC, or other means.
  - *Dedicate more resources to follow-ups with all who express interest.* The greatest drop-off in the recruitment process is between the group that expresses interest in the program

---

<sup>2</sup> Per NCGS 115c-325, all probationary teachers (teachers without three years of experience and local school board designation as a career-status teacher)—not just alternative licensure teachers—are subject to contract non-renewal.

and the group that eventually applies (Table 4, main text). Identifying ways to interact multiple times and through multiple media with those expressing interest may help improve the conversion of interest into applications.

- *Further refine the recruitment event site list.* Only 12 recruitment sites produced more than one employable corps member across two years (Table 1, main text). NCTC may want to consider significantly reducing the number of on-site recruitment events it attends in order to shift some of those resources to the most productive venues.
- *Revise strategies for low-yield but highly-selective schools.* The reduction suggested above should not be based solely on raw numbers, however; equally as important will be considerations of other NCTC goals, such as recruitment of the highest-caliber candidates. For example, NCTC may want to refine its approach at events with low yields but higher-caliber candidates by experimenting with new ways to improve yield at those events, rather than dropping the events altogether.
- *Incorporate current corps members into more of the recruitment process.* NCTC's efforts to convert interest into applications may be buoyed by providing more opportunities for interested candidates to interact with current corps members, both in person and virtually. The enthusiasm those corps members have for the program and for the NCTC staff's support has the potential to sway candidates who might otherwise have decided against submitting an application based on the information provided by staff and in recruitment materials alone. In addition to bringing current corps members to some recruitment events, when feasible, NCTC also could consider arranging for interested recruits to visit current corps member classrooms.
- *Digitize the application process.* Consider providing laptops or tablets at each recruitment event so that candidates can submit at least some of their registration information on-site. This added strategy also could help recruiters manage the occasional overflow of interested candidates—individuals with whom the recruiter is unable to engage can access the registration form and the NCTC website to review additional information.
- *Provide more information to recruits.* Consider enhancing the program's website and the paper materials provided at each event by including more detailed program information (such as the full list of participating LEAs and the employment locations of active corps members).
- *Expand recruitment staff.* To support these recommendations, consider hiring a dedicated recruitment specialist. This staff person can be responsible for maintaining the NCTC website, managing recruitment and cohort databases, supporting NCTC retention efforts, exploring ways to expand recruitment year-round, and improving recruitment targeting.

#### *Summer Institute and Ongoing Training*

- *Seek sponsors for summer stipends.* Pursue sponsorship for stipends or paid internships for corps members to help defray corps member income lost as a result of participation in the institute. Such support also might enhance the possibility of extending Summer Institute, as recommended in the first report.
- *Continue to enhance the summer practicum experience.* Continue to adjust the Summer Institute practicum experience so that it more closely reflects the school environments in which most corps members will find employment. In addition to recommendations included

in the first report, NCTC also should consider: incorporating during-practicum sessions that extend instruction on topics of particular importance to corps members and their potential employers, such as techniques for better classroom management and for meeting the needs of students with special needs; and pairing new corps members with veteran corps members for at least some portion of their summer practicum experience.

- *Establish an online community.* As an extension of the recommendations in the first report related to the development of a larger online presence, create an online forum to support corps member interaction, resource-sharing, and reflection. The forum could provide a low-cost option for enhancing corps members' capacity development through provision of an e-community of practice, reduction of feelings of isolation, enhancement of corps member cohesion, and closer monitoring of corps member progress and needs.

### *Employment*

Data from the first year of implementation suggest that several recommendations from the first report—(1) de-emphasizing corps members' preferences with respect to the LEAs in which they would prefer to teach, (2) consulting with programs with goals similar to those of NCTC to identify additional employment strategies, and (3) targeting schools and LEAs that demonstrate a capacity for supporting corps members and their development (Appendix I, main text)—continue to apply.

### *In-School Support*

- *Increase support staff.* As the size of the cohorts increases each year, NCTC will need a staff large enough to provide coverage and support during each phase of the program. Staff expansion can help ensure that corps members continue to receive the level of support so highly valued by members of the first cohort.
- *Expand site visits.* In addition to helping NCTC to establish a stronger presence at each school and to develop more school-level relationships that increase program support, extended visits also may help NCTC leverage more direct administrative and peer teacher support for corps members and increase the chances that NCTC can identify warning signs that corps members are considering leaving the program and leaving their schools.
- *Support corps member school and LEA integration.* NCTC should experiment with ways to help encourage corps member development of on-site peer relations. One option may be to provide strategies and opportunities that can help them learn how to integrate quickly into their new school communities, such as staff facilitation of in-depth school and LEA visits for groups of new corps members who have found employment in the same area. Finding opportunities for successful first cohort corps members to share their experiences may be particularly helpful as well.
- *Plan for 2014.* Begin to prepare for the end of the first cohort's second year by identifying strategies to encourage corps members to stay for a third year of teaching, whether at their current schools, somewhere else in their current LEAs, or even somewhere else in the state that can benefit from the presence of an NCTC teacher in the classroom.

**Contact Information:**

Please direct all inquiries to Trip Stallings, Friday Institute, NCSU  
[dtstalli@ncsu.edu](mailto:dtstalli@ncsu.edu)

© 2013 Consortium for Educational Research and Evaluation–North Carolina



Carolina Institute  
for Public Policy



THE UNIVERSITY  
of NORTH CAROLINA  
at CHAPEL HILL

