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Executive Summary of

North Carolina Teacher Corps Start-Up and Teach for America Expansion

Initial Findings on Recruitment, Training, and
Employment

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NORTH CAROLINA TEACHER CORPS START-UP AND TEACH FOR AMERICA EXPANSION: INITIAL FINDINGS ON RECRUITMENT, TRAINING, AND EMPLOYMENT

Executive Summary

The Consortium for Educational Research and Evaluation–North Carolina is evaluating North Carolina’s use of Race to the Top (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 high-need schools and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) targeted in the RttT proposal. This first report presents baseline measures for future evaluations of NCTC, describes early results of TFA’s expansion under RttT via its Eastern North Carolina (TFA-ENC) chapter, and provides formative feedback to NCTC in support of its growth and improvement.

Initial Observations and Findings: North Carolina Teacher Corps

Recruitment

- NCTC participated in 20 recruitment events across the state between February and June, 2012. Five of these events each attracted interest from 30 or more potential recruits, with the highest numbers at the Research Triangle Park National Career Fair (61) and an East Carolina University event (60).
- In all, 441 of the 481 candidates expressing interest came from the 20 recruitment events, and 113 eventually applied.
- Forty-two of the 113 applicants were invited to attend the inaugural NCTC Summer Institute, 34 of whom attended; of those 34, 29 remained in the program for the start of the 2012-13 school year.
- Almost 90% of the inaugural NCTC cohort attended North Carolina colleges or universities, in line with the program’s goal to recruit in-state individuals.
- Recruitment for 2013-14 began in September 2012 and will include two acceptance dates: December 2012 and March 2013.

Inaugural Summer Institute

- The NCTC Summer Institute took place over three weeks, with an initial three-day training session followed by a two-week in-school practicum. The Institute concluded with a one-day follow-up training session.
- The three-day training session provided corps members with training on state policies, the state’s new Common Core and Essential Standards, and basic pedagogy.

NCTC Start-Up and TFA Expansion

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- The in-school practicum paired corps members with practicing teachers in year-round schools. NCTC also provided periodic after-hours Round Table meetings during the practicum period, during which issues and concerns raised by corps members were addressed.
- During their practicum experiences, corps members indicated that the Summer Institute was beneficial overall, but that both the training sessions and the practicum were too short, with a need for additional guidance and training on lesson-planning and subject-specific pedagogy.

Employment and Distribution of Corps Members (2012-13)

- For the 2012-13 school year, NCTC fell short of its first-year goal of securing employment for 100 new corps members in high-need schools not served by TFA.
- To date, 22 of the 29 NCTC corps members have secured employment in 9 of the 18 eligible school districts.
- Two corps members are in RttT District and School Transformation (DST) schools, 17 are in LEAs with RttT DST schools, and 3 are in an LEA with a history of high teacher turnover.

Characteristics of Past and Current Eastern North Carolina Teach for America Corps Members

- In total, TFA placed or retained 157 corps members in Eastern North Carolina at the beginning of school year 2011-12, and 219 corps members at the beginning of 2012-13.
- For the 2010-11, 2011-12, and 2012-13 school years, RttT funds helped TFA-ENC meet its overall goal for growth in Eastern North Carolina—TFA-ENC supported 20, 90, and 115 of its total number of corps members in those three years with RttT funds.
- Since 2008, about 87% of TFA-ENC corps members have completed two full years of teaching; however, the retention rate for the 2010 cohort (84%) was somewhat lower than the rate for the two preceding cohorts.
- TFA-ENC corps members who are dismissed or depart early do not appear to be different than those who stay in terms of GPA, leadership potential, or undergraduate institution selectivity.
- Between 2011 and 2012, TFA-ENC increased the number of corps members intentionally placed in school-level “pods” (clusters of three or more teachers); TFA-ENC formed pods in 21 of 44 participating schools in 2011-12, and in 33 of 51 participating schools in 2012-13.

Recommendations and Suggested Best Practices for North Carolina Teacher Corps

Recruitment

- *Expand the use of Internet recruitment tools.* NCTC should consider providing recruits with immediate access to application materials at career fairs, and it should explore supplementing face-to-face recruitment with Internet-based and other social networking strategies.
- *Customize recruitment activities for multiple audiences.* To date, NCTC’s approach to recruitment has been similar for each event, even though the potential candidates who attend them are different; NCTC should make efforts to adjust its recruitment approach from event

to event to reflect these differences. In addition, NCTC should develop discussion points (to accompany current recruitment materials) that help set expectations for candidates with respect to both the opportunities and the challenges they will face in targeted schools.

- *Develop relationships with recruitment event sponsors and hosts.* Event sponsors or others on campus with ties to campus organizations and student groups that share values similar to those of NCTC may be good ongoing resources for corps member recruitment. Such relationships can result in extending recruitment to opportunities beyond the career fairs.

Summer Institute

- *Extend and expand the Summer Institute.* As budget, recruitment, and partnering allow, NCTC should consider beginning Summer Institute earlier in the summer to allow for more time to: (a) cover in greater depth the mechanics of teaching (e.g., lesson planning); (b) extend modules so that they can better model effective teaching practices; and (c) extend each corps member's practicum experience.
- *Offer pre-Summer Institute in-school experiences.* Arranging informal observation time in schools for corps members before the Summer Institute begins—something now possible because of NCTC's earlier recruitment calendar—will provide important context and help set expectations for corps members as they transition to Summer Institute and their schools.
- *Seek Summer Institute partnerships.* An arrangement in which NCTC conducts part of its Summer Institute in partnership with other new teacher summer training and induction programs has the potential to (a) reduce costs, (b) pool intellectual resources and expertise, and (c) support the development of a larger, statewide network of first-year teachers.

Employment

- *Dedicate more resources to multiple components of the employment process.* As time and resources allow, NCTC should: (a) consider de-emphasizing corps member LEA preference as a criterion in the employment process; (b) increase the amount of information provided to corps members about the employment process; and (c) consult with other programs to identify additional strategies for promoting individual corps members for specific positions.
- *Target schools and LEAs that demonstrate a capacity for supporting corps members and their development, and provide additional support for corps members in schools that do not.* Ideal employment settings are host schools with cultures or structures that facilitate a sense of community and integration for all staff members. In addition, NCTC should investigate ways to provide corps members with techniques for successful school integration, both prior to employment and throughout their first year of teaching.
- *Monitor closely the experiences of corps members employed in schools at which no other corps members are employed.* TFA-ENC focus group data indicate that, in some cases, corps member isolation may negatively impact retention. Expansion of social networking tool use may help.
- *Attempt to fit school-level cohort size to school, LEA, and corps member needs.* Evidence from TFA-ENC focus groups suggests that an optimal number of corps members at a single school is between three and five—larger clusters (or “pods”) hinder healthy integration of corps members into the larger school community, and small pods may not support retention goals.

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