

Investing in Residencies, Improving Schools:

How Principals Can Fund Better Teaching and Learning

Executive Summary



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What if co-teaching were the norm inside the K-12 school system, and students progressed through their educational experiences with the kind of targeted support and individualized instruction made possible by having two instructors in the classroom? What if, instead of trial by fire, new teachers had the opportunity to practice with and benefit from the expertise of a more experienced mentor for an entire year? Sound like a pipedream? Hardly. It turns out such models are far more feasible than they first appear, especially when designed in partnership with teacher preparation programs.

In our work across the country, the Sustainable Funding Project (SFP) at Bank Street College has found many examples of efforts to improve teacher preparation for aspiring teachers by creating year-long co-teaching opportunities, referred to here as residencies. Conversations with leaders from districts and from teacher preparation programs, as well as with teachers themselves, reveal a widely shared recognition that extended, supported clinical practice is key to ensuring new teachers enter the classroom ready to meet the complex challenges of the job. Yet despite such widespread agreement, year-long residencies are not the norm. Many residency programs have been developed around the country, but their longevity is typically tied to the availability of external funding sources, such as public or private grants. When grants end, partnerships have been challenged to fund their innovative and promising models in sustainable ways. As a result, one of the best approaches to improving teachers' knowledge and skills has an almost endless list of once strong, now closed programs. Programs that have ongoing funding are typically small, boutique-style options that do not reach the vast majority of aspiring teachers.

Perhaps the most challenging component of a residency program for district-provider partnerships to fund is the financial stipend or other form of support for aspiring teachers during their full-time clinical practice experience. As we explored in *For the Public Good: Quality Preparation for Every Teacher*, providing support to

aspiring teachers is essential in order to ensure strong, diverse candidates are able to dedicate themselves to learning and development. This report examines the potential for K-12 schools to fund these committed co-teachers through creative resource reallocation, and shares one example of how doing so contributes to a strong, collaborative school culture with wide-ranging benefits.

A year-long co-teaching model offers great promise for developing strong, well-prepared teachers, as well as positively impacting student learning. Bullis Charter School (BCS), an innovative charter school in California, has found ways to support a co-teaching model inside its classrooms for well over a decade. Upon hearing about the work of the SFP, BCS invited us into their classrooms to learn about their Associate Teacher (AT) program, a co-teaching position for novice teachers. Though the school hires fully credentialed teachers into AT positions, the structures in place that enable it to do so also apply to pre-service, residency-style positions, and the staffing strategies they've adopted offer ideas for other school leaders to explore. Of course, our education system is driven by local contexts, and there are often key contextual differences between public charter schools and traditional district public schools. So while we do not assume that what works at BCS will necessarily work in every other school, the model offers lessons that may be applicable to other traditional public school contexts.

To explore how the fiscal and staffing models inside BCS might translate to other schools, we analyzed public school finance and staff data in California. California has a wealth of transparent funding data from which we imputed school-level budget estimates for two hypothetical district public schools. Both of our hypothetical schools were imagined to enroll the same number of students as does Bullis Charter School, in kindergarten through the eighth grade; one of these hypothetical schools was assumed to serve relatively low-need students, aligned with the demographics of students at BCS. The other hypothetical school was assumed to enroll a much higher proportion of disadvantaged students. Our goal was to examine the relative feasibility of funding co-teaching positions through dollars one might expect inside traditional public schools serving different student populations.

It turns out, finding resources to support co-teaching is probably more feasible than commonly believed. Whether considering the total portion of a school's budget that could be reallocated towards co-teaching after essential classroom teachers are taken into account, or by using the portion of the budget that typically funds instructional support or instructional supervision functions, our analyses indicate that traditional public schools could conceivably support pre-service residency positions by reallocating a relatively small portion of their budgets. Such reallocation could be facilitated through creative staffing strategies, such as those employed inside BCS and described in this report.

Efforts to grow residency programs will require additional shifts in approach and resource decisions from teacher preparation providers and district central offices, but we hope the analyses and staffing descriptions provided here might spur a sense of possibility for this core element of teacher residencies – compensation for candidates during their full-time co-teaching year. If school and district

leaders and their teacher preparation partners have an understanding of school-level funding strategies to support residents, they can focus their conversations on how their partnerships can ensure high quality experiences throughout programs' trajectories, potentially growing numbers of funded pre-service residencies for our nation's aspiring teachers.