

Journal of Teacher Education

<http://jte.sagepub.com>

The Boston Teacher Residency: District-Based Teacher Education

Jesse Solomon

Journal of Teacher Education 2009; 60; 478

DOI: 10.1177/0022487109349915

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://jte.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/60/5/478>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



[American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education \(AACTE\)](#)

Additional services and information for *Journal of Teacher Education* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://jte.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://jte.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations <http://jte.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/60/5/478>

The Boston Teacher Residency: District-Based Teacher Education

Journal of Teacher Education
60(5) 478–488
© SAGE Publications 2009
Reprints and permission: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>
DOI: 10.1177/0022487109349915
<http://jte.sagepub.com>



Jesse Solomon¹

Abstract

This article describes an effort to create a coherent teacher recruitment, preparation and induction program in a large urban school district, based in part on the medical residency model. The article argues for several core principles in the creation of such a program: a) the program serves the school district, b) the program is structured to blend theory and practice, c) the program emphasizes the selection, recruitment and support of the mentor teacher and treats the mentors as teacher educators, d) the program creates an aligned set of induction supports which extend for the first three years of the new teacher's career, e) the program treats student achievement as its ultimate outcome.

Keywords

urban schools, beginning teacher recruitment, teacher preparation, new teacher induction, teacher residencies, teacher education

Introduction

This article describes the Boston Teacher Residency (BTR), a comprehensive teacher recruitment, preparation, and induction program created by and housed in an urban school district, the Boston Public Schools (BPS). By identifying core principles underlying the design and implementation of BTR and explicating those principles through descriptions of key program components, the article argues for an integrated, district-based approach to teacher education.

Background

In early 2003, a private Boston foundation, Strategic Grant Partners (SGP), posed a simple question to then BPS Superintendent Dr. Thomas Payzant: What is a problem you are unable to fix with the resources you have? Dr. Payzant answered that pipeline of teachers into the BPS was not filling the district's needs. First, although BPS did not have a teacher shortage in terms of absolute numbers, the district was not attracting teachers in its areas of highest need: mathematics, science, special education, and teachers of English language learners. Second, BPS was attempting to diversify its teaching force, yet the vast majority of the applicants were White. Finally, BPS regularly lost half of its new teachers within their first 3 years. Dr. Payzant wanted to build the capacity within the district to recruit, prepare, and induct its own teachers, and thus yield greater control of its teacher pipeline. These conversations led to the creation of the Boston Teacher Residency.

BTR is an effort by an urban school district to drive teacher preparation and development, making the district the producer and not just the consumer of new teachers. The efforts described in this article all focus on figuring out how to make such an effort work best for an urban district. BTR draws on a number of exemplary practices from the field of teacher education in its program design, many of which will be familiar to the reader. This article will argue for the efficacy of harnessing a broad and coherent set of these practices in and for an urban school district.

Program Overview

BTR's mission is to recruit, prepare, and sustain excellent teachers in and for the Boston Public Schools. Since its launch in 2003, BTR has prepared more than 250 BPS teachers. BTR is currently preparing 75 teachers per year and plans to grow to prepare 120 teachers per year, which represents an estimated 30% of the total teachers Boston hires each year.

BTR locates teacher preparation in classrooms rather than in the academy. BTR is highly selective and recruits talented and committed people from diverse backgrounds who want to be urban teachers. These aspiring teachers, called Teacher Residents, spend a full school year working with a skilled,

¹ Boston Teacher Residency

Corresponding Author:

Jesse Solomon, Boston Teacher Residency
Email: jsolomon@bpe.org

experienced Mentor teacher (who is also trained and supported by BTR) in a BPS classroom 4 days each week. BTR clusters cohorts of Residents in host schools that have applied to serve as BTR preparation sites. BTR hires half-time, school-based Site Directors, who are themselves excellent veteran teachers or instructional coaches, to supervise Residents and Mentors. Residents participate in a curriculum, tailored to becoming a teacher in Boston, on Fridays, after school, and in summer sessions before and after the school year. During the preparation year, Residents earn a Massachusetts Initial Teacher License in their primary academic content area, partial credit toward dual licensure in special education or English as a Second Language, which they complete the following year, and a master's degree in education from the University of Massachusetts/Boston. During this year, Residents receive a modest living stipend to help defray living expenses and incur no cost for the degree or licensure; in return, they commit to teach for at least 3 years in the BPS. BTR continues to support its graduates for at least their first 3 years as teacher of record, helping them develop from novice teacher to teacher-leader with the goal of building a critical mass of like-minded, effective teachers equipped to bolster school and district improvement efforts.

Outcomes

In its first seven cohorts, more than half of all BTR Residents have been people of color and more than half of all middle and high school Residents teach in the high-needs areas of mathematics and science. BTR has placed more than 95% of all graduating Residents in BPS teaching jobs. BTR graduates are being retained at an 86% rate within the BPS over their first 3 years, compared to a 53% rate overall for BPS teachers. In a recent survey, principals/headmasters considered 88% of their BTR-prepared teachers as or more effective overall than other first-year teachers at their school and considered the majority (55%) to be "significantly more effective."

In what follows, this article first briefly lays out the context for the work described herein: (a) the alternative certification movement, which provides a backdrop for BTR, and (b) the major influences on the structure of BTR. The article then describes the organizational and financial structures underlying BTR, including its relationship with the BPS, its licensure status and university partnership, its own internal organizational structure, the program's financing, and the financial arrangement for Teacher Residents. The bulk of the article takes up a set of core principles and uses descriptions of various program components to illustrate these principles. The first of these sections describes the importance of BTR's positioning as part of and in service to the BPS; the program's recruitment and admissions component is used as an illustration. The second section focuses on BTR's blend of theory and practice and details the preparation

component. The third section focuses on the importance of Residents' learning alongside an experienced, trained Mentor teacher. The fourth section focuses on BTR's belief that teacher development extends beyond the preparation year and describes the induction program for graduates. The fifth and final of these sections makes a case for the centrality of student achievement in BTR's work. The article concludes with some observations about the potential for BTR to serve as a driver of change in the school district and a call for future work that closely ties school district improvement and teacher preparation.

Context

Alternative Certification Movement

The alternative certification movement in the United States dates back roughly 25 years. Although it would be a mistake to characterize the movement as monolithic, and there is no single definition of alternative certification, the movement has capitalized on disenchantment with the teacher education system. Criticisms of university-based teacher education, including accusations of low admission standards and meaningless coursework, led to a call for deregulation of pathways to the classroom. Proponents argue that the way to increase the flow of qualified teachers into our nation's classrooms is to remove as many of the unnecessary barriers that licensure and university teacher education programs represent. Most alternative certification programs are characterized by an accelerated route to the classroom, often consisting of a summer component before a candidate begins to serve as teacher of record (Tom, 2000). Nearly one in five new teachers in the United States now comes through an alternative route. The evidence on whether alternatively certified teachers are any better than those who enter through a traditional route is not conclusive in either direction (Walsh & Jacobs, 2007).

BTR does not position itself as part of the alternative certification movement. Rather, it is based on a lengthier apprenticeship model coupled with intense coursework. However, it is important to see BTR within the context of this movement because the alternative certification movement has opened up the field of teacher preparation, allowing a district to get into the teacher preparation business. The alternative certification movement arose to question whether teacher preparation mattered. BTR does not question the need for preparation, but rather seeks to find better ways to recruit and prepare the teachers we so desperately need.

Program Influences

Much of what BTR does has been adopted or influenced by effective teacher education practices. BTR is not based on one particular model or approach but has drawn on a large variety of people and practices. This article does not attempt to include each reference or influence; what follows are just a few of the

approaches and practices reflected in BTR's design. A major influence on the program, as will be obvious to the reader, has been the Professional Development School movement. BTR was also influenced early on by the school-based teacher preparation program at the Shady Hill School in Cambridge, MA. It has adapted practices such as the Rounds process used at Clark University in Worcester, MA; the descriptive review process developed at the Prospect Center in Vermont; and the critical friends group work pioneered by the Annenberg Institute and carried on by the National School Reform Faculty. It is influenced by the ideas and actions of educators like Deborah Ball, Lisa Delpit, Bob Moses, and many others.

Clinical education traditions in other professions also influence BTR's design and practices. Gary Bellow, a lawyer and Harvard Law School professor who designed and ran a model clinical program for law students at the Legal Services Center in Boston, argued for the need to create an environment that allows for "reflective, self-taught practice in a pressured real world setting." He asserted that "students have to learn to be taught by the experienced without being overwhelmed by them" (Bellow, 1975). BTR aims to facilitate its Teacher Residents' learning in similar ways. The urgent requirements of the day to day drive Residents' learning, as they work in the company of expert practitioners and have room to reflect and improve individually. The program's aim is to come to theory and research through the questions, reflections, and hypotheses that emerge from practice. The challenge is to capture this balance and facilitate the constant negotiation and blending of theory and practice.

Organizational Description

Organizational Structure

From the outset, BTR was created as a BPS program, a relationship that fundamentally affects the nature of the program. Rather than viewing Teacher Residents as its clients, BTR sees the students and families of Boston as its ultimate clients. This structure changes the way everyone involved with the program conceptualizes the accountability, incentives, responsibilities, goals, and possibilities for change associated with BTR, as well as its everyday workings.

BTR sits in a "one-foot-in-one-foot-out" structure, straddling the school district and a local nonprofit organization. BTR was set up to report to BPS's deputy superintendent for teaching and learning, at that time Tim Knowles, who had been instrumental in launching the program. BTR has a formal contract with the district covering critical issues such as financing, job placement, and leadership. At the same time, BTR is housed within the Boston Plan for Excellence (BPE), Boston's local public education foundation. Superintendent Payzant made BPE the fiscal and managing agent of BTR from its inception. He knew how hard it would be to start up an organization within the school system's bureaucracy. BPE, under the leadership of Ellen Guiney, had for years

served both as a critical friend to the district and as an incubator for innovation, piloting new ideas for eventual adoption by the district. This one-foot-in-one-foot-out structure has been critical in BTR's development, allowing it to serve as a district program while remaining flexible enough to experiment and innovate in its development.

Licensure and University Partnership

In the wake of Massachusetts's 1993 Education Reform Act, the state Department of Education deregulated pathways to teacher licensure, allowing school districts and nonprofit organizations to serve as licensing agents. The BPS, through BTR, is an approved Massachusetts teacher preparation program, having demonstrated alignment with and coverage of the state standards, just like any university program. As an approved program, BTR recommends candidates for licensure directly to the Department of Education. Because of this authority, BTR has been able to build and tailor its curriculum to the district's work and the district's needs. BTR has partnered with the Graduate College of Education at the University of Massachusetts/Boston to enable Residents to earn a master's degree through the program. While BTR runs the full program, BTR and UMass have negotiated a relationship in which BTR courses are approved by the university and Residents can earn credit and a degree for successful completion of the courses.

Internal Structure

BTR is composed of four key departments: (a) Recruitment/Admissions, (b) Field, (c) Curriculum, and (d) Induction. The Field department oversees all work in the school placement sites, primarily through the work of BTR Field Directors who supervise school-based Site Directors (see the following section for further description of the Site Director role). The Curriculum Director oversees the development and implementation of all coursework, including hiring and supervising all course instructors. The Induction Director oversees all support for Residents once they graduate BTR and work as teachers in the BPS. The Induction Director hires and supervises school-based coaches and course instructors who work with program graduates.

Funding

As mentioned previously, BTR received an initial grant from SGP, which supported BTR's full activities for a start-up period and the first 2 years of operation. At the time of this grant, BPS entered into an agreement with SGP and BPE that gave the school district a 2-year window in which to support and assess the program. If the district wanted to continue the program, it committed to contribute an increasing percentage of the funding over the following years. BPS decided to continue and expand BTR after the 2-year period, and

currently BPS's commitment is to support half of BTR's costs. In addition to BPS's support, BTR receives support from government and foundation sources. BTR is an AmeriCorps program; Residents receive a modest living stipend, health insurance, and an Education Award upon successful completion of the program.

Resident Financial Arrangement

Residents sign a contract with BTR when they begin the program committing them to teach in BPS for at least 3 years following graduation. BTR charges \$10,000 tuition for its program, but automatically loans Residents that full amount upon entrance to the program. One third of the loan is forgiven for each year the BTR graduate teaches in BPS; thus, a graduate who completes his or her 3-year commitment pays no tuition to BTR.

BTR Core Principles and Program Description

This section lays out the core principles behind BTR's structure and uses descriptions of the various program components to illustrate these principles in action.

BTR Serves the BPS: BTR Recruitment and Admissions

BTR is a BPS program; it is designed and operates to serve BPS. It makes decisions based on what is best for the district, and specifically for the district's children and families. The bottom-line mission to serve BPS influences every aspect of BTR's operation, from the way it recruits and selects Residents, to its preparation of those Residents, to the support it provides after graduation. This section explicates the notion of a program serving a school district through a description of the program's recruitment and selection process, though this theme recurs in later sections as well.

BTR works closely with BPS's Office of Human Resources (OHR) to ensure that it targets, attracts, and selects the candidates who will best meet the district's needs. OHR provides BTR with explicit instructions detailing the desired make-up of the next cohort of Residents. BTR then recruits and admits a cohort in accordance with the district's needs, aiming to recruit and prepare the high-needs teachers the district will hire the following year. BTR functions, in essence, as a component of BPS's overall recruitment program. This relationship means that BTR's recruitment efforts are aimed at securing a cohort with a specific make-up (i.e., with a certain percentage of secondary math teachers) and that its efforts cannot just be focused on individuals. Each year BTR turns down exceptional candidates with potential to be great teachers because they will not help BPS fill its projected teaching vacancies. BTR must be able to alter and adjust its recruitment

methods and emphases year to year in order to be responsive to the district.

Because of its goal of recruiting diverse cohorts with backgrounds in high-needs areas, BTR recruits broadly, at colleges and career fairs, on public service Web sites, and in churches, community centers, local businesses, and corporations. BTR cohorts range in age from 21 to 65, include at least 51% people of color, and represent a broad variety of work and life experiences. BTR believes that the cohort's diversity contributes to each Resident's learning and desire to stay in Boston. The diversity fosters learning about issues of race and class, approaches to an academic content area, and building and maintaining a strong support system to keep people in teaching. BTR has learned from successful recruits that the opportunity to be part of such a cohort during the preparation year and in the initial years as BPS teachers is an important factor for applicants considering BTR.

BTR's applicant selection process centers on a core set of dispositions and experiences that are intended to be predictive of successful teaching in the BPS. These qualifications are based on the district's Dimensions of Effective Teaching (described in a following section) and BTR's learnings about the backgrounds of successful candidates. Applicants who make it to the finalist stage are invited to an all-day selection process at a BTR host school. Applicants complete a series of performance tasks before a variety of BTR raters: Mentor teachers, school and district administrators, BTR graduates, colleagues in community-based agencies, and students. Finalists teach a mini-lesson to a group of students, engage in a group problem-solving activity, are interviewed twice, complete a live writing sample about a classroom observation, and take a mathematics assessment (for elementary candidates). BTR does not accept an applicant until program staff and members of the school and district communities have observed and rated the applicant action in a real school with real children. All raters seek to assess whether an applicant has the potential to be an excellent teacher who will stay in the BPS; a candidate who does not persuade the raters on both issues is not accepted.

BTR is explicit with potential Residents: BTR's clients are the children and families of Boston, not the Residents themselves. While some Residents are taken aback when they first hear the message that "it's not about you," it sets an important tone in the program. This relationship presents a contrast to the traditional relationship between a candidate and a teacher preparation program in which the client is the candidate. In most teacher preparation programs, candidates pay tuition, go through the program, and receive a degree and licensure at the end. The transaction is largely between the teacher preparation program and its candidates. BTR recruits, prepares, and supports teachers only to further the goals of the district, to enable all BPS students to achieve at high levels. BTR recruits the people it judges to be best for Boston, attempts to make the program affordable so that BTR can enroll the

best candidates regardless of their financial situations, and provides the best preparation it can—all so that Boston's students will have good teachers. If BTR were to fail to serve the district's goals, it would be discontinued.

Even after admission to BTR, the preparation year serves as an extended job interview for Residents and hence functions as a continuation of the recruitment process. Residents are closely scrutinized, and their performance during this year often determines their job prospects the following year. Because BTR aims to prepare BPS teachers whose students make significant academic gains, the program has a tight accountability loop with BPS principals, OHR, and the district as a whole. When BTR Residents interview for jobs, the principals are on the phone with each other and with BTR staff to learn as much as possible about the Resident. If a BTR graduate is not doing well as a BPS teacher, BTR hears about it immediately. That teacher's principal not only calls the program, but also talks to other principals and district administrators. BTR lives and dies on the reputation of its graduates within the BPS and has a strong incentive to ensure it provides teachers that schools and principals want. Each year, BTR dismisses people from the program for underperformance. Although the program goes to great lengths to ensure that Residents are successful, it is firmly committed to putting forth and sticking to a clear definition of acceptable performance.

In a similar vein, BTR Mentor teachers report having different expectations and standards for BTR Residents than they may have had for student teachers from local universities. Mentors have reported that in their past work with other programs, when a student teacher was not meeting standards, there was little incentive for the cooperating practitioner to raise the issue and invite the extra work and hassle to ensure that the person either developed the necessary teacher competencies or was dismissed from the program. BTR Mentors report that they know they are helping to prepare their future colleagues. BTR Mentors say they are tougher on BTR residents because the Resident might be teaching their students next year or the students in the grade level below them. BTR Mentors want to make sure they are only sending off teachers they would want teaching next door. The various checks on BTR Resident and graduate performance serve as a constant source of accountability and program improvement.

BTR Blends Theory and Practice: The Residency Year

This section begins with an introduction to the idea of blending theory and practice in BTR and a note about the importance of the cohort model, then contains brief descriptions of the curriculum and classroom placement components of the program, and concludes with a specific example to illustrate this principle of blending theory and practice. BTR's mentoring component is referred to in this section and is expanded on in the following section.

BTR has worked to create a curriculum that is enacted coherently across the classroom placement and coursework components of the program and that strikes a careful balance between these two components. It grounds Residents' preparation in the classrooms of effective urban teachers and at the same time ensures that Residents are part of an ongoing set of broad conversations about effective teaching and do not simply replicate their Mentor teachers' practices (Grossman, 1991). One of the historical criticisms of teacher preparation is that there is a split between theory and practice, that the university teacher educator and the cooperating practitioner advocate conflicting practices while the candidate is left to make sense of this schism. BTR has purposely moved away from a model of course instructor as the primary teacher educator. BTR hires instructors whose careers and experiences represent a blend of theory and practice: a literacy coach with a doctorate in language acquisition, for example, or a professor at a local university who has been an urban special education teacher. BTR structures a complex series of yearlong conversations between Residents, course instructors, Mentor teachers, Site Directors, and program staff; BTR conceives of the people in each of these roles as teacher educators (Bartunek, 1990; Feiman-Nemser, 1998). Everyone involved in BTR is expected to work to join theory and practice, to wrestle with core questions about maximizing student learning for all students (Berry & Norton, 2006; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Hiebert, Gallimore, & Stigler, 2002). The people in each of those roles take responsibility for contributing to the development of the Residents toward a common vision of effective teaching. In turn, BTR both supports and holds the people in these roles accountable for this work. The many teacher educators working with each Resident spend significant time and effort communicating with one another about the program's common set of competencies and about the development of each individual Resident toward those competencies (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992). The program has a responsibility not only to present diverse viewpoints and perspectives to Residents, but also to provide mechanisms for the Resident to make sense of the viewpoints held by the many teacher educators he or she encounters. The Mentor teacher needs to be in regular conversation with the course instructor, for example, so that they are both involved in supporting the Resident to shape a philosophy and approach to teaching.

Another thread running across the design of the program is that each BTR Resident is part of several cohorts. The Residents are first part of a cohort that contains the whole group; BTR brings the entire class together regularly and intentionally structures some core courses to include all Residents, across grade levels and content areas. Residents are also part of more intimate cohorts within their school placement. Upon graduation, Residents join with the BTR of graduates from years past who are teaching across the BPS. BTR believes that this membership in multiple communities is a key factor

in Resident learning and in their longevity as teachers (Beck & Kosnik, 2001; Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001; Lieberman & Wood, 2001; Rust & Orland, 2001; Seifert & Mandzuk, 2006; Westheimer, 1998). The opportunity to come together in a structured way with other practitioners has been significant in many Residents' growth. As one BTR graduate described,

To be in a group of teachers who were passionate about teaching and believed in the same thing was powerful. Residents and Instructors were open to ideas that we [Residents] had. BTR created and sustained a mantra within us that we are all in it for the kids. We're not in it for other things. You can have a great program on paper but the residency cohort experience was really valuable . . . hearing Residents and Mentors talk about their practice and trying something out and figuring out why you failed.

Curriculum. Residents begin their coursework with a 2-month intensive session that starts in the July before the school year. Courses continue throughout the year all day on Fridays and one afternoon per week, and Residents have a full month of courses in the July following the school year.

The BTR curriculum was developed backward starting from a key question: What set of dispositions, skills, and habits does a BTR graduate need to be an effective teacher in the BPS? To help answer this question and to create a program whose structure and curriculum are well aligned with its outcomes, BTR began by developing a clear vision of what a BPS teacher should be able to do and used that vision to backwards plan the program. Such a vision did not exist when BTR was launched, so BTR embarked upon its own competency development process. BTR surveyed the field and developed a set of core teaching competencies that represented the research community's consensus on competencies aligned to effective teaching as well as BTR and BPS's specific values. BTR designed and chose courses, experiences, assignments, and readings that were most likely to help Residents achieve a level of competence in each of the core teaching areas. The curriculum has three main strands: equity, inquiry, and community. Residents (and Mentors) are all taught a simple cycle of inquiry that serves as a common tool for the analysis and use of data across the program. Residents complete portfolios over the course of the year with entries tied to each competency, modeled loosely after the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards process. BTR's curriculum includes specific attention to the district's instructional initiatives. A middle school math teacher who goes through BTR will take part in a broad exploration of the content and pedagogies associated with teaching mathematics and will also become familiar with the specific math curriculum BPS uses in its schools. BTR aims to graduate teachers who on their first day are already well versed in the curriculum

they will be teaching and may be able to focus on some of the many other challenges of the first year of teaching.

BTR uses the competency framework to align the areas of study across its courses and classroom placement activities. Although there is much that is unpredictable about a classroom or a graduate course, BTR developed a hypothetical learning trajectory around the eight competencies. As an example, Residents are asked to focus on the *Safe, Respectful, and Culturally Sensitive and Responsive Learning Communities* competency at the beginning of the school year. Each course that Residents are enrolled in addresses this competency, each Mentor and Resident pair looks at aspects of the competency, and each Site Director guides learning experiences in the school-based cohort designed to deepen Resident's understanding in this area. BTR assesses each Resident's progress each month and a special emphasis is given to the most recent focus competency. As good teaching requires attention to many variables at the same time, the purpose of this focus competency is not to oversimplify practice but to allow Residents the room and guidance to add to their repertoire in an intentional and explicit manner.

The Classroom Placement. The core of BTR's teacher preparation program is a full-year "residency" in a BPS school, working closely full-time 4 days per week with a BTR-trained and -supported Mentor teacher in his or her classroom. Residents are placed in host schools in clusters of six or more. Residents begin their placement the week before schools starts, though many have started working with their Mentors as early as the previous June, and Residents are in the school Monday through Thursday full-time until the last day of school. Residents work with classes of students for an entire year; it is critical that they do not miss, for example, the crucial first days of school in which the foundation for classroom cultures are often established. The Resident begins the year from day one as an active participant in the classroom, sharing responsibilities with the Mentor teacher, and gradually taking over more responsibility. Before Thanksgiving all Residents complete a lead teaching week that provides particular insight into their strengths and challenges as a new teacher. In the second half of the year, Residents assume a 50-50 split of all instructional duties with the Mentor.

The Mentor-Resident relationship is at the center of the preparation year. Mentors and Residents take part in carefully structured meetings each week (referred to as "sacred time") and are closely supervised by the school-based Site Director. The Resident is also expected and supported to learn as part of a broader community in the school. Each Resident has a secondary special education or English as a Second Language placement and works closely with a Mentor teacher in that setting. Site Directors are excellent veteran teachers or instructional coaches already working at the host school who are ready and eager to take on a new role without leaving the school; many are still in the classroom. Having a school-based Site Director means that

supervision is day to day, not intermittent; the Site Director is always there and available. Site Directors have demonstrated their excellence as BPS teachers and are trained, committed, and supervised to focus on the Residents' and Mentors' development over the course of the year. As a citizen of the school, the Site Director already knows the students, culture, norms, and most importantly, the other teachers. He or she can operate in the school setting skillfully. The Site Director position also helps build a set of career roles and responsibilities for teachers to advance without leaving the classroom and school building (Boles & Troen, 1997; Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

Blending Theory and Practice: An Example. BTR's curriculum is built around ongoing central experiences. One of BTR's core competencies is the ability to use data to inform practice. BTR asks Residents to complete a set of assignments called a child study. Residents begin the year by collecting data about three children in their classes who they will follow throughout the year. BTR trains Residents, Mentors, and Site Directors in data collection techniques. The Mentor is expected to include explicit attention to the child study assignment and its larger aims in his or her mentoring, to ensure that he or she is modeling data collection techniques, is being explicit about the analysis he or she performs, and is working with the Resident on his or her data collection and analysis. The Site Director supervises the collection of data about the students and the Mentor-Resident conversations; he or she also leads a process in which he or she brings a host school's entire cohort of Residents together and uses a discussion protocol to deepen their analyses. The assignment, which originates in a yearlong Reflective Seminar course, also has components in two other classes, Child Development and the appropriate Content Methods (e.g., Teaching History) class. Residents continue to work on the assignment throughout the fall, collecting data and learning about the case study students' learning styles and needs. During Residents' lead teaching week in November, they reflect on, among many other things, the effectiveness of their lessons for their case study students as evidenced in the students' work. They then use those conclusions to inform further instruction. Residents present their learning about the case study students and what they have learned about their own practice to a panel of educators from BTR and their host schools in the first of two portfolio presentations (a midyear, formative, presentation in January and a final presentation in June). The child study assignment expands during the spring as Residents begin to engage in a similar process with whole classes, looking at patterns of achievement in the data and learning about how to best design instruction so it meets the range of learners in the classroom, while continuing to follow their child study students. The assignment continues to play a key role in the Content Methods classes and is picked up in an Inclusive Education class.

Residents present this work as part of their yearend portfolio presentation and the final written analysis is one of the major components of their portfolio.

Residents Focus on Learning Alongside an Experienced, Trained Mentor

The role of the Mentor teacher and the mentoring school are critical to BTR Residents' development. BTR carefully selects and collaborates with BPS host schools in which it places cohorts of Residents. Within these host schools, BTR carefully selects, trains, compensates, and supervises Mentor teachers. The Mentor teacher serves as the primary, though by no means the sole, guide to the Resident over the year.

While the Mentor teacher and the mentoring relationship are central to BTR's model, BTR's approach to mentoring starts not with the individual Mentor but also with the mentoring school. BTR has tried to move away from a pure one-on-one model of mentoring and treats the host school community as the mentoring body. BTR believes that the one-on-one model places an unnecessary burden on both the Resident and the Mentor and believes that there is much to learn across the school building; a Resident who spends time in only one classroom misses out on much of what the rest of the school has to teach. Although each BTR Resident is assigned to a primary Mentor teacher, the host school's community of Mentors, Residents, and Site Director are all expected to spread the learning around the school community. This effort regularly takes the form of Grand Rounds, collective learning experiences led by the Site Director for the cohort of Residents based in classrooms around the school. All Residents serve in a secondary placement in a special education or English as a Second Language setting, which allows them access to another classroom and another approach to teaching. Residents also participate in many formal and informal observations and conversations with other educators in the building (often focused on specific learning points, e.g., asking probing questions or interacting with social service agencies).

Schools within the BPS apply to be BTR host schools. Each host school agrees to mentor at least six Residents. BTR looks for schools with three primary characteristics: (a) a critical mass of teachers ready and eager to serve as Mentors; (b) a collaborative, data-based professional culture; and (c) leadership with a clear vision for school improvement that includes the work of teacher preparation and development. The selection process focuses on finding a good fit between the program and the school. BTR staff visits schools that apply, observe and talk with teachers and leadership, and review the school's academic performance. BTR coordinates its school selection with BPS leadership. Only after a school is selected do individual teachers apply to be Mentors. BTR looks to recruit and select a diverse cohort of Mentors who have demonstrated their effectiveness as teachers, are consciously skilled

and able to talk about their decision making, and are able to commit to the work of a rigorous yearlong mentoring program (Cohen, McLaughlin, & Talbert, 1993).

Mentors participate in a 3-day BTR Mentor training that takes place over the summer, as well as monthly trainings during the school year. Mentors commit to a set of responsibilities over the course of the year, including the two sacred hours of meeting time each week, and commit to open their classrooms and practice to the entire cohort of Residents (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Mentors oversee the program's gradual release of responsibility (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Sweeney, 2003). BTR pays Mentors \$3,000 for their work over the school year. The stipend, although far less than the Mentors deserve, is critical; it sends the message that the Mentors are doing important, professional work for which they should be paid, and it helps build in the expectation that BTR will hold Mentors accountable for their work.

The Site Director oversees the learning of the Residents and is also the direct supervisor of his or her host school's Mentor teachers. BTR has developed a set of Dimensions of Effective Mentoring to guide its development and supervision of Mentors. BTR has learned that the support and accountability associated with the Site Director–Mentor relationship is critical to the program's ability to provide effective mentoring for all of its Residents.

Teacher Development Extends Beyond Preparation: BTR's Induction Program for Graduates

BTR is conceived as a 4-year program, comprised of 1 year of preparation and 3 years of induction support. New teachers are not "done" on graduation day. To the contrary, new teachers are just beginning their development as they enter classrooms as teachers of record and need significant support to continue to grow (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999; Ingersoll, 2004; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000; Whisnant, Elliott, & Pynchon, 2005). As a BPS program, BTR's key outcomes occur only after the preparation year: (a) the retention of our graduates in the BPS, (b) their effectiveness as measured by supervisors and independent evaluators, and (c) their ability to help students make significant academic progress (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). As such, BTR's induction component is critical to its success and is linked closely and carefully with the first-year preparation program. BTR would be leaving its work undone if it did not ensure aligned induction work for program graduates.

Because BTR is not purely a teacher preparation program, but rather a teacher development program, its responsibility to its Residents has no natural end, other than a graduate deciding to leave the BPS. This responsibility is in fact a tremendous opportunity for BTR to work with teachers to help them develop and contribute as long as they want to teach in some form. BTR has tried to create a coherent, contextual program that takes teachers from the beginning of

their preparation to their establishment as effective teachers, and beyond.

BTR has designed, and continues to develop, its preparation and induction programs along the continuum of teacher development associated with our core competencies. BTR works with teachers to chart their development along these competencies over their years of teaching. BTR's induction supports begin with one-on-one in-class coaching for graduates in their first few years of teaching. BTR continues offering courses to graduates that are aligned with its preparation courses; the core ideas and practices are continued from the residency year into the induction period. Some instructors teach both Residents and graduates, and the cohort of Residents continues on as a cohort of BPS teachers. All graduates are expected to complete a second license in special education or English as a Second Language in their first year as teacher of record.

BTR is working to maximize the coherence of the induction experience for its graduates. Information about a Resident, his or her strengths and areas of growth, is handed off from one program component to the next. BTR ensures that there is a relay of information from the Site Director who worked closely with a particular Resident during his or her residency year to the Induction coach who will support this graduate in his or her first years. In this way, coaches can pick up and build on the learning goals and strengths established in the previous years.

BTR has come to the conclusion that if it is to maximize impact, it must be more intentional and strategic about clustering graduates in certain schools. Hiring in BPS is completely decentralized; there are 143 schools and each makes its own hiring decisions. While BTR has always tried to have graduates hired in clusters by schools, it has only been able to place graduates in clusters through individual relationships with principals and in schools. BTR is working to align placement of graduates with district priorities. To the extent that there are schools identified that would benefit from clusters of graduates, BTR wants to work with the district to direct graduates there. Clustered placements of graduates would affect how BTR works with these schools. Whereas BTR's induction efforts to date have primarily focused on individuals and small groups, the organization will ultimately move toward a school-based model, much as BTR structures its preparation component. An individual coach or course can only be so effective if a teacher is working in a dysfunctional school, but a well-functioning and supportive work environment often obviates the need for external coaching or coursework. BTR aims to partner with the schools that hire its graduates to help them develop the kind of data-based, collaborative cultures the program models in its preparation. There are a growing number of schools that have hired clusters of graduates and are starting to see some changes. One school, for example, now has more than 20 BTR-affiliated adults: 6 Residents, 6 Mentors, 3 special education Mentors,

a Site Director, and 7 graduates. The graduates are beginning to take on leadership roles in the school; 3 of the 4 content area leaders are BTR graduates. In such a school, in close partnership with the principal and other teacher leaders, BTR is able to gain some traction to help create a new culture and better results.

As larger numbers of BTR graduates enter the second stage of their teaching careers, they are raising a series of questions for BTR and BPS to consider. How do BTR and BPS continue to develop outstanding second-stage teachers who want to stay in teaching but also advance in the profession? How does BTR work to create new roles and opportunities for these talented and committed teachers? How does BTR help change the notion of the profession, from a flat one in which people do the same job in Year 1 as in Year 20 to one that provides options for advancement and diversity? Although these discussions are in their early stages, BTR is excited about the potential represented by the cohorts of graduates pushing for answers to these questions.

Student Achievement as BTR's Bottom Line

As BTR has developed, it has reached the conclusion that it should ultimately be measured by the academic achievement of the students in its graduates' classrooms. BTR wants its teachers to produce measurable and significant gains in student learning. If BTR is to be part of the answer in Boston to help all students reach academic proficiency, it must graduate teachers that can support students to make steady and significant gains. If BTR does not produce teachers who support those academic gains on a reliable basis, the program's efforts will have fallen short.

This commitment to student achievement must be reflected in all aspects of the program. BTR has begun the work of reviewing and adjusting its curriculum and overall program structure to reflect this focus. This shift has two significant implications. First, BTR has developed an urgent interest in understanding whether and to what extent having a Resident in the classroom affects student achievement during the preparation year and whether and to what extent program graduates are producing significant student learning gains. As one piece of this effort, BTR has begun to track the value-added student achievement impacts of its graduates. Second, BTR is in the process of retraining its own staff—course instructors, coaches, Site Directors, and Mentors, not to mention program leaders—to work with student achievement as the starting point. For example, it is not enough to sit down with a teacher and only talk about teacher practices, the norm in many classroom observations, student work and student achievement data must be a focal point of the discussion. The conversations have to work to identify and explore linkages between teacher practices and student learning.

BTR does not support, and is not trying to implement, an accountability system for individual teachers. There are strong

arguments against the idea of linking student achievement to a specific teacher. The sheer quantity of variables that affect learning in a classroom and the complex interplay of those variables make it nearly impossible to compare any two classrooms, there are at best imperfect ways of measuring student learning, and such a system could easily present an incentive for teachers to avoid difficult assignments. However, BTR does believe that in the aggregate, across cohorts of program graduates, there is much to be learned about the effectiveness of the program. There is absolutely no question that large numbers of our children, and disproportionately children of color and children from low-income households, are not being well served by our school systems. BTR takes it as a given, therefore, that it must start to understand the effects of its graduates on student learning. Although the current assessment and growth modeling systems are far from perfect, if we wait for a system that is perfect, another generation of students will pass through our schools. Teacher education has operated without clear measures for too long, and that has left the field open to charges of ineffectiveness. As a part of a school district, BTR's work takes place in schools and in a central office that is constantly being measured according to student achievement measures. BTR believes that it should share in this accountability with the district.

Leveraging Broader Change

The article now turns to the question of BTR's potential to leverage change both within and outside the BPS. What follows are two examples in which a BTR effort has been able to spur a larger district change and a possible future direction for the relationship between school districts and teacher preparation programs.

BPS Dimensions of Effective Teaching

Soon after BTR developed its Core Teaching Competencies, the BPS leadership started a similar process to identify and codify a vision of effective teaching. Because BTR had just gone through this process, the district used the BTR Core Teaching Competencies as one of its main models in the development of what is now known as the BPS Dimensions of Effective Teaching (DET). BTR's placement as a district program made its set of competencies a natural fit for the BPS-wide effort. In turn, given the close alignment between BTR's curricular goals and the DET, BTR made the decision to fit its program around these DET, so that Residents would be using the same language and set of core ideas in their preparation as in their careers at BPS. BTR adopted these Dimensions because it wanted to present a clear, developmental view about what it means to be a good teacher. Having a consistent set of DET that overlap the boundary between preparation and a teaching career means that Residents can see their growth along a single continuum, rather than feel like

they have to adapt to a new framework of what's good teaching once they actually become teachers.

District-Wide Induction

The work of creating a teacher preparation program with the BPS and the district's commitment to support the program financially raised a set of questions about the kind of induction support the district provided for all its new teachers. How could the district prioritize and invest in teacher preparation as a core element of its improvement strategy but leave many new teachers to flounder? As a result of these conversations, BPS has built and now runs a comprehensive new teacher support system that is of far greater intensity and coordination than was previously in place. The district's decision to invest in its own teacher preparation program was instrumental in pushing the next logical conversation about how to create effective induction supports for new teachers.

Changing the Relationship Between a District and Teacher Preparation Institutions

Before it started BTR, BPS and districts like it across the country had been purely consumers of teacher preparation. BTR enables BPS to produce its own teachers, fundamentally changing the relationship with all teacher preparation institutions. This new relationship gives districts such as the BPS an opportunity to begin new conversations with the teacher preparation institutions that prepare teachers for that district. Imagine, for instance, that the district were to sit down with each teacher preparation institution and give it a "report card" of sorts, a document detailing key statistics about the teachers that the teacher preparation program has provided to the district: how many, what content areas, demographics of the group, retention statistics, and some measure of effectiveness (whether through principal evaluations, student achievement, or some other observational protocol). The differences in these report cards might provide key information and leverage for the district as it decides which preparers it wants to work with. The conversations over these report cards might lead to new innovations and relationships between the district and the most effective local teacher preparation programs. Some teacher preparation programs might be asked to prepare more teachers and might be given some sort of preferential status in the district, others might decide that the district was not the right fit. School districts across the country have begun to take control of their human capital needs; programs like BTR may be able to serve as critical levers in these efforts.

Conclusion

This article has tried to describe BTR's central ideas and practices in an effort to contribute to a larger conversation about how school districts might build the kinds of teaching

forces they need to meet the challenges of 21st-century public education. Teacher preparation should not continue as an institution isolated from the schools and school districts it aims to serve; likewise, school districts cannot continue to outsource so much of their human capital development work. Rather, these efforts must be combined.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interests with respect to the authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.

References

- Bartunek, H. (1990). *The classroom teacher as teacher educator*. Retrieved August 24, 2009, from http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERIC Docs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/23/1e/f7.pdf
- Beck, C., & Kosnik, C. (2001). From cohort to community in a pre-service teacher education program. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 17*, 925-948.
- Bellow, G. (1976). *Council on Legal Education for Professional Responsibility, Fourth Biennial Report, 1975-76*, p. 24-25.
- Berry, B., & Norton, J. (2006, July/August). Learn from the masters. *Edutopia*, 44-48.
- Boles, K., & Troen, V. (1997). How the emergence of teacher leadership helped build a professional development school. In M. Levine & R. Trachtman (Eds.), *Making professional development schools work* (pp. 52-75). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (1999). Relationships of knowledge and practice: Teacher learning in communities. In A. Iran-Nejad & P. David Pearson (Eds.), *Review of research in education* (Vol. 24, pp. 249-305). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Cohen, D. K., McLaughlin, M. L. W., & Talbert, J. E. (1993). *Teaching for understanding: Challenges for policy and practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Feiman-Nemser, S. (1998). Teachers as teacher educators. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 21*, 63-75.
- Feiman-Nemser, S. (2001). From preparation to practice: Designing a continuum to strengthen and sustain teaching. *Teachers College Record, 103*, 1013-1055.
- Feiman-Nemser, S., & Parker, M. (1992). *Mentoring in context: A comparison of two U.S. programs for beginning teachers*. Ann Arbor: Michigan State University, National Center for Research on Teacher Learning.
- Fideler, L. F., & Haselkorn, D. (1999). *Learning the ropes: Urban teacher induction programs and practices in the United States*. Belmont, MA: Recruiting New Teachers, Inc.
- Grossman, P. (1991). Overcoming the apprenticeship of observation in teacher education coursework. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 7*, 345-357.

- Grossman, P., Wineburg, S., & Woolworth, S. (2001). Toward a theory of teacher community. *Teachers College Record, 103*, 942-1012.
- Hiebert, J., Gallimore, R., & Stigler, J. W. (2002). A knowledge base for the teaching profession: What would it look like and how can we get one? *Educational Researcher, 31*(5), 3-15.
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2004). Do teacher induction and mentoring matter? *NASSP Bulletin, 88*(638), 28-40.
- Lieberman, A., & Wood, D. (2001). When teachers write: Of networks and learning. In A. Lieberman & L. Miller (Eds.), *Teachers caught in the action: Professional development that matters* (pp. 174-187). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Pearson, P. D., & Gallagher, M. C. (1983). The instruction of reading comprehension. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 8*, 317-344.
- Rust, F., & Orland, L. (2001). Learning the discourse of teaching: Conversation as professional development. In C. Clark (Ed.), *Talking shop: Authentic conversation and teacher learning* (pp. 82-117). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Seifert, K., & Mandzuk, D. (2006). Student cohorts in teacher education: Support groups or intellectual communities? *Teachers College Record, 108*, 1296-1320.
- Stansbury, K., & Zimmerman, J. (2000). *Lifelines to the classroom: Designing support for beginning teachers*. San Francisco: WestEd.
- Sweeney, D. (2003). *Learning along the way: Professional development by and for teachers*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Tharp, R. & Gallimore, R. (1988). *Rousing minds to life: Teaching, learning, and schooling in social context*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Tom, A. (2000). *Teacher education reform in the United States: Thrusts, assumptions, and implications*. Keynote address at the International Symposium on Repositioning Teacher Education, Sydney. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 438 262)
- Walsh, K., & Jacobs, S. (2007). *Alternative certification isn't alternative*. Retrieved August 24, 2009, from http://www.nctq.org/p/publications/docs/Alternative_Certification_Isnt_Alternative.pdf
- Westheimer, J. (1998). *Among schoolteachers: Community, autonomy and ideology in teachers' work*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Whisnant, E., Elliott, K., & Pynchon, S. (2005). *A review of literature on new teacher induction*. Retrieved August 24, 2009, from <http://www.cstp-wa.org/resource/review-literature-new-teacher-induction>

Bio

Jesse Solomon is director and co-founder of the Boston Teacher Residency. He previously taught secondary math for ten years and co-founded both City On A Hill school and its Teachers' Institute.