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VCU



CECE

INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AWARDS PROGRAM

IEP CATEGORY - TALENT

2023
CASE
STUDY

Virginia Commonwealth University: The Richmond Teacher Residency Program

THE CHALLENGE

VCU has a longstanding commitment to educational equity, enshrined in its strategic plans. Richmond city and region are marked by high poverty pockets, ongoing de facto segregation, few math, science, and prep courses, lower AP enrollments, lower performance in reading and math, and significant teacher shortages. The RTR, formerly Richmond Teacher Residency, is a response to the community that needs teachers trained in critical shortage areas, able to work in high-needs schools, and who look like their students.



RTR teacher in a secondary school classroom engaging his students. All hands are raised

VCU'S RESPONSE

RTR is an innovative partnership among VCU and area school districts that recruits, prepares, supports, and retains excellent teachers for high-needs, hard-to-staff schools. Partner districts wanted the best-prepared teachers for those schools.

RTR exemplifies how meeting talent needs through process innovations in how we train talent improves lives in the local community. RTR-trained teachers are able to teach immediately upon graduation in hard-to-staff, high-needs schools with measurable impacts on student learning and, in some cases, have turned struggling schools around.

It works because RTR does not just train teachers. It trains teachers for change. Its mission is:

RTR recruits prepares, and supports the retention of extraordinary, inspiring teachers and teacher leaders who are committed to social justice and the disruption of educational inequities for systemically underserved students. RTR and its community partners are committed to strong collaborations that result in positive contributions to the collective culture and success of the public schools we serve.



Since its beginning in Richmond Public Schools (RPS) in 2011 with a U.S. Department of Education (DoE) grant and nine teachers, RTR has seen steady expansion in response to community priorities. Today, it partners with RPS and four additional school districts in the region (Chesterfield County, Petersburg City, Henrico County, and Prince William County) and, next year, will expand again to reach a total of 16 school divisions across Virginia. Similarly, the program started with secondary teachers, then expanded to special education, elementary, early childhood, and now school leaders. RTR has been particularly successful in diversifying the talent pipeline. Currently, 48% of recruits are underrepresented minorities. DoE has been a continuous, but not the only, funder of the project. Future growth includes developing the first residency teacher apprenticeship program in the country and an undergraduate residency program.

RTR is a Masters program that combines VCU's research with direct experience in high-needs classrooms by pairing teacher trainees with mentor teachers for a year in a high-needs school. All the teacher trainees' work is done in the classroom, where they receive a gradual release of responsibilities from their mentor teacher. When trainees graduate, they are prepared for high-needs classrooms.

RTR is tuition-free and comes with a stipend. Upon program completion, residents can graduate with a master's degree or graduate certificate, a teacher's license, and a full year's experience in the classroom. In return, each student commits to work in a hard-to-staff school for three additional years.

RTR's programming does not end with the degree and placement because retention is a program priority. RTR provides every first- and second-year teacher with a career coach to help them academically, emotionally, and socially to stay for the long term.

RTR offers significant process innovation for teacher talent development. A traditional program puts the teacher trainee in a classroom for eight weeks, overseen by a cooperating teacher, where the trainee assumes increased responsibility within that time frame. An RTR resident is put in the classroom supported and guided by a mentor and the RTR staff for one full year assumes increased responsibility in that time frame, participates in all school functions, and is supported for the first two years of its teaching.

The all-in-class design, the mentors, and the coaches are not the only innovations. RTR teaches to the whole student, necessary for the students and neighborhoods where they are trained and where they teach.



Moreover, since it is DoE-funded, the program is required to do yearly evaluations and get major evaluations every three years. That evaluation culture helps the program to innovate and improve.

THE RESULTS

Training a teaching workforce that looks like its students, responds to community need and relies on innovative, experiential pedagogy improves education outcomes. In 2021, Virginia Governor Northam declared April 15 as RTR day.

Talent

- 314 teachers trained and supported by 209 mentors (with 124 new trainees planned for next year)
- A 2020 evaluation found that RTR-trained teachers
 - are better prepared to teach in high-needs schools and less expensive to hire and replace than their traditional peers
 - have a 90% retention rate in year two and 82% in year three, which is significantly higher than traditionally trained teachers' retention rates at 70% in year two and 52% in year three
 - better reflect student demographics than non-RTR colleagues. 42% of all program graduates are underrepresented minorities.
 - In the current cohort, that number is 48%

Community Benefit

- 45,000 students reached in 67 Schools.
- A 2019 evaluation of RTR found that students of RTR-prepared teachers outperformed those of similar non-RTR teachers on English (18 points), math (35 points), and social studies (24 points) Standard of Learning End-of-Course tests.
- Success story: Ettrick Elementary School in Chesterfield County was a non-accredited school when it started working with RTR. Within three years, it became a distinguished Title 1 national school. Half of the school's teaching staff are RTR graduates or mentors.

National Recognition

- The Director of the National Science Foundation visited Franklin Military, an RPS middle school, with nine RTR residents or graduates, including Chrystal Corey, a black female science teacher and Richmond's Teacher of the Year.



- The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education recognized RTR as a national model.

Why it Matters

“I’ve visited all of the schools in RPS. The residents are fantastic! They are dynamic, energetic, skilled, passionate, and have a mindset of high expectations for all of their students. They are the kind of individuals we want in RPS.”

- Jason Kamras, RPS Superintendent

LINKS TO FURTHER INFORMATION

Supporting Information:

- [RTR Teacher Residency](#)
- [Benefit-Cost Analysis of Richmond Teacher Residency Program](#)

Articles:

- [Gov. Ralph Northam proclaims today ‘RTR Day’](#)
- [VCU receives grant to develop teacher apprentice residency program in three Virginia school systems](#)

Videos:

- [What is RTR Teacher Residency](#)
- [Why RTR Teacher Residency](#)



ABOUT APLU

The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) is North America's oldest higher education association. APLU is a research, policy, and advocacy organization dedicated to strengthening and advancing the work of public universities in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. The association's membership consists of public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations.

APLU's mission is to expand access and improve student success to deliver the innovative workforce of tomorrow; advance and promote research and discovery to improve society, foster economic growth, and address global challenges; and build healthy, prosperous, equitable, and vibrant communities locally and globally.

Based in Washington, DC, the association's work is furthered by an active and effective advocacy arm that works with Congress and the administration as well as the media to advance federal policies that strengthen public universities and benefit the students they serve.

ABOUT THE IEP PROGRAM

APLU and its [Commission on Economic and Community Engagement \(CECE\)](#) established the Innovation and Economic Prosperity (IEP) Program to help higher education institutions codify, elevate, and advance their campus enterprise supporting economic and community development.

The **IEP Designation Program** recognizes institutions that have demonstrated a meaningful, ongoing and substantial commitment to economic and community development, growth, and economic opportunity.

The **IEP Awards Program** recognize exemplary and innovative projects in university-based economic and community engagement:

- Talent and workforce development
- Innovation, entrepreneurship, and tech-based economic development
- Place development through public service, outreach, and community engagement

Learn more at: www.APLU.org/IEP

