BRIEF

CONSIDERATIONS FOR MATCHING RESIDENTS WITH COOPERATING TEACHERS

Making the Most of the Residency Clinical Experience

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Introduction

A large and growing body of research finds that teachers are the most important school-based factor affecting both students' academic achievement and non-academic skills and behaviors (Hanushek and Rivkin 2010; Kirabo Jackson 2018). Given the impact effective teachers have on their students' success, there is surprisingly little research on the relationship between the characteristics of teacher preparation programs and the classroom effectiveness of their graduates (National Research Council 2010). Available studies suggest the clinical experience of residents and student teachers is likely the most important component of teacher preparation (Goldhaber, Krieg, and Theobald 2017). Surveys of candidates' perceptions of how well they feel prepared, ratings on subsequent evaluations by their employers, and measures of the academic achievement of their students when new teachers begin their teaching career find the quality of their clinical experience—student teaching or year-long residencies—are more influential than any other component of their preparation programs (Goldhaber, Krieg, and Theobald 2017; Ronfeldt 2015; Ronfeldt, Schwartz, and Jacob 2014). Research also shows that longer clinical experiences, such as year-long residencies, improve both candidates' perception of and actual readiness for the classroom (Ronfeldt 2012). Additionally, these studies find that longer clinical experiences lead to higher retention rates, especially among teachers of color (Ronfeldt 2012; Ronfeldt, Schwartz, and Jacob 2014).

West Virginia, acknowledging the importance of longer, quality clinical experiences for preparing effective educators, developed the West Virginia Residency Model to implement residency-based teacher preparation statewide. Educator preparation programs (EPPs) were required to implement the residency model for at least a portion of their undergraduate teacher preparation programs by fall of 2021, with residencies required for undergraduate preparation in all certification areas by fall of 2024 (West Virginia Department of Education 2022). Moving to a full-year residency-length clinical experience holds promise for improving the quality and effectiveness of educators prepared through West Virginia's 19 EPPs.

How preparation programs manage several related key components of the clinical experience (whether year-long residencies or one-semester student teaching placements) is important in determining the effectiveness of these experiences. Components include how candidates are placed in schools for their clinical experiences, how their cooperating teachers or mentors are selected, and how candidates are matched with their cooperating teachers (Goldhaber, Krieg, and Theobald 2017; Guha, Hyler, and Darling-Hammond 2016). Little research literature addresses the practices of residency programs in these three areas. Instead, most studies were conducted in programs utilizing a traditional one-semester student teaching experience as the culminating field experience. The interviews conducted for this study support this idea, offering little evidence of differentiated approaches between traditional student teaching and residency programs. Unfortunately, the available evidence suggests that all too often educator preparation programs and their partner school districts pay too little attention to these key areas (Krieg, Goldhaber, and Theobald 2020).

The information presented in this report was collected from three sources. The first is a review of the research literature regarding the common and best practices in the areas of placing teacher candidates in schools, selecting cooperating teachers, and matching candidates with cooperating teachers. The second is findings from the approaches of five West Virginia EPPs that participated in interviews for this study. Finally, three established residency programs located in other states were also interviewed to learn more about their approaches in each of these areas.

The report is divided into three main sections: Placing Candidates in Schools, Selecting Cooperating Teachers, and Matching Candidates with Cooperating Teachers/Mentors. These are followed by three recommendations flowing from the findings of the report. The report concludes with a brief description of the methods used for this study.

Placing Candidates in Schools

Studies show the characteristics of schools where teacher candidates are placed for their clinical experience may affect both their effectiveness as teachers and their likelihood of remaining in the teaching profession (Krieg, Goldhaber, and Theobald 2020). For example, teacher candidates placed in schools with higher teacher retention rates tend to become more effective teachers and have higher retention rates themselves (Ronfeldt 2012). Higher levels of teacher collaboration in placement schools are also related to greater effectiveness of teacher candidates once they begin their teaching careers (Goldhaber and Keesler 2019; Ronfeldt 2015). A study of eight educator preparation programs in Washington State (Goldhaber, Krieg, and Theobald 2017) found that early career teachers were more effective if the student demographics of their placement school matched those of the school where they were later employed. There is also some evidence that placing teacher candidates from nonurban backgrounds in diverse urban schools leads to positive shifts in their attitudes toward these student populations (Adams, Bondy, and Kuhel 2005; Downey and Cobbs 2007). Related to this finding, teacher candidates placed in hard-to-staff schools for their field experience are more likely to seek or accept teaching jobs in similar schools (Goldhaber, Krieg, and Theobald 2017). Preparation programs seeking to prepare teachers for hard-to-staff urban schools may find this approach an effective strategy for preparing teachers who are better equipped to teach in challenging schools and reducing turnover rates.

However, student teacher (or resident) placements are not always determined by which schools will provide the best clinical experience for a candidate. The Washington State study of eight educator preparation programs identified several factors other than the quality of a clinical experience that most often influence student teachers' clinical placements (St. John et al. 2018). The first has to do with who in a placement district is making placement decisions. Some districts employed a field placement coordinator in the central office who determined all student teacher placement within the district. In other districts, the EPPs worked directly with individual schools' principals and/or school-based placement coordinators. The study found these differences in who makes placement

decisions and where within a school district the placement decision is made impacted the rules, cultural norms, tools, and processes of student teacher placements.

Secondly, placement districts and schools also consider whether to accept student teachers and how many to accept, based on capacity issues such as school performance, teacher workloads, the number of student teachers accepted in prior years, classroom characteristics, the compatibility of endorsement areas and grade levels, and the quality of the student teacher (St. John et al. 2018).

Finally, the Washington study (St. John et al. 2018) found that in many cases, districts and schools strongly considered their own staffing needs when deciding which student teachers to place and where to place them. In some cases, schools advocate for a student teacher placement with the same endorsement area of a current or anticipated teaching position opening. The researchers concluded that too often EPP clinical administrators had little information from their partner districts and schools about how placements are made, how cooperating teachers are selected, and how student and cooperating teachers are paired.

In terms of the EPPs, the Washington study (St. John et al. 2018) found the following factors most often guided their placement decisions:

- the number of candidates needing placement;
- candidates' endorsement areas;
- candidates' preferred grade level;
- where candidates lived and how far they were willing to travel;
- candidates' preferred geographical region of placement; and
- candidates' educational background.

EPPs then use candidates' preferences for each of these factors to build a placement profile to share with its partner districts and schools who then ultimately made the school placement decision. The findings of this study highlight that the factors research shows lead to more effective program graduates were not typically among the top criteria for making placements.

Table 1 below summarizes the practices for placing teacher candidates in schools for their culminating field experience. The table presents information on school placements in three areas: 1) the basic criteria for selecting schools, 2) the preferred school characteristics that programs look for in placement schools, and 3) the entity or entities most responsible for directing school placements.

The first row, labeled Evidence-Based Practice, summarizes effective approaches as suggested by the research literature. In addition to providing a field experience with the subject areas or grade levels appropriate to a candidate's area of certification and offering a convenient geographic location for both candidate and supervising faculty, the literature suggests a high-quality placement school should possess effective leadership, high teacher retention rates, and high levels of teacher collaboration. The literature (Pomerance 2020; Pomerance and Walsh 2020) also recommends

EPPs should take primary responsibility for directing the selection of placement schools. Greater EPP involvement allows program faculty to gain a better sense of the quality of schools' culture, leadership, and support for cooperating teachers and their teacher candidates. Program faculty may also become more familiar with schools' teachers, allowing them to determine who may have the best skills and dispositions for serving as mentors.

The second row, labeled "West Virginia Standards," summarizes the West Virginia Board of Education's (WVBE's) standards for placement school selection (Approval of Educator Preparation Programs 5100, C.S.R. §126 [2022]). State Board rules require EPPs and their partner school districts to have written partnership agreements that formalize the roles and responsibilities of each partner. The State Board also establishes minimum qualifications for cooperating teachers. As a result, schools serving as placement schools must employee eligible teachers to serve as cooperating teachers. The State Board rules are silent on other school characteristics or who should take primary responsibility for selecting placement schools.

The next five rows, labeled "West Virginia EPP" A through E, summarize the practices of the five West Virginia EPPs interviewed for this study. All of the programs first look for schools with the subject areas and grade levels appropriate for the certification areas of their residents. EPP A also reviewed the quality of placement schools in terms of student performance, while EPP C prioritized the needs of the resident in terms of cost and convenience. Three EPPs preferred placements with districts and schools with whom they had a long-term relationship for placing student teachers. EPP B also preferred schools in which their graduates were working as teachers. Two of the EPPs specifically mentioned working with schools known to have experienced and effective cooperating teachers. Four of the five programs led the school placement process, with two also collaborating extensively with their partner school districts. Only EPP E looked to partner districts to lead the process.

The final three rows, labeled "External Residency" A through C, summarize the school placement practices of the three out-of-state residency programs interviewed for this study. The minimum criteria for all three included offering appropriate subject areas or grade levels and being conveniently located for both residents and program supervising faculty. External Residency A also reviewed data on schools' student performance and school environment, including school safety, climate, and culture. External Residency C selected schools with which it has had a history of effective placements. All three programs led the school selection process with varying degrees of input from their partner districts.

An "NA" entry signifies either the entities had no policy or practice related to the component summarized in a column or the available information was silent with regard to that component.

Table 1. School placement practices

Source	Basic Placement Criteria	Placement School Characteristics	Responsibility for School Placement
Evidence-Based Practice	› Appropriate subjects/grade levels › Geographic location › Supportive	› Effective leadership › High retention › High collaboration	› Educator preparation program (EPP) leads but collaborates with district and school
West Virginia Standards[a]	› EPP and district have partnership agreement › Employees qualified cooperating teachers	› NA	› NA
West Virginia EPP A	› Appropriate subjects/grade levels › Geographic location › Quality	› NA	› EPP leads, works with resident to find best placement
West Virginia EPP B	› Appropriate subjects/grade levels › Geographic location	› Have relationship with district › Have program graduates placed as teachers	› EPP leads but collaborates with district and school
West Virginia EPP C	› Appropriate subjects/grade levels › Geographic location › Needs of student	› Have relationship with district and school › Experienced cooperating teachers	› EPP leads
West Virginia EPP D	› Appropriate subjects/grade levels › Geographic location	› Have relationship with district and school	› EPP leads but collaborates with district and school
West Virginia EPP E	› Appropriate subjects/grade levels › Geographic location	› School performance on State tests › Effective cooperating teachers	› District leads
External Residency A	› Appropriate subjects/grade levels › Geographic location › Review performance data and environment	› Effective leadership › Safe and stable environment › High need	› EPP sets criteria, district nominates schools, EPP reviews nominated schools
External Residency B	› Appropriate subjects/grade levels › Geographic location › Accept clusters of residents	› Experienced cooperating teachers › Teacher opening in school	› Residency program leads process but collaborates with EPPs and districts
External Residency C	› Appropriate subjects/grade levels › Geographic location	› History of effective placements	› EPP leads

[a] §126-114-6.7.b.5 and §126-114-6.7.b.6.B.3 – Student teaching clinical experiences to be completed in public schools or West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE)-accredited nonpublic schools with a West Virginia certified teacher. §126-114-6.1 – EPPs shall have teacher clinical partnership agreements with county boards of education. §126-114-5.12 and 5.12.a, §126-114-6.7.b.5.A, §126-114-5.13 – Cooperating teacher requirements.

Selecting Cooperating Teachers

The research literature on cooperating teacher selection points to certain practices and characteristics that should inform the practices of EPPs and their district partners. Generally, this research falls into two categories. The first, and largest, body of research measures cooperating teachers' effectiveness by surveying both candidates and cooperating teachers about their perceptions of how well prepared the candidates are to teach. The second body of research uses statistical methods to measure the association between various cooperating teacher characteristics and their mentee's standards-based evaluation scores, classroom value-added scores, or both, in their first years of teaching (Goldhaber et al. 2020). Which approach is used matters as comparisons of the results of the two approaches found that teacher candidates' own perceptions of readiness to teach rarely correlated with objective measures of their teaching performance, such as evaluation scores or student value-added measures. However, their cooperating teachers' perceptions more often did coincide with these objective measures of performance (Ronfeldt et al. 2018).

Researchers using a statistical approach failed to find strong relationships between various cooperating teacher characteristics, such as years of experience, advanced degrees, or National Board of Professional Teaching Standards certification, and the instructional effectiveness of the teacher candidates they mentored (Ronfeldt et al. 2018). Instead, the study found that cooperating teachers who demonstrated high-quality instructional practices, based on observations and student value-added scores, had a significant positive effect on the future effectiveness of their mentees. In other words, the most important predictor of a cooperating teacher's impact on their mentee is the quality of their own instructional practices.

The perceptions of cooperating teachers' coaching ability have a more limited effect on the instructional effectiveness of their mentees (Ronfeldt et al. 2018). A study of cooperating teachers and teacher candidates in Chicago Public Schools found that a positive perception of the cooperating teachers' coaching skills, by either the teacher candidate or the cooperating teacher, in the areas of instruction, classroom environment, and lesson planning had a positive impact on the candidates' future instructional effectiveness as a teacher (Ronfeldt et al. 2018). Perceptions of other mentoring domains such as professional responsibilities or a blended "Overall" measure had no impact on candidates' eventual effectiveness.

A report by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) on the relationship between cooperating teachers' quality of instructional practice and their teacher candidates' instructional effectiveness notes that teacher candidates mentored by highly effective cooperating teachers are likely to be as instructionally effective in their first year of teaching as a typical third-year teacher (Pomerance and Walsh 2020). As a result, NCTQ strongly urges EPPs to lead the cooperating teacher selection process, using data on instructional quality as their primary criteria. Unfortunately, neither EPPs nor school districts appear comfortable routinely selecting their most effective teachers to serve as cooperating teachers, with districts concerned about causing a rift among their

teaching staff and EPPs unwilling to step into a potentially sensitive situation (Pomerance and Walsh 2020). Both EPPs and districts also report that it is difficult to find enough willing teachers to serve all teaching candidates. The Washington State study of preparation programs found that only between 3 percent and 4 percent of teachers agree to serve as cooperating teachers (Goldhaber et al. 2020). NCTQ found that only 10 percent of traditional preparation programs play an active role in confirming some or all relevant instructional mentor skills of potential cooperating teachers. Ninety percent of these programs have either no involvement in cooperating teacher selection or play a minimal role in the process (Pomerance and Walsh 2020).

Although these research results point to the importance of selecting cooperating teachers with strong instructional and mentoring skills, the processes and criteria used for selecting cooperating teachers are not well known and appear to vary significantly across preparation programs (National Council for Teacher Quality 2016, 2017). Like the criteria most often used for selecting placement schools, the most common determinants for selecting cooperating teachers are often their schools' geographic proximity to the EPP, the EPP having previous relationships with the placement schools and cooperating teachers, and the cooperating teachers graduating from the same preparation program as the teacher candidates (Krieg, Goldhaber, and Theobald 2020; St. John et al. 2018).

The reason that the more highly effective teachers do not serve as cooperating teachers may be at least partially explained by the fact that there is little financial incentive to do so. Nationally, cooperating teachers are paid, on average, only $246 per semester (Goldhaber et al. 2020). Of the five West Virginia EPPs interviewed for this study, cooperating teacher pay ranged from $100 to $500 per semester. Three of the five West Virginia EPPs paid between $100 and $250 per semester. Another reason teachers were reluctant to host a resident or student teacher in their classroom is concern it may harm their students' learning. However, studies have shown this is not the case, especially for more effective teachers (Pomerance and Walsh 2020; St. John et al. 2018).

The research literature strongly points to the need for residency programs to seek out cooperating teachers who have demonstrated instructional effectiveness. Studies suggest that teacher candidates who are placed with cooperating teachers with high evaluation ratings and student value-added scores are more likely to be instructionally effective themselves (Ronfeldt et al. 2018).

Using the same format as the previous table, Table 2 summarizes information on evidence-based practices identified in the literature, WVBE standards, and the interviews of EPPs and residency programs on selecting cooperating teachers.

Evidence-Based Practice. The findings of several studies suggest that teacher candidates mentored by highly effective cooperating teachers are more likely to be effective teachers themselves. On average, these candidates enter their first year of teaching as effective as teachers whose cooperating teachers were less effective are in their third year of teaching. There is some evidence that early career teachers also tend to be more effective if mentored by cooperating teachers who are skilled mentors in key instructional domains. Based on these findings, preparation programs

should focus on recruiting instructionally effective teachers as cooperating teachers. These teachers should also be particularly skilled at modeling effective instructional approaches or receive training to develop these skills. NCTQ strongly recommends that EPPs play an active role in ensuring every resident or student teacher has access to cooperating teachers possessing these skills rather than leaving such a critical process up to partner districts and schools.

West Virginia Standards. The WVBE standards (Approval of Educator Preparation Programs 5100, C.S.R. §126 [2022]) establish minimum requirements for cooperating teachers' credentials and experience levels. It also seeks to set a minimum level of instructional effectiveness by requiring potential cooperating teachers to earn at least an Accomplished rating on the State's Educator Evaluation scale. However, only 20 percent of teacher evaluations are based on evidence of student learning, and the State no longer requires State assessment results as a measure of student learning growth (National Council on Teacher Quality 2022). As a result, teachers' evaluation ratings may not provide consistent measures of instructional effectiveness. State Board rules also require cooperating teachers to complete a State-developed training. The State standards are silent on who is responsible for selecting cooperating teachers, but ultimately EPPs are accountable for the quality of their programs.

West Virginia EPPs. The five West Virginia programs interviewed for this study all select cooperating teachers primarily on the basis of their meeting the State's minimum requirements and teaching in a grade level or subject area appropriate for their resident mentee. Only EPP E explicitly assesses the academic achievement of potential cooperating teachers' students. The programs all provided some supplemental training beyond the State's cooperating teacher training. They all provided additional co-teaching training, while three also provided training on other topics such as using the summative evaluation tool for residents. All of the programs rely on their partner districts and schools to identify and recommend potential cooperating teachers. Three of the programs take a more active role in reviewing candidates and making final selections. Two of the programs leave the selection of cooperating teachers largely up to their partner districts and schools.

External Residency Programs. The three out-of-state residency programs required the same minimum of 3 years of teaching experience for potential cooperating teachers as West Virginia's State standard. Two of the programs also explicitly required evidence of effective teaching, with one also requiring evidence of professional growth. The selection criteria of one program included prior mentoring experience with teacher candidates. Each of the three programs provided extensive training focused on co-teaching and mentoring skills. Two of the three programs led all aspects of the selection process, while one collaborated with districts and schools to identify and evaluate prospective cooperating teachers. However, this program preferred to cycle through a small cadre of established cooperating teachers.

Table 2. Selecting cooperating teachers

Source	Qualifications	Cooperating Teacher Training	Responsibility for Selecting Cooperating Teachers
Evidence-Based Practice	› Demonstrates effective teaching practices › Mentoring skills in key instructional domains	› NA	› Educator preparation program (EPP) establishes criteria and leads the selection
West Virginia Standards[a]	› Minimum 3 years of experience › Hold a WV 5-year teaching credential › Earned Accomplished or higher evaluation rating for past 2 years › Completed State cooperating teacher training or National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification	› Requires State-approved cooperating teacher training course or be NBPTS-certified teacher	› NA
West Virginia EPP A	› State Board requirements › Appropriate certification	› Trained in co-teaching and working in trauma-sensitive schools	› EPP sends principals profiles of residents, principal makes selections
West Virginia EPP B	› State Board requirements › Appropriate certification	› Trained in co-teaching and using resident evaluation tool	› EPP seeks principals' recommendations › Prefers cooperating teachers it has worked with previously
West Virginia EPP C	› State Board requirements › Appropriate certification	› Trained in co-teaching	› EPP works with principal and school placement coordinator
West Virginia EPP D	› State Board requirements › Appropriate certification	› Conducts "pairs" training and using resident evaluation tool	› District leads › District and school recruit qualified teachers
West Virginia EPP E	› State Board requirements › Appropriate certification › Performance of students on State tests	› Trained in co-teaching	› District leads › District curriculum director makes selections
External Residency A	› Appropriate subjects/grade levels › Minimum 3 years of experience › Full-time teaching position › Evidence of exemplary classroom practice	› Six days of training in co-teaching and effective mentoring skills	› EPP leads
External Residency B	› Appropriate subject/grade level › Minimum 3 years of experience › Prior mentoring experience	› Trained in co-teaching, accommodating residents in classroom, and in "crucial confrontations"	› Residency program leads process but collaborates with EPPs and districts
External Residency C	› Appropriate subjects/grade level › Minimum 3 years of experience › Full-time teaching position › Evidence of effective teaching, professional growth, leadership › Recommendation of school principal	› Completion of EPP's Mentor Teacher Training Module	› Decision made collaboratively by EPP, superintendent, and principal › EPP prefers to work with existing cadre of experienced cooperating teachers

[a] §126-114-5.12 and 5.12.a, §126-114-6.7.b.5.A, §126-114-5.13 – Cooperating teacher qualifications.

Matching Candidates with Cooperating/Mentor Teachers

Despite the outsized impact cooperating teachers can have on the future effectiveness of teacher candidates, relatively little research has been undertaken on how these pairings are—or should be—made (Goldhaber et al. 2020). The research literature on matching teacher candidates, whether student teachers or residents, with cooperating teachers focuses on two areas. The first is the basic logistics of pairing teacher candidates with cooperating teachers. This includes ensuring cooperating teachers meet basic State or program criteria, such as the type of certification they hold and years of teaching experience; ensuring they teach in the same subject area and/or grade levels as the candidate's area of study; and identifying districts and schools that are conveniently located to avoid long travel times by candidates and their preparation programs' clinical supervisors.

The other focus area is on making a compatible match. That is, pairing candidates with cooperating teachers with similar or complementary personalities, educational philosophies, and teaching styles. Making a compatible match may help to strengthen the mentoring relationship and improves the odds that candidates will emerge from their clinical experience feeling better prepared and confident of their teaching ability (Montgomery 2000; Scheib and Rowland 2022). Some preparation programs have begun using mentoring surveys or personality inventories administered to both candidates and cooperating teachers in hope of improving the chances of making a good match (Kitchel and Torres 2007; Octavia Tripp and Eick 2008).

As discussed previously, another important piece of the matching puzzle is how cooperating teachers are selected. The evidence suggests that teacher candidates are better prepared and become more effective teachers if they are mentored by teachers with effective instructional practices and who possess strong mentoring skills in key instructional domains (National Council on Teacher Quality 2016; Ronfeldt, Brockman, and Campbell 2018).

The Logistics of the Match

The available studies (Krieg, Goldhaber, and Theobald 2020; Krieg, Theobald, and Goldhaber 2016) suggest that in most cases pairings are driven by finding a school that:

- includes subject areas or grade levels compatible with a teacher candidate's credential area;
- is geographically convenient to the EPP;
- has the capacity to effectively sponsor a teacher candidate's clinical experience;
- has qualified cooperating teachers who are willing to work with teacher candidates; and
- maintains an ongoing relationship with the EPP.

The logistical side of the matching process is driven by several factors, including State standards, accreditation requirements, and the needs and desires of the teacher candidate (Indiana Department of Education 2018; St. John et al. 2018). These factors may influence the types of schools where teacher candidates may be placed and the cooperating teachers with whom teacher candidates may be paired. For example, West Virginia's rules governing clinical, or field-based,

experiences require the cooperating teacher to hold a valid West Virginia teaching license in the areas in which a candidate is seeking certification (Approval of Educator Preparation Programs 5100, C.S.R. §126 [2022]).

Pairing a teacher candidate with a cooperating teacher working in a school with close geographic proximity to the EPP holds several advantages. First, it reduces travel time between the EPP and school for both the candidate and the EPP's clinical supervisor. Second, close proximity facilitates the development of a close working relationship between the EPP and the placement district and school, leading to a greater likelihood of other candidates being placed in that school and possibly with the same cooperating teacher. Finally, closer proximity may lead to cost savings for the EPP as reduced travel time may allow each clinical faculty member to supervise more candidates, potentially reducing the number of clinical faculty needed to supervise the program's placements (Hirschboeck et al. 2022; St. John et al. 2018).

Identifying qualified and willing cooperating teachers may also prove to be a challenge. As noted above, only a small percentage of teachers volunteer to serve as cooperating teachers. Principals may also have concerns about whether their school has the bandwidth to take on the placement of one or more teacher candidates. In assessing whether to accept a placement, they take into consideration factors such as their school's performance level, teachers' workloads, and the number of candidates placed in the school in recent years. Both school leadership and EPPs are concerned about inducing "mentor fatigue" from using the same cooperating teachers too frequently (Goldhaber et al. 2020; St. John et al. 2018).

The literature and interviews with residency programs both pointed to the importance of a close and ongoing relationship between the EPP and placement district and schools (Maier and Youngs 2009; St. John et al. 2018). The more experience and trust an EPP has in working with a district's schools, the more likely the EPPs will be to continue to place teacher candidates in those schools. This was borne out in this study's interviews with several West Virginia EPPs and county school districts. These programs noted that initial placements and pairings were most often based on the relationships and trust EPP faculty had developed with principals, placement coordinators, and cooperating teachers the EPP had worked with in the past. Two of the three external residency programs also noted their preference for working with schools and cooperating teachers with whom they were familiar.

Making Compatible Matches

Much of the research on matching looks at the importance of compatibility between the teacher candidate and cooperating teacher, and approaches to predicting the quality of potential matches. Generally, these studies took two different approaches to assessing the effectiveness of various matching strategies. One strand of studies relied primarily on candidate and cooperating teacher perceptions of the mentoring experience. A second, and more recent, strand made use of objective measures of the eventual effectiveness of the candidates as early career teachers.

The literature suggests that making a good match between candidate and cooperating teacher is important to the ultimate success of the candidate's transition to full-time teaching. Studies of candidates' perceptions of their clinical experience found one of the strongest determinants of success is the candidate-cooperating teacher relationship. Where candidates felt they shared similar values, attitudes, working styles, and teaching styles with their cooperating teachers, candidates were more comfortable working with their cooperating teachers and felt better prepared to teach by their clinical experience (Kitchel and Torres 2007). Where candidates were not as comfortable with their cooperating teacher relationship, they expressed feeling less well prepared by their clinical experience and, the evidence suggests, may experience a more difficult transition to their own classroom when starting their first teaching job (Kasperbauer and Roberts 2007).

The study of Washington State educator preparation programs (St. John et al. 2018) highlights the gulf between actual practices found in many preparation programs and those the evidence suggests may lead to more successful clinical experiences. Among the Washington State preparation programs reviewed by St. John and her colleagues, the typical practice for matching candidates and cooperating teachers was to leave the pairing to the placement districts or schools. Generally, the EPPs knew little about the process used to do the matching (St. John et al. 2018). Several of the EPPs studied noted that by leaving the matching process of candidates and cooperating teachers to districts or schools with little oversight from the EPP, there may be a greater possibility that candidates may be paired with less effective teachers in hope of supplementing the teachers' instruction, rather than with effective or highly effective teachers (St. John et al. 2018).

The best scenario the Washington State study found for pairing candidates with cooperating teachers consisted of the EPP or school first suggesting an initial match. If the candidate and cooperating teacher agree to the match, a meeting is set up with the candidate, cooperating teacher, school principal, and placement coordinator to collectively determine if the pairing is a good fit. In most cases, the pairing is confirmed. In some cases, the cooperating teacher may reject a candidate they perceive as potentially weak based on prior performance on coursework or clinical experiences (St. John et al. 2018), raising concern that hosting the candidate may be detrimental to the cooperating teacher's students.

Due to the importance of the candidate-cooperating teacher relationship, some programs, both traditional and teacher residency preparation, have adopted personality inventory instruments or other surveys or questionnaires in an attempt to assess the level of compatibility between candidates and prospective cooperating teachers as part of the matching process.

A study of 30 agricultural education student teachers and their cooperating teachers at the University of Missouri-Columbia and University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign explored whether using personality assessments as part of the pairing process improved the likelihood of beneficial matches (Kitchel and Torres 2007). This preparation program used two instruments, a modified version of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and the Mentoring Relationship Questionnaire

(MRQ) developed by Dr. Bradley Greiman at the University of Missouri-Columbia (Greiman 2002). The study found much higher correlations between responses on the MRQ and perceived satisfaction with the clinical experience by both candidates and their cooperating teachers than with the MBTI responses. Correlations based on MRQ responses for both student and cooperating teachers ranged from .59 to .85. Those based on MBTI responses ranged from -.31 to .06 (Kitchel and Torres 2007). These findings indicate the MRQ instrument was a much better predictor of both students' and cooperating teachers' perceived satisfaction with their mentoring relationship.

A second, smaller study (four pairs of candidates and cooperating teachers) found a similar result. This program administered the Insight Learning Inventory, also a condensed version of the MBTI, to both student teachers and their cooperating teachers (Octavia Tripp and Eick 2008). Of the four pairs of student and cooperating teachers, the members of only one pair expressed satisfaction with the match. While the authors concluded the Insight Learning Inventory was not useful for improving student-cooperating teacher matches, it did help to identify areas where cooperating teachers may require focused training for improving their mentoring skills (Octavia Tripp and Eick 2008).

While these studies point to the importance of ensuring some level of compatibility between candidate and cooperating teacher, the data are most often self-reported on surveys of candidates and their cooperating teachers. Unfortunately, to date these studies cite little evidence that these perceptions of greater compatibility and comfort with the match leads to candidates becoming more effective teachers or remaining in the profession longer. The empirical studies (Ronfeldt, Schwartz, and Jacob 2014; Ronfeldt 2015) strongly suggest candidates will become more effective teachers if matched with cooperating teachers with strong instructional practices. Ultimately, it may be the case that both factors are important in providing a well-rounded, successful clinical experience.

Evidence-Based Practices. The research literature suggests that placing teacher candidates with cooperating teachers located in schools in close proximity to the EPP improves the economic efficiency of the program and helps to build a stronger working relationship between the EPP and its placement districts and schools. A key research finding suggests that teacher candidates matched with cooperating teachers with demonstrated effective teaching practices and greater skill in mentoring instructional practices, classroom environment, and lesson planning are more likely to be effective teachers themselves. Studies also suggest that matches that enhance compatibility between candidates and cooperating teachers in areas such as personality, educational philosophy, and work style may result in a better candidate-cooperating teacher relationship and a more successful transition to teaching by the candidate.

West Virginia Standards. Under State Board of Education rules (Approval of Educator Preparation Programs 5100, C.S.R. §126 [2022]), cooperating teachers are required to be licensed by the State of West Virginia, and their certification must be in the same areas as their teacher candidates. State Board of Education rules do not require a specific process for matching candidates with cooperating teachers or the use of surveys, interviews, or other tools to potentially improve their compatibility as mentor and mentee. The rules do not specifically designate which entity, the EPP or placement

district or school, should be responsible for leading the matching process. However, ultimately EPPs are responsible for the quality of their preparation programs and graduates.

West Virginia EPPs. The resident-cooperating teacher matching process for programs in West Virginia varies across EPPs and their partner county districts. Based on interviews with teacher preparation faculty from five EPPs across the State, the process for how residents and cooperating teachers are matched differs based on the partnership agreements between each EPP and county district, and their past practices dating to before residency programs were implemented.

The factors that programs take into consideration when placing and matching residents with cooperating teachers in West Virginia are similar to those described in the research literature. The key placement and pairing criteria noted by West Virginia's EPP programs included the following:

- the cooperating teacher meets minimum State requirements for serving as a mentor;
- the cooperating teacher's certification and teaching assignment is in an appropriate grade level and subject area relative to the resident's prospective certification area;
- the placement school is geographically convenient for both the resident and EPP supervising faculty; and
- the school has a track record of providing student teachers and residents with positive clinical experiences.

Generally, the degree to which an EPP is involved in and oversees the matching of residents and cooperating teachers depends on its familiarity and past experiences with a county district and school. If an EPP's faculty and placement coordinator know a school's principal, fieldwork placement coordinator, and cooperating teachers well, they will tend to allow the school more leeway in the matching process. In cases where the EPP has less familiarity with a placement school or its principal, it will play a more significant role in the matching process.

All five of the EPPs noted their matching process for residents was similar to, if not the same as, the process used previously for student teachers. None of the programs appeared to use tools such as a personality inventory or MRQ as part of the pairing process. However, several programs hold a half- or full-day "meet and greet" for newly paired residents and cooperating teachers to allow them time to get to know one another prior to the start of the residency year and discuss their respective educational philosophies and expectations for the residency fieldwork. The preparation programs also monitor the pairing closely early on and will intervene with or change pairings where there is a clear mismatch of personalities or approaches, or where one or both of the participants are uncomfortable or dissatisfied with the relationship.

The matching practices for the five interviewed EPPs are briefly summarized below.

- **EPP A.** The EPP works to provide residents with quality placements, focusing on factors such as geographical convenience and cost, and appropriate grade or subject matching. The matching itself is primarily the responsibility of placement schools, typically led by principals

and local residency liaison teachers. The EPP follows up initial pairings with a half-day gathering on campus for residents and their cooperating teachers to allow them to meet face-to-face and learn more about the program's expectations for the residency year.

- **EPP B.** The program prefers to place residents in districts and schools where they have a history of placing both student teachers and residents, and where graduates of the program have been hired as teachers. Initial criteria for placements include schools with grade levels and subject areas matching residents' certification areas. In placement schools that are well known to the program, the EPP's placement coordinator will typically accept the principal's matching recommendation. The placement coordinator plays a larger role in schools with less of a placement history with the EPP.
- **EPP C.** The EPP placement coordinator first selects schools on the basis of meeting residents' needs. This includes finding an appropriate match for the subject or grade level of residents' certification area. The EPP's placement coordinator favors county districts and schools where the program has a good relationship with the district's human resource director, placement coordinators, principals, and cooperating teachers. The EPP's placement coordinator places a premium on selecting teachers who have successfully served as cooperating teachers previously. With implementation of its residency program, the EPP has played a more active role in the placement and pairing of its residents. Nevertheless, both processes are undertaken in partnership with county districts and schools.
- **EPP D.** The EPP's placement coordinator actively works with their partner county districts and schools to identify suitable placement opportunities. Once placement schools have been selected, the matching of residents with cooperating teachers is left primarily to the schools' principals and lead mentors.
- **EPP E.** The EPP's placement coordinator works with each partner county district's curriculum director to select potential cooperating teachers. Most of the partner districts take school or classroom average State test scores into consideration when selecting cooperating teachers. Once cooperating teachers have been selected, the EPP's placement coordinator works with districts' curriculum directors and school principals to match residents with cooperating teachers. The EPP's focus is to ensure residents are paired with effective teachers. The EPP is more involved overall in the placement and matching process since implementing its residency program.

External Residency Programs. All three of the external residency programs interviewed took steps to try to improve the quality of their matches between residents and their cooperating teachers. These ranged from using a personality inventory tool to more informal interviews and meetings.

- **External Residency A.** This program takes several steps to increase the odds their pairings will result in personal and professional compatibility between residents and mentors. The program prefers to select their own graduates to serve as mentors, believing these teachers know the program well and better understand the needs of residents and how to effectively mentor residents. Where graduates are not available to serve as mentors, faculty from the program

interview prospective mentors to learn more about important mentoring dispositions, such as their willingness to share their classroom and their ability to relate to mentees and effectively mentor them. The program uses several tools to bolster the matching process:

- First, both residents and mentors take a condensed online version of the Myers-Briggs personality inventory.
- Second, residents are administered a survey designed to identify what their greatest mentoring needs are.
- Next, both residents and mentors are administered a survey designed to create a portrait of who they are personally, highlighting information about their personalities, background, and interests.
- Finally, program staff hold interviews with both residents and mentors. Program staff then take all of these data points into consideration to make the matches.

» **External Residency B.** Where possible, this program seeks mentor teachers with prior mentoring experience or who have completed a State-offered mentor training program. The program employs a series of interviews of both residents and mentor teachers to help ensure their personalities are compatible and to raise the odds of making a successful match. The interviews proceed as follows:

- The mentor teachers undergo interviews with the residency program staff, EPP faculty, and district and school administrators from their school district.
- Residents begin with interviews administered during their advisory meetings prior to the start of their residency. The purpose of these interviews is to develop a "sketch" of the candidate in terms of personality, educational philosophy, and experiences thus far in the residency program. Next, the resident is interviewed by the placement coordinator from the placement district or school.

An initial match is made based on an analysis of the information provided by these interviews. Prior to finalizing the match, the resident and mentor teacher meet to assess for themselves their potential compatibility and ability to work well together in a mentor-mentee relationship. If this meeting goes well, the pairing is finalized.

» **External Residency C.** Similar to the other two external residency programs, this program provides multiple opportunities for both prospective residents and mentor teachers to learn about each other's personalities, educational philosophies, and management styles through multiple approaches. Here, residents and mentor teachers both complete profiles detailing this information. Residents also use an online application to create a 5-minute video in which they discuss their personal life, educational philosophy, and experiences in greater detail. Prospective mentors view videos from multiple candidates and rank them in order of their perceived compatibility (this interaction will occur face-to-face when COVID-19 has sufficiently receded). The residency program's director is responsible for making final matching decisions based on information from the profiles and the mentors' candidate rankings.

Table 3 summarizes key practices for matching teacher candidates with cooperating teachers in a similar format to Tables 1 and 2. These practice areas include the basic criteria used for making the match—that is, the minimum criteria guiding the matching process; other criteria used in the matching process; how compatibility between candidate and cooperating teacher may be assessed if it is used as one of the matching criteria; and the entity most responsible for leading the matching process.

Table 3. Matching residents with cooperating teachers

Source	Basic Criteria	Other Criteria	Assessing Compatibility	Responsibility for Matching
Evidence-Based Practice	› Geographic proximity › Appropriate certification › Effective instruction › Mentoring skills in key instructional domains	› Compatibility	› NA	› Educator preparation program (EPP)
West Virginia Standards[a]	› Appropriate certification	› NA	› NA	› NA
West Virginia EPP A	› Geographic proximity › Appropriate certification	› Compatibility	› EPP campus event for residents and cooperating teachers	› School leads—principal and residency coordinator
West Virginia EPP B	› Geographic proximity › Appropriate certification	› NA	› NA	› EPP based on knowledge of prospective schools/cooperating teachers
West Virginia EPP C	› Geographic proximity › Appropriate certification	› NA	› NA	› EPP based on knowledge of prospective schools/cooperating teachers
West Virginia EPP D	› Geographic proximity › Appropriate certification	› NA	› NA	› School leads—principal and lead mentor
West Virginia EPP E	› Geographic proximity › Appropriate certification	› Teaching effectiveness › Mentoring skills	› NA	› EPP leads, works with district and schools
External Residency A	› Geographic proximity › Appropriate certification	› Teaching effectiveness › Mentoring skills › Compatibility	› Personality inventory › Surveys › Interviews	› EPP
External Residency B	› Geographic proximity › Appropriate certification	› Mentoring skills › Compatibility	› Interviews › Resident/mentor meeting	› Residency program
External Residency C	› Geographic proximity › Appropriate certification	› Compatibility	› Interviews/videos	› EPP and prospective cooperating teachers

[a] §126-114-5.12.a – Cooperating teacher certification.

Summary

Although there is currently limited research into program characteristics that may affect teacher preparation programs' quality, the available studies point to candidates' clinical experiences as perhaps the most important determinant of their subsequent effectiveness as teachers. The literature highlights several key processes that may determine the ultimate quality of these clinical experiences. These include identifying appropriate placement schools, selecting high-quality cooperating teachers, and successfully matching candidates with cooperating teachers. One strand of research stresses the importance of pairing candidates and cooperating teachers who are compatible in terms of personality, educational philosophy, and teaching style. Another stand presents evidence that candidates are more likely to become effective teachers if they are paired with cooperating teachers who demonstrate effective teaching practices and, to a lesser extent, are proficient in mentoring certain key instructional skills. Unfortunately, studies show that the majority of preparation programs do not follow the evidence when it comes to developing and implementing these processes.

Recommendations

The following recommendations follow from the findings presented in this report.

Recommendation 1. The Department should consider developing evidence-based guidance, and perhaps training, on important clinical experience components, including selecting placement schools, selecting and training cooperating teachers, and matching residents with cooperating teachers.

Recommendation 2. The Department should develop data systems for collecting and analyzing data from EPPs on their practices for placing residents in clinical experiences and corresponding data on their program graduates' subsequent performance as teachers, including residents' and their cooperating teachers' perceptions of readiness to teach, graduates' evaluation scores in the first 1 or 2 years of teaching, and their students' value-added scores on State assessments or similar measures of academic achievement.

Recommendation 3. The Department should seek to standardize and increase stipends paid to cooperating teachers. Studies show that more proven effective teachers are needed to serve as cooperating teachers, and one reason more are not serving is inadequate financial incentives. Currently, some cooperating teachers receive no compensation while others are paid less than $1,000 for a full academic year of mentoring.

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Appendix:
Study Method

The information presented in this report was derived from three sources: 1) a comprehensive literature review, 2) interviews with five West Virginia EPPs, and 3) interviews with three established residency programs located in other states. The literature reviewed for this report came primarily from peer-reviewed journal articles and reports produced by education policy organizations, residency support organizations such as the National Center for Teacher Residencies, and established residency programs. In addition to a review of the literature, interviews were conducted with five EPPs and three county districts. An interview questionnaire was developed to guide discussions with these organizations about their practices for placing residents for their clinical experiences, selecting cooperating teachers, and matching residents with cooperating teachers. Although only three county school districts were interviewed directly, the five participating EPPs partner with between 25 and 30 districts, providing at least some insight into the relevant practices of roughly half of the State's county school districts. Finally, a purposefully selected sample of three established residency programs located in other states were interviewed to learn what their approaches were in each of these areas. The three residency programs include an urban program that is currently undergoing a significant expansion, a rural program partnering with multiple EPPs and school districts, and a small program based in a State university currently serving candidates for prekindergarten through early elementary certifications.