

# Preparing Day One Ready Teachers

Early observations and lessons learned from Phase 1 of an innovative partnership to embed training on high-quality instructional materials in teacher residency programs.



NATIONAL CENTER FOR  
**TEACHER  
RESIDENCIES**

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## About NCTR

The National Center for Teacher Residencies is a nonprofit organization dedicated to developing, launching, supporting, and accelerating the impact of teacher residency programs. Headquartered in Chicago, NCTR's mission is to disrupt historical educational inequities by advancing the teacher residency movement to prepare effective, diverse, culturally responsive educators. For more information about NCTR, please visit [nctrresidencies.org](http://nctrresidencies.org).

## About EdReports

EdReports is an independent nonprofit designed to improve K-12 education. [EdReports.org](http://EdReports.org) increases the capacity of teachers, administrators, and leaders to seek, identify, and demand the highest quality instructional materials. Drawing upon expert educators, our reviews of instructional materials and support of smart adoption processes equip teachers with excellent materials nationwide. For more information please visit [edreports.org](http://edreports.org).

## About the Authors

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# Executive Summary

In 2020 the National Center for Teacher Residencies (NCTR) and EdReports forged a partnership to address the need for teacher awareness of high-quality instructional materials during their preservice training. Teacher residency programs are an ideal environment to equip emerging teachers with the skills to identify and fully utilize quality instructional materials rather than search for or develop their own. “The goal of the project is to provide new teachers undergoing a period of supervision in the classroom with support to become savvy consumers and users of high-quality instructional materials, too rare in teacher preparation programs across the country” (Hirsch & Grossman, 2021). This report represents learning from Year One where teams from each residency participated in three workshops.



## Assumptions Underlying the Work

Examining assumptions regarding what qualifies as good teaching and a good teacher underlie much of this work. Throughout the first-year program activities resulted in surfacing such assumptions and encouraging participant’s openness to reconsidering them in light of new research and lessons learned from the practitioners they serve. While many assumptions were identified, participant discussions were most intense around the following:

**Assumption 1: Autonomy is the hallmark of the teaching profession.** The concept of **teacher autonomy** “refers to the professional independence of **teachers** in schools, especially the degree to which they can make **autonomous** decisions about what they **teach** to students and how they **teach** it” (edglossary.org).

**Assumption 2: Good teachers are skillful lesson plan writers.** Considerable evidence is available that points to two important facts: Few teachers are able to develop lessons that are consistently standards-aligned and on grade level.

**Assumption 3: High-quality curriculum is code for “scripted” instruction.** Many college faculty members are unfamiliar with the emerging high-quality curriculum reviewed on websites such as EdReports. Their mental models for curriculum vary widely based on their experiences with it during their own classroom teaching tenure.

**Assumption 4: Effective teachers use curriculum, textbooks, and other materials as resources rather than the focus of instruction.** A common perception among experienced teachers is that comprehensive curriculum materials are very important for new teachers and less important for veterans. In fact, experienced teachers may view such materials as a crutch that they avoid using.

**Assumption 5: Teacher prep programs cannot limit their focus to one curriculum.** “Curriculum decisions are left to school systems and teachers.

**Assumption 6: Curriculum literacy is not a prerequisite for preservice educators.** Wide discrepancies abound in the meaning that educators attach to the word “curriculum”; practitioners show even less familiarity with the phrase “curriculum literacy.”

## What Our Lessons Mean for Residencies, Teacher Preparation-at-Large, and Policymakers

This report highlights key strategies of the residency model that may serve as levers for advancing equity. The themes explored in this project are not exclusive to teacher residencies. These concepts and strategies can be applied at any teacher preparation program. Policy makers, school district leaders, and education preparation providers are invited to consider the following actions to advance the conversation and work within your sphere of influence.

**Examine your new teacher graduate profile.** Determine the role curriculum literacy plays in it (see sidebar “Curriculum Literacy Basic Competencies”) and whether it is time to rethink what constitutes a graduate of your program.

**Convene a “great” team.** Begin with “willing” or “interested” educators. Such curriculum work requires an intentional, functional partnership between an IHE and school district(s) or charter management organization (CMO) determined, in a large part, by the extent to which the district(s) or CMO is committed to using high-quality instructional materials and how it will prioritize its use for teacher residents in both their course preparation and their residency-year experience.

**Collect baseline data to focus early conversations.** Collecting and examining data relevant to the curriculum literacy agenda offers a starting point for the learning journey. Data is key to surfacing problems as well as opportunities for addressing project goals and expectations.

**Rethink selection, preparation, and support of cooperating teachers and mentors.** A 2020 NCTR research brief affirms the significance of the role of the mentor on resident success as well as benefits that accrue to mentors from their supervisory experience (Azar, Casciano, & Puma, 2020). Carefully consider both the extent to which mentors are curriculum literate and additional support you can give them so they may continue to advance their own curriculum literacy.

**Flip the script in learning experiences.** More demanding career- and college-ready standards demand different learning experiences for students. Few teachers were prepared with those types of experiences in mind. Flipping the script and asking participants to enter professional learning as “students” while their learning facilitators use state- or district-selected high-quality instructional materials brings multiple benefits.

**Document the progress and impact of your efforts; be prepared to share your findings.** The more rigorously teacher preparation program administrators and district decision makers assess impacts of new preparation practices on teaching and learning outcomes, the more there is to learn from these new behaviors.



## A Compelling Lever for Equity in Learning

Peter Senge's (1990) book, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, applied the metaphor of trim tabs to systems by citing designer Buckminster Fuller who had a wonderful illustration of leverage that also served as his metaphor for the principle of leverage—the “trim tab,”... a small “rudder on the rudder” of a ship. Its function is to make it easier to turn the rudder, which, then, makes it easier to turn the ship. (p. 64)

Thinking about systems—systems of learning, for example—Senge notes that:  
[S]mall, well-focused actions can sometimes produce significant, enduring improvements, if they're in the right place. Systems thinkers refer to this principle as “leverage.” Tackling a difficult problem is often a matter of seeing where the high leverage lies, a place which - with a minimum of effort - would lead to lasting, significant improvement. (p.64)

Among all the important things leaders could do, the notion of trim tabs asks leaders to identify which activities bring the greatest leverage and do them first (Sparks, 2013).

State policymakers and school district leaders invest in their own educational trim tabs for equity—high-quality instructional materials and the professional learning and support to implement them well in classrooms. These investments are motivated by studies showing that high-quality materials mean better outcomes for students (Kane et al., 2016,) and that how

teachers use them affects those outcomes (Chiefs for Change, 2017). First, give hard-working teachers, particularly those serving students in low-income communities, high-quality, standards-aligned curricula. Next, make sure they have the knowledge and support they need to take advantage of everything those curricula offer. That investment will leverage their instructional efforts with their students (Short & Hirsh, 2020; Student Achievement Partners, 2020).

**If we want all students to be given the opportunity to achieve career- and college-ready standards, all teachers must have the materials and support to implement them in ways in which students will benefit most.**

If we want all students to be given the opportunity to achieve career- and college-ready standards, all teachers must have the materials and support to implement them in ways in which students will benefit most. Absent support for implementation, teachers use high-quality instructional materials as simply one more resource; they pick and choose what feels most comfortable and thus may limit students' opportunities to do grade-level work (TNTP, 2018). And these potentially inhibiting actions are more prevalent in communities that predominantly serve students living in poverty and students of color (Goldberg, 2016; Opfer, et al., 2016).

While the immediate challenge is supporting the 3.5 million teachers in classrooms today in accessing and using high-quality materials, a long-term opportunity is using this knowledge to shift how we prepare teachers and ensure they are day-one ready to select and use high-quality instructional materials with their students. However, curriculum literacy—the awareness of what rigorous, grade-level content looks like and the ability to implement it effectively in the classroom—is rarely emphasized in teacher education programs (Steiner, 2019). This absence poses both a challenge and an opportunity. Making this one shift in teacher preparation may present the trim tab opportunity for transforming teacher preparation and outcomes for K–12 students.

## What Does Day-One Ready Mean?

NCTR's High Priority Resident Practices highlight what established residency programs prioritize to prepare day-one ready teachers and promote teacher retention. As part of our commitment to preparing new educators with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be effective on day one, NCTR guides partner programs to use the High Priority Resident Practices to design the residency year curriculum to integrate theory and practice. Graduates of residency programs who are able to demonstrate mastery of the descriptions of NCTR's High Priority Practices are considered day-one ready. You can access NCTR's High Priority Practices on our [website](#).



## How To Recognize High-Quality Instructional Materials

Users, evaluators, and designers of well-aligned materials identify the following “look-fors” of high-quality materials:

- Clear articulation of learning goals aligned to standards and instructional shifts as well as incorporation of culturally relevant pedagogy.
- Adult-level explanations of the content to support content knowledge and practices for teaching.
- Insights into how students might think and how student knowledge and experience might interact with the content.
- A set of instructional activities and tasks well-aligned to the learning goals with assessments that show evidence of student growth toward those goals.
- A comprehensive (year-long), coherent (lessons connected to one another day-to-day, unit-to-unit), sequenced learning path to prepare students for grade level mastery.

*- Adapted from Deborah Loewenberg Ball's CCSSO Presentation (2020)*

In 2020 the National Center for Teacher Residencies (NCTR), the only organization in the country dedicated to developing, launching, supporting, and accelerating the impact of teacher residency programs, and EdReports, an organization committed to increasing the capacity of teachers, administrators, and leaders to seek, identify, and demand the highest quality instructional materials, forged a partnership to address the need for teacher awareness of high-quality instructional materials during their preservice training. Teacher residency programs are an ideal environment to equip emerging teachers with the skills to identify and fully utilize quality instructional materials rather than search for or develop their own.

Motivated by a vision of graduating teacher candidates who are curriculum literate and skillful users of at least one high-quality curriculum, the two partners launched a multi-year pilot program to consider ways of realizing their vision. Following a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process, NCTR and EdReports chose to work with three teacher residency programs: Alternative Pathways to Education Certification Program (APEC) (South Carolina), Kern High Teacher Residency (California), and William Carey University School of Education (Mississippi). This report represents learning from Year One where teams from each residency participated in three workshops (see sidebar “Workshop Objectives”) and coaching sessions to determine implications and future actions of curriculum literacy in action, namely, when teachers have the knowledge and skills to 1) analyze and adapt curriculum to meet student needs and 2) build targeted supports to address unfinished learning while still ensuring that all students master grade-level content.

### NCTR and EdReports Programs Workshop Objectives

Participants in teacher residency sites will be able to:

- Assess the quality and alignment of materials covering subject-specific criteria, such as whether texts used in English language arts are on grade level and appropriately challenging, or math problems are sufficiently rigorous.
- Prepare for lessons using well-aligned materials, including assessing where and how to incorporate targeted supports for students who need them, such as breaking up lessons into manageable chunks.
- Leverage materials that are not fully aligned, for example, by judiciously adding elements from high-quality curriculum to fill gaps in rigor or lesson structure.
- Advocate for better-aligned materials, including building trust with key decision makers and identifying resources that can best help to make the case.

**“The goal of the project is to provide new teachers undergoing a period of supervision in the classroom with support to become savvy consumers and users of high-quality instructional materials, too rare in teacher preparation programs across the country” (Hirsch & Grossman, 2021).**

The residency model provides fertile ground for teacher residents to grow these skills through immersive, sustained practice in a teacher residency setting where the partnership between the institution of higher education (IHE) and the school districts where residents are placed is a priority. In fact, the quality of this partnership is a determinant factor in the overall success of a teacher residency. It is important to also note that teacher residencies place at its core, the role of

the mentor. In NCTR's residency model, a highly effective, veteran teacher is trained and supported as a mentor to the resident. This one-on-one relationship conveys benefits to both the resident and the mentor in NCTR's model (Azar, Casciano, & Puma, 2020).

Building on this knowledge, NCTR and EdReports seized an opportunity to launch a pilot project in a residency setting where the IHE and school district closely cooperate to support mentors in using and modeling the use of high-quality instructional materials; develop teacher residents' curriculum literacy skills to assess and teach with quality instructional materials in high-needs schools; and test strategies for infusing the use of well-aligned materials in a teacher preparation program.

This report presents early observations and lessons learned from Year One for others considering similar efforts.

## **First Year: EdReports and the National Center for Teacher Residencies Advance a Theory of Action**

Residency programs support teacher candidates in a year-long clinical experience that transforms what teacher candidates learn and how they learn it. During their residency year (clinical experience) there is a carefully orchestrated gradual release of teaching responsibilities. By the end of the residency year, teacher residents feel confident to step into the role of teacher. NCTR and its partner residencies specifically prepare them to serve in high-need schools across the nation

This project makes an investment in preparing emerging teachers to:

- Analyze and use high-quality materials because of the imperative to give teacher residencies access to learning and activities that lead to curriculum literacy;
- Examine current assumptions regarding curriculum literacy and its placement in the preparation program for its students; and
- Engage mentors and teacher candidates in curriculum literacy exercises and classroom applications.

THEN, as an outcome of this work, residency professors, district partners, and mentors will recognize the importance of and opportunities to increase emphasis and placement of curriculum literacy and use of high-quality instructional materials in the program curriculum;

Placing curriculum literacy and the use of high-quality instructional materials prominently in the curriculum will lead to increased instructional effectiveness of new teachers; and

The ultimate benefactors will be students with access to the materials and the improved learning outcomes such materials are able to afford them.



## Phase 1: Pilot Program Surfaced Assumptions

Examining assumptions regarding what qualifies as good teaching and a good teacher underlie much of this work. Throughout the first-year program activities resulted in surfacing such assumptions and encouraging participant's openness to reconsidering them in light of new research and lessons learned from the practitioners they serve. While many assumptions were identified, participant discussions were most intense around the following:

**Assumption 1: Autonomy is the hallmark of the teaching profession.** The concept of teacher autonomy “refers to the professional independence of teachers in schools, especially the degree to which they can make autonomous decisions about what they teach to students and how they teach it” (edglossary.org). Many people pursued the

teaching profession motivated by the professional autonomy it offered. It is not uncommon to hear teachers claim that while administrators may make suggestions, once they close their classroom doors and take the lead of what happens with students. Providing and requiring, even incentivizing, teachers to use an adopted curriculum can be seen as a challenge to their expertise and autonomy—their ability to identify and address what their students need most. College faculty may benefit most by engaging with high-quality instructional materials and considering how they can be used to enrich rather than limit professional decision making.

### **Assumption 2: Good teachers are skillful lesson plan writers.**

Considerable evidence is available that points to two important facts: Few teachers are able to develop lessons that are consistently standards-aligned and on grade level. According to new findings, in a single school year the average student spends 581 of 720 available hours on assignments that are not high quality (TNTP, 2018). Secondly, many teachers turn to Google, Pinterest and Teachers Pay Teachers for lesson planning ideas. A 2016 Rand analysis found that when teachers don't have access to great materials, they hunt for them online—perhaps leading to inconsistent instruction quality that would have the greatest impact on low-income students of color (Opfer, et al., 2016). Examining a 20+ page lesson plan from a highly rated curriculum and comparing it to a lesson found through Google or Pinterest can promote deeper discussion of what quality lesson plans include.

**Choosing and working with one curriculum as an exemplar of the components of high-quality curriculum is key to helping teacher residents learn about navigating and using great curriculum.**

**Assumption 3: High-quality curriculum is code for “scripted” instruction.** Many college faculty members are unfamiliar with the emerging high-quality curriculum reviewed on websites such as EdReports. Their mental models for curriculum vary widely based on their experiences with it during their own classroom teaching tenure. As one of the partners put it, “It is clear that our professors had limited exposure to any EdReports green-lit curriculum. And, understanding what it [curriculum] had to offer was critical to their understanding and support of its value.” Giving participants opportunities to experience and review high-quality instructional materials can challenge the notion that such materials are scripted.

**Assumption 4: Effective teachers use curriculum, textbooks, and other materials as resources rather than the focus of instruction.** A common perception among experienced teachers is that comprehensive curriculum materials are very important for new teachers and less important for veterans. In fact, experienced teachers may view such materials as a crutch that they avoid using. Facts and figures demonstrating how most lessons that teachers create

independently rarely meet standards and grade-level expectations apply to others not them. They are confident in their planning and decision making. In this situation, experienced teachers may benefit from hearing curriculum developers' perspectives on how the materials are best used as well as co-planning with teacher candidates for implementation of materials with their students.

**Assumption 5: Teacher prep programs cannot limit their focus to one curriculum.** “Curriculum decisions are left to school systems and teachers. Every teacher will face different expectations,” said one participant who continued, “Investing too deeply in one set of curriculum materials may benefit some and hurt others. Prep programs have a responsibility to prepare teachers for any situation they may face.” Meaningful partnerships with school district partners can surface needs associated with preparation for placement and success in schools that host residents. Preparing teachers to use the district materials will be key to their success. In the absence of a district curriculum, preparing teachers to select and locate high-quality materials is

even more important. Choosing and working with one curriculum as an exemplar of the components of high-quality curriculum is key to helping teacher residents learn about navigating and using great curriculum.

**Curriculum literacy is not a prerequisite for preservice educators.** Wide discrepancies abound in the meaning that educators attach to the word “curriculum”; practitioners show even less familiarity with the phrase “curriculum literacy.” Perhaps this variation is a reason for avoiding the subject in teacher preparation. Nevertheless, curriculum literacy—the awareness of what rigorous, grade-level content looks like and the ability to implement it effectively in the classroom—seems to be an essential skill for

every teacher (Steiner, 2019). The definition and competencies of curriculum literacy (see sidebar “Curriculum Literacy Basic Competencies”) can fuel conversations about their relevance to and importance in teacher preparation. Agreeing to a definition can also help in setting benchmarks so that teachers are able to demonstrate their grasp of curriculum literacy competencies.

Challenging assumptions is hard work. It often begins with a conversation to surface teachers’ and leaders’ long-held beliefs and reasons for holding them. Designing learning experiences that allow educators to acquire new perspectives will be key to changing the way we prepare teachers.

## Early Lessons Learned

The final participant survey offers promising signs that the design is headed in the right direction: 86% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the learning sessions and technical assistance helped them to establish a common definition of curriculum literacy and create a learning experience to ensure residents can define curriculum and identify the characteristics of high-quality materials. Overall, respondents indicated that adjustments to residency coursework was the highest priority, followed by mentor professional development. Participants also identified important foundational issues that are necessary to any collaborative project, including shared commitment and engagement among participants and partners; continuous attention to the evolving relationship between teacher learning and curriculum, especially the learning of teacher preparation faculty and district-based mentors to experience the type of transformative curriculum they are providing residents.

### **Residency program partners need shared language about curriculum and instructional materials.**

This pilot project is focused on curriculum and curriculum literacy. Other terms that may challenge participants include high-quality, standards-aligned, and culturally relevant pedagogy. Varying definitions will affect expectations of participants. Launching with program definitions provides a baseline for future learning and conversation. Modifications based on context can be considered after understanding and appreciation of the definitions are established.



Using the following definitions provides a common ground from which to launch the effort.

*Curriculum* is the means to achieve the goals expressed in the standards. It is the teaching and learning program, and can include lesson plans and activities, scope and sequence documents, textbooks, computer programs, and even related pedagogical advice and embedded formative assessments.

*Curriculum literacy* is the ability of teachers to identify and remedy deficiencies in instructional materials they are given to teach.  
(Steiner, 2018, p.18)

### **Shared commitment and engagement from key stakeholders are foundational.**

In addition to ensuring clarity of terms, clarity of roles and responsibilities is essential to the success of the effort. Absent any key roles or perspectives, participants can succumb to traditional reasons for not advancing: “We don’t have authority over these kinds of decisions,” or “I don’t know what the district expects or has planned in this area.” Key roles essential to this partnership work include the district personnel responsible for residencies as well as academics; practitioners engaged in the work in supporting teacher residents including mentors and cooperating teachers; university personnel responsible for residencies’ placement. Defining role clarity seems a straightforward request, but given that educators often wear multiple hats, particularly in smaller school systems, identifying and engaging all desired parties may pose challenges. As partners build a learning agenda together, they will persist in clarifying whose participation is essential in each aspect of the work.

### **Addressing the relationship between teachers and curriculum will be ongoing.**

In fact, this continuous relationship is where the learning will focus. “The so-called ‘good-teacher doctrine’ has long perpetuated the idea that good teachers don’t use pre-packaged curriculum materials. Rather, they create their own lessons intended for the students sitting in front of them” (Remillard,

## **Curriculum Literacy Basic Competencies**

1. The ability to identify quality instructional materials:

- Know the standards, instructional shifts, and learning progressions within a content area. Understand the characteristics of high-quality materials aligned to standards and instructional shifts and be able to incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy.
- Be able to evaluate the quality, strengths, and weaknesses of a specific curriculum based on those quality characteristics as well as the standards and instructional shifts.
- Understand the features of a high-quality unit and lesson plan, and how each fits with other aspects of the curriculum.

2. The ability to know how to use curriculum resources effectively (what to keep, what to emphasize, how to augment, when to adapt to student needs, and pedagogical moves that enhance the content)

3. The ability to use resources to support particular student learning needs – while without removing the rigor by watering down the materials. It is important to emphasize that knowing core materials well enough to identify where you need to augment to meet students’ needs is critical to making instruction meaningful and accessible to students.

-David Steiner, *Curriculum Literacy for Future Teachers* (2019)

2018). The success of this pilot project is already shifting this assumption to one that recognizes the contribution of high-quality materials and the role of teachers in relationship to them. Although curriculum materials offer the teacher a high-level map of the learning domain and pathways to understanding within and around it, their effectiveness depends on teachers using them and making appropriate adaptations for their context and their students (Remillard, 2018; Student Achievement Partners, 2020).

### **Centering the learning on equity and curriculum-based professional learning.**

If college faculty are expected to develop curriculum-literate residents, they must be curriculum literate. They themselves must first experience the kind of learning activities they will need to create for their teacher

residents. This requires teacher educators to use a high-quality curriculum as the focus for learning and apply *The Elements of Curriculum-Based Professional Learning* (Short & Hirsh, 2020). On the surface this idea is easy to accept; implementation is challenging. As a result, many teacher educators default to lectures and workshop models of learning. Changing teaching and learning in the college classroom will require transformative learning experiences for the instructors. College of education leaders will need to allocate time and resources as well as support new models of preparatory and residency instruction. Administrators with decision-making authority will be necessary members or resources to the team.

### **High-Quality Curriculum is the Trim Tab for Equity**

Armed with deeper understanding of and skill in implementing high-quality materials, teacher residencies will increase their efforts to secure partners who share these commitments. District partners will realize huge benefits when their residents arrive day-one ready with a belief in power of coherent, standards-aligned curriculum that provides opportunities for culturally relevant pedagogy, experience navigating and making decisions with such curricula that support students without undermining its design and intent. Collectively, the partnership takes a huge step toward advancing equity for all engaged in the work.

## **What Our Lessons Mean for Residencies, Teacher Preparation-at-Large, and Policymakers**

This report highlights key strategies of the residency model that may serve as trim tabs or levers for advancing equity. The themes explored in this project are not exclusive to teacher residencies. These concepts and strategies can be applied at any teacher preparation program. Policy makers, school district leaders, and education preparation providers are invited to consider the following actions to advance the conversation and work within your sphere of influence.

### Examine your new teacher graduate profile.

Determine the role curriculum literacy plays in it (see sidebar “Curriculum Literacy Basic Competencies”) and whether it is time to rethink what constitutes a graduate of your program. The failure to properly prepare teachers to develop, select, and teach curriculum can and should be remedied. Prospective teachers require curriculum literacy to translate their understanding of the subjects they will teach and the curriculum they will be provided in order to create meaningful learning opportunities for students (Steiner, 2018 p. 16).

**Convene a “great” team.** Begin with “willing” or “interested” educators. Such curriculum work requires an intentional, functional partnership between an IHE and school district(s) or charter management organization (CMO) determined, in a large part, by the extent to which the district(s) or CMO is committed to using high-quality instructional materials and how it will prioritize its use for teacher residents in both their course preparation and their residency-year experience. Seeking the perspectives of the partners is also necessary to launch and maintain momentum of the work.

**Collect baseline data to focus early conversations.** Collecting and examining data relevant to the curriculum literacy agenda offers a starting point for the learning journey. Data is key to surfacing problems as well as opportunities for addressing project goals and expectations. Early data sets a baseline for monitoring and measuring progress of the work. To take the necessary steps to collect those baseline data, NCTR and EdReports recommend that you do the following:

- Learn the status of your state and local school systems with regard to selection and implementation of high-quality instructional materials;

- Gather information on how and where curriculum and instructional materials are addressed in teacher preparation coursework;
- Seek input from graduates regarding curriculum and lesson planning expectations as well as the challenges they encountered and how they addressed them;
- Identify and include relevant student outcome data tied to your cooperating teachers/mentors and recent program graduates;
- Determine assets and needs of college faculty and mentors/cooperating supervisors as it relates to curriculum literacy; and
- Dig into the data and determine what it tells you about where to focus attention.

### Rethink selection, preparation, and support of cooperating teachers and mentors.

A 2020 NCTR research brief affirms the significance of the role of the mentor on resident success as well as benefits that accrue to mentors from their supervisory experience (Azar, Casciano, & Puma, 2020). Carefully consider both the extent to which mentors are curriculum literate and additional support you can give them so they may continue to advance their own curriculum literacy. The role of the mentor is a key element in ensuring that teacher residents have a clinical placement that sets them up to be ready on day one to teach students.



**Flip the script in learning experiences.** More demanding career- and college-ready standards demand different learning experiences for students. Few teachers were prepared with those types of experiences in mind. Flipping the script and asking participants to enter professional learning as “students” while their learning facilitators use state- or district-selected high-quality instructional materials brings multiple

benefits. Most importantly, it provides teachers with a vision of the kind of learning they are being asked to create for their students along with an appreciation for the contribution that curriculum materials make to such learning experiences (Short & Hirsh, 2020). This visioning work can begin now without a formal change to preparation program curricula or certification requirements.

**Document the progress and impact of your efforts; be prepared to share your findings.** The more rigorously teacher preparation program administrators and district decision makers assess impacts of new preparation practices on teaching and learning outcomes, the more there is to learn from these new behaviors. When administrators and decision makers of teacher residencies, other preparation programs, and district partners share assessment results, everyone can plan collectively where to allocate resources and shape future efforts for teacher preparation programs. Consider the following schematic as a starting place for talking about the work and measuring progress along the way:

## Rethinking and Documenting New Practices for the Preparation of Curriculum-Literate Teachers

Teacher Candidates	
Less like...	More like...
Reading about high-quality instructional materials’ impacts on student learning and scanning curriculum documents	Experiencing the intention of high-quality instructional materials and learning to plan and teach with them
Developing good lesson plans as hallmark of an effective teacher	Identifying, selecting and appropriately adapting high-quality instructional materials as the hallmark of an effective teacher
Teachers with minimal exposure to curriculum literacy competencies	Teachers who are competent, curriculum literate
Passive recipients of local curriculum decisions	Advocates for selection and adoption of high-quality curriculum materials

Educator Preparation Programs	
Less like...	More like...
Lectures, discussion, and problem-solving coursework	College preparation characterized by curriculum-based professional learning
Exposure to curriculum materials in selected courses	Course(s) centered on experiencing, comprehending, and applying a high-quality curriculum
Curriculum-agnostic programming designers	Advocates for selection and adoption of high-quality curriculum materials within their largest school system partner
A few mentors and cooperating teachers using recognized high-quality instructional materials	All mentors demonstrating curriculum literacy as a requirement of service

# Final Words

David Steiner (2019), executive director of the Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy wrote a commentary on the importance of and urgency for strengthening teacher access to and usage of high-quality instructional materials:

*What we teach and how well we teach it, are the core of any and every school learning experience, no matter the method used. Unless we incentivize teachers to teach demanding material well, most especially to underprivileged students, we will lose this vital opportunity to close achievement gaps and raise learning outcomes.*

The teacher residency model—with its embedded supports, integrated clinical and academic experiences, and commitment to serving high-need communities—is well positioned to accelerate and scale this agenda. Others need not wait, and we dare not keep teachers and students waiting any longer. This paper suggests some of the actions that state education agencies, school systems, and educator preparation programs can take now.



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## Photo Information

On the cover: Derrick Hearn, Resident, and Jocelyn Gaston, Mentor, Chicago Public Schools Teacher Residency. Photo taken at Mt. Vernon Elementary School.

Page 1: Shannon Gray, Resident, Memphis Teacher Residency. Photo taken at Kingsbury Middle School.

Page 3: Marchelle Williams, Resident, Memphis Teacher Residency. Photo taken at Kingsbury Middle School.

Page 5: Shemena Shivers, Resident, Memphis Teacher Residency. Photo taken at Kingsbury Middle School.

Page 8: Maya Alston, Resident, Memphis Teacher Residency. Photo taken at Grizzlies Prep.

Page 10: Roxy Nance, Resident, Chicago Public Schools Teacher Residency. Photo taken at King Elementary School.

Page 13: Armani Alexander, Resident, Memphis Teacher Residency. Photo taken at Treadwell Elementary School.

Page 15: Nate Rodriguez, Resident, Memphis Teacher Residency. Photo taken at East High School.



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