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Teacher Preparation Programs in Washington State

**Introduction**

It’s the first day of school. You are 24 years old and starting your first day as a fourth grade teacher. Class is about to begin, but only two students are seated appropriately at their desks — the rest are staring out the window or chasing each other around the room. You assess the chaos, realizing that your thoughtful lesson plan is already falling apart. Your deliberate planning and pedagogical courses could not have prepared you for the realities of the classroom. Obviously, you need to get the students under control, in their seats, and ready to learn. How will you proceed? This is the moment when you put all of your training into action, but will your training be enough? This is the reality that many first year teachers face each autumn, and many of them feel unprepared for this challenge.

For the past three years, Washington State has received a D+ from the National Council on Teacher Quality in “delivering well prepared teachers” (State Policy Yearbook). The American Legislative Exchange Council also gave the state a D+ in producing adequately trained teachers for 2014. How can our state expect results from its elementary school students when the teacher training programs produce poorly trained teachers? Training is absolutely necessary for strong teachers, just as training is necessary for success in any career. Teaching is not a “natural ability,” and the answers to the first day challenges mentioned above will not just magically appear (Green). While dedication to students and the process of teaching may be a natural passion, the ability to run a classroom, motivate students, and engage kids in learning requires both training and experience. Teacher preparation programs help educators learn to react quickly and effectively to daily classroom challenges that are not found in textbooks or university lecture halls. What do you attend to first: the student throwing up or the student climbing onto his desk? How do you respond to a student’s off-topic question or incorrect answer?  How do you gracefully redirect a lesson that is clearly going nowhere? Successfully handling situations like these requires thorough training and extensive classroom experience.

For our project, we chose to examine the history of teacher preparation programs in Washington State and consider case studies of three high profile Washington State teacher preparation programs: Seattle Teacher Residency, Evergreen State College, and University of Washington College of Education. These three programs reveal both the pros and cons of current Washington State teacher preparation programs. Through our research, we have gained a better understanding of how teacher training programs can better prepare teachers for success in their teaching careers.

**Literature Review**

Washington’s first teachers, who came west with the pioneers, possessed an eclectic mix of backgrounds and ambitions. Some pioneer teachers actually came west just for the land and money, taking on teaching as a side job, while others were missionaries hoping to spread their religion; some were East Coast teachers hoping for a higher position. Additionally, the examinations administered by superintendents and school boards to become a teacher in the Washington Territory “were very superficial, often entirely waived” (Bolton, 277). Consequently, the educations of the pioneer teachers ranged from East Coast college degrees to barely any education at all.

Around the mid-1800s the concept of normal training, the idea that teachers should be trained how to teach, reached the Washington Territory. A normal training course was incorporated into the curriculum of the few high schools that did exist so that students wishing to become teachers could begin teaching directly after high school, using their training from the normal course. Eventually, normal training was removed from high schools and placed in Normal schools for a more specialized training after graduation from high school. Normal schools often provided training schools where children would be taught classes by teachers-in-training, while the teachers-in-training would be simultaneously observed and taught by the normal school faculty in the same building. These schools were very similar to some of the more recent laboratory schools, such as the Spartan Village school run by Michigan State University.

Throughout Washington’s territorial period from 1853 to 1889, only “a few private academies and private normal schools of a very inferior type attempted some professional training.” Once established in 1861, the University of Washington also provided a few classes “on school law, methods, theory and art of teaching, and school management of a very elementary character”(Bolton 358). However, the purpose of providing these courses at the time was similar to the current-day “cash cow” rationale behind many universities’ subpar teacher education programs, as the teaching classes were most likely created to bring in extra money to fund the University of Washington’s academic work.

By the early 20th century, students in normal schools were required to “teach anywhere from two weeks to two years, the length of time varying with the size of the training school, the number of student-teachers, and the pedagogical view of the administrative officers in charge” (Lewis 435).  The majority of normal schools still used training schools for teacher preparation; however many of them reported that they were struggling to create conditions in the school that modeled actual working conditions. As a result, some normal schools began to send their teachers to local public schools for practice teaching, which was “always supervised by faculty of the normal school” (Lewis 436).

By the 1960’s, normal schools had transitioned into universities, and the student-teaching phase of teacher training had been moved out of normal training schools and into public schools. Student-teaching was recognized as a critical and important part of teacher training, but it had come into the spotlight as being seriously problematic. For instance, *Student Teaching Today: A Survey Report of Selected Aspects of* *Student Teaching* (1960) reported that “the absence of any clearly defined relationship between the on-campus aspects and the student-teaching aspect of teacher education, and the lack of understanding of the rationale for the nature and purpose of student teaching have been accompanied by varying amounts of disparity and conflict between the two parts of the program” (1). The report even went so far as to compare student teachers to the children of divorced parents, buffeted between two disparate home environments. There was also a trend among education schools, the report noted, to hold the belief that student-teaching could never fully prepare teachers for their first year of teaching.  The curriculum committee of the College of Education at Brigham Young University, for example, stated that student teaching “is only a prelude to on-the-job experience, and finds its completion in that activity…The first year of teaching should be viewed as part of the teacher’s complete preparation program and the total program should be constructed so as to utilize it” (Woodruff 3).

Nevertheless, recent studies suggest that the student teaching experience includes aspects that impact the effectiveness of teachers during their first year on the job. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* (2009) concluded that “teacher preparation that focuses more on the work of the classroom and provides opportunities for teachers to study what they will be doing as 1st-year teachers seems to produce teachers who, on average, are more effective during their 1st year of teaching.” The study also found that “teachers who have had the opportunity in their preparation to engage in the actual practices involved in teaching (e.g., listening to a child read aloud for the purpose of assessment, planning a guided reading lesson, or analyzing student math work) also show greater student gains during their 1st year of teaching” (Boyd 434).

        Contrary to the philosophies of many student teaching programs, recent studies have also found that “the duration of student teaching has little effect on teacher outcomes, but the quality of student teaching has significant and positive effects.” While the length of student teaching was relatively unrelated to feelings of preparedness and career plans, student teachers who reported “better quality student teaching experiences” also reported feeling more prepared, and planned to stay and teach in the district more years than student teachers who reported lower quality experiences (Ronfeldt 1103). Additionally, when student teaching is in schools with more Hispanic and Black students, “the magnitude of the effects of student teaching quality are greater” (Ronfeldt 1091), demonstrating the importance of diverse exposure in teacher training.

        Woodruff’s previously mentioned concern in the 1960 report that student teaching and on-campus learning were missing a connection is still expressed in the literature on student teaching today. The student-teaching experience is often considered a triad of players: the student-teacher, their teacher training program, and the cooperating teacher mentoring the student-teacher. The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) found that “student achievement was improved for first-year teachers prepared in institutions that…picked the cooperating teacher (as opposed to allowing the K-12 school or student teacher to select that teacher) and required the following: A minimum of three years of teaching experience for cooperating teachers, a minimum of five supervisor observations, and a capstone project at the conclusion of student teaching” (*Student Teaching in the United States* 6-7). These aspects of student teaching are quite specific and require clear expectations of each member of the triad and communication between all members. Unfortunately, the information the NCTQ collected for their 2011 report on student teaching suggests that most teacher training programs have extremely vague definitions and requirements for each of these roles.

        Perhaps as a consequence, the abandonment of student teachers by their institutions during their training in classrooms appears commonplace. According to the 2011 NCTQ report, “little evidence was found that institutions provide student teachers with sufficient guidance and feedback to improve first-year performance.” Furthermore, the study found that “supervisors were not expected to visit and evaluate student teachers frequently, and when evaluations did occur, the quality of the instruments used was inadequate” (29-30).

The selection of a high-quality cooperating teacher would seem a serious priority for teacher education programs as well, yet most states have fairly weak regulations on the effectiveness of cooperating teachers. In fact, Florida is the only state that explicitly requires that the cooperating teacher performs in a way that consistently results in improved student performance (*Student Teaching in the United States* 8). A high-quality cooperating teacher should be able to effectively mentor a student teacher, but institutions also typically do very little to ensure that the cooperating teachers for students in their program are actually any good at mentoring. “Even under a generous interpretation of the language used by institutions to describe mentoring skills, only 38 percent of institutions require cooperating teachers to possess the qualities of a good mentor,” and “more than half of the 134 institutions have relinquished any role in the selection of the cooperating teacher” (*Student Teaching in the United States* 25-27).

Most institutions also seem to take a sacrificial view of their student teachers when it comes to the quality of cooperating teachers. Many institutions will give their students to cooperating teachers, but will wait “until the end of the semester to receive feedback on whether new cooperating teachers were deemed satisfactory” (*Student Teaching in the United States* 28). In this manner, student teachers who are paired with ineffective teachers or teachers with poor mentoring skills will have to suffer through an unproductive semester of student teaching before the institution intervenes on their behalf. Earlier feedback on the quality of the cooperating teachers would prevent student teachers from floundering under bad mentorship and would instead give them the opportunity to leave their current mentor in favor of another more effective cooperating teacher.

In the interest of improving the personalization of the student-teacher placement and communication between all three triad members, there has been a recent movement to reform student-teaching to more closely resemble medical student training. For example, the article “Transforming Teacher Education Through Clinical Practice: A National Strategy To Prepare Effective Teachers” (2011) suggests that “states and the federal governments develop opportunities for teacher candidates to work in hard-to-staff schools through a "matching" program similar to that developed by the American Association for Medical Colleges for placing medical school graduates in teaching hospitals for internships and residencies.” The article also recommends stricter standards for the preparation, selection, and certification of mentors, such as those required for medical resident mentors.

One of the commonly cited obstacles impeding the improvement of the student-teacher experience is the pressure many institutions feel to place their huge numbers of students. The NCTQ estimated in its 2011 report that out of each faculty of 25 teachers in the U.S., only one teacher is qualified and willing to be a cooperating teacher. Based on this estimate, there is an annual shortage of 400,000 qualified cooperating teachers in the U.S. (Greenberg 19), indicating that with the current rate of teacher production, quality of the student teacher experience is being traded for quantity. In order to improve the situation, the NCTQ recommends overhauling the current outlook of teacher educators and district personnel:

On the preparation side, student teaching should be viewed as the culminating experience provided only for those teacher candidates who have met a high bar for competency. On the school district side, student teaching should be viewed as a human capital development vehicle in which recruiting and rewarding talented teachers for their role as cooperating teachers improves prospects for hiring novice teachers who are effective on day one. (*Student Teaching in the United States* 50)

These changes in the current perception of student teaching are important. However, changes to the current system cannot be made without the support of high-quality research. Although many articles about student teaching have been published over the years, “the proportion of studies providing quantitative or qualitative evidence and meeting generally accepted standards for academic publication in peer-reviewed journals is small,” (*Student Teaching in the United States* 6) and very few studies actually report on which aspects of student teaching produce more effective teachers, which should be the ultimate goal. One of the rare studies that recently tried to identify the aspects of student teaching that lead to more effective teachers acknowledged that, because of this gap in research, the conductors of the study could not even express confidence in their own results. Since the tools to evaluate and describe teacher education had not yet been developed, the researchers had to develop their own instruments, and cautioned that while they had piloted the measures, those measures have not yet been validated for their purpose (Boyd 435). Clearly, in order to make any headway in the struggle to improve this critical component of teacher education, the standard of research on student-teaching must improve, first with the development of well-tested evaluative instruments, and second with the focus of more studies on the components of student-teaching that lead to effective teachers.

**Case Studies**

Seattle Teacher Residency

The Seattle Teacher Residency (STR) was formed in 2013 in an effort to reform how elementary school teachers are trained in the Seattle Public Schools. STR, along with eighteen other residency programs across the country, is part of the Urban Teacher Residency. The Urban Teacher Residency started in 2004 after independent residencies in Boston, Chicago, and Denver came together to start an informal partnership. Since then, Urban Teacher Residency has branched out to cities across the country including Memphis, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and, in 2013, Seattle (The UTRU Network). The Seattle Teacher Residency was formed in partnership with the Alliance For Education, Seattle Public Schools, University of Washington’s College of Education, and Seattle Education Association (Seattle Teacher Residency). These partnerships are unique because this is the first time that a residency program under Urban Teacher Residency has included the union as a full partner. This is even more incredible considering that the Alliance For Education (the major fundraiser behind STR) and the union have not seen eye to eye on many issues in the past. These two programs claim they can put aside their differences for this project. As Sara Morris of the Alliance For Education said in an interview with the *Seattle Times*, “We can disagree at breakfast and agree at lunch” (Higgins).

Seattle Teacher Residency looks for teachers with diverse backgrounds who are committed to teaching in the Seattle Public Schools for five years. Residents must have a bachelor’s degree and meet the University of Washington’s admissions requirements to the College of Education. Additionally, residents must be legalized to work in the US and have passed the West B, a test for candidates applying to teacher preparation programs. STR looks for applicants who are committed, resilient, passionate, and who have experience volunteering with urban schools or students (Seattle Teacher Residency). The program is challenging, so residents must be prepared to work. As program director Dr. Marisa Bier said in a presentation I attended, “We work them very, very hard.” The first cohort of residents was twenty-five students (out of 70 applicants) and STR is hoping to train 60 teachers a year by 2018 (Higgins). The residents all form a close bond by taking all of their courses together and working to better each other’s teaching in the classroom.

The program itself spans fourteen months and includes one full year in an elementary school classroom. Residents are in the classroom for four days a week and take graduate courses on Fridays. Additionally, Tuesday evenings and some Saturdays are reserved for Seattle Teacher Residency enrichment courses. The summer before and after the residency are filled with additional coursework. Some sample classes include Special Education and the Law, Issues of Abuse, and Physical Education and Health, and classes regarding numeracy, literacy, social studies, and science (Seattle Teacher Residency: Courses & Field Based Learning). These classes tie directly to the experiences of the residents in their classrooms, and many courses are tailored with information specifically applicable to the Seattle Public Schools. At the beginning of the program, residents and mentor teachers go through an intensive process that includes meeting prospective mentors before being paired. Mentors must be recommended by their principal and apply to be a mentor (Seattle Teacher Residency). During their residency year, student teachers move from co-teachers to a lead teaching role. Lessons are recorded and student work is reviewed to help residents learn from their experience. This is part of a cycle in which residents learn about a practice, prepare to enact the practice, enact the practice, and finally analyze enactments (this includes making plans for growth). This in depth practice is known as a “learning cycle” and is repeated for different topics throughout the year. This integration of in the classroom teaching and graduate level coursework is an integral part of the STR (Seattle Teacher Residency).

An additional selling point for the STR includes the generous stipend for both mentor teachers and residents. Mentors are given $3,500 and residents are given $16,500 over the fourteen month period. Additionally, out-of-state students pay in-state tuition for the Masters program at the University of Washington (Seattle Teacher Residency). Another unique aspect of the STR is their mission to represent the urban population of seattle. Students are placed in Title I schools and much of the experience is focused on understanding the community that the resident is working in. This will help the residents better understand their students and help them during their five year commitment to the Seattle Public Schools.

The mentoring relationship is another unique facet of the STR.  As mentioned earlier, mentor teachers are not randomly assigned; mentors and mentees are strategically selected for compatibility (Seattle Teacher Residency). Residents develop a close relationship with their mentors and spend four days a week with them. This connects closely to the benefits of being in an actual classroom while training. A helping hand during the teaching experience is irreplaceable. The first few years of teaching are said to be the most challenging and this program gives teachers one full year of co-teaching before doing it on their own. Additionally, any mistakes made in the classroom are not at the student’s expense. When a student-teacher is struggling with a lesson, mentor teachers are always on hand to assist.

After the residents end their fourteen month program, they are continually supported through their first full year of teaching. Residents complete a supervised practicum through the College of Continuing Education (Seattle Teacher Residency). This program provides continual mentorship during what is arguably the hardest year of teaching. This mediates the challenge and hopefully helps residents feel prepared and confident in their own classroom. According to a national survey, two-thirds of teachers felt unprepared for “classroom realities” (Marklein). This lack of preparation could contribute to the high number of teachers who leave after their first few years of teaching. By giving residents a year of guided practice and support during their first solo year, STR can help well trained teachers stay in the profession. Additionally, STR teachers are working in some very tough neighborhoods where first year challenges may be exacerbated by challenging conditions.

My recommendations for this program include lowering the mandated time commitment and expanding the program to secondary education. Currently, residents must commit five years to the Seattle Public Schools after their year long residency with STR. Giving back to the community through a mandatory teaching commitment is a good idea, but the length may be too long. Five years may be too much time for some residents and may deter some ambitious teachers from applying to STR. Three years would be a more appropriate commitment. Three years will give novice teachers the chance to overcome the learning curve of the first two years of teaching, while having a third year where they gain confidence in their teaching abilities. Teachers would have time to adjust, while not being tied down to one place for too long. As of 2015, Seattle Teacher Residency only trains elementary school teachers. I would recommend expanding this program to secondary education as well. All K-12 teachers need to have this intensive in the classroom training to feel prepared for their first year of teaching. Currently, all residents take the same coursework at the same time. If the program is expanded to secondary education, new coursework should be tailored to reflect their classroom experience and needs of their students.

Evergreen State College Master in Teaching

Evergreen State College, located in Olympia, Washington offers a Master in Teaching program. The college was founded in 1967 as an alternative to traditional schooling. Evergreen’s mission statement emphasizes this through “interdisciplinary learning across significance differences” and “commitment to social justice, diversity, environmental stewardship and service in the public interest” (Evergreen’s Mission). Evergreen State College shows this alternative approach through its education program. The program emphasizes dialogue between professors and students and opts out of letter grades for narrative reports. The Master in Teaching (MiT) program lasts for two-years, including two-quarters of student teaching after which students receive residency teacher certification in the State of Washington after passing the edTPA or Teacher Performance Assessment (Master in Teaching). The first year students spend about a quarter of their time observing in classrooms and working with students. It is interesting to note that in their first months in the program all students are required to observe classrooms in elementary, middle, and high schools in urban, suburban, and rural settings before choosing their focus area. This requirement allows teacher candidates to have a diverse exposure to teaching scenarios, important to their development as a well-rounded teacher. All teacher candidates complete a Master’s project focusing on current research in an area relevant to their teaching goals. The second year encompasses the student teaching aspect of the program—the main focus of this project.

        The year begins with a fall quarter full-time student teaching internship (Master in Teaching Program). Placements in student teaching classrooms for both fall and spring quarter are chosen with great purpose. Both internships are in different grade levels at different schools, in order to provide exposure to as many classroom scenarios as possible for students. The college also makes sure to place student teachers in classrooms that don’t match their personal background. All MiT students are placed in classrooms with teachers that have been deemed qualified by their school districts as appropriate mentors. Placement immediately at the beginning of fall quarter is a result of research that suggests having a student teaching experience in the opening weeks of school is helpful for a novice teacher. During winter quarter, students in the program take a break from student teaching to return to the college for ten weeks of personal reflection, continued learning with professors and other students, and the creation of a Professional Growth Plan for every student. Spring quarter, student teachers head back into the classroom to complete their second student teaching internship. The goal of this second experience is to build on the learning of the first student teaching experience, to understand how to organize curriculum at the conclusion of the school year, and to make comparisons between their two different classroom experiences. Narrative evaluation is used throughout the student teaching process. Evergreen professors and the mentor teachers that work with students collaboratively assess students for these reports (Master in Teaching).

        Both student teaching assignments fall under one of two models (Student Teaching Handbook). The first model culminates with the student teacher taking solo responsibility for the classroom for at least three weeks while the mentor teacher remains in the building at all times and is often in the classroom to observe and provide feedback. During the first weeks of the assignment, the student teacher organizes curriculum with the mentor teacher and works with students in limited situations.  The next step is allowing the student teacher to take control of the classroom for about half of the time. The student teacher receives feedback and advice from the mentor teacher on each lesson plan prior to teaching. About halfway through the quarter, the student teacher takes control of the classroom for a full week after consulting with the mentor teacher. The remainder of the quarter, the student teacher plans and teaches independently with designated review by the mentor teachers.

The second model is called “Co-teaching”. This method creates a collaborative relationship meant to benefit both the student teacher and mentor teacher. The beginning of this method places the mentor teacher in a leading role while both teachers are involved in planning and teaching. By the middle of the quarter the responsibilities should be evenly split between the mentor and student teacher using one of many co-teaching strategies. Team teaching is one of these strategies. This involves a very well planned lesson that requires teachers to share instruction showing no clearly defined leader from a student perspective between the student teacher and mentor teacher . Another strategy is “One teach, One observe” or similarly “One teach, One drift.” These strategies place the bulk of responsibility for a certain part of instruction on either the student teacher or mentor teacher, while the other observes or assists students. By the final three weeks of the quarter, the mentor teacher should have stepped back, allowing the student teacher to take the lead in curriculum planning and co-teaching. In both methods, there may be opportunity for the student teacher to take the last week of the quarter to visit other classrooms or schools (Student Teaching Handbook).

        At the conclusion of the program, all teacher candidates create a Student Teaching Portfolio of lesson plans and reflections. After collaborating with the mentor teachers, Evergreen faculty provides the final evaluation of teacher candidates for a final narrative report and for a final evaluation conference. This evaluation decides if the student teacher is deemed successful in the completion of the MiT program and ready for certification.

Evergreen State College is ranked 29th in the nation of masters degree colleges according to Washington Monthly’s distinctive rating scheme which asks the question “What are colleges doing for the country?” It has been cited repeatedly on “Colleges That Change Lives” and also was recognized as a College of Distinction based on “Engaged Students, Great Teaching, Vibrant Community and Successful Outcomes” (Evergreen’s National Reputation). Unfortunately, there is little outside information on the quality of the Master in Teaching program, likely due to the program’s small size.

However, according to the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), Evergreen State College ranks 229th nationally as a graduate elementary teacher prep program (Program Rank Sheet). This low ranking is due to their failure to adhere to two out of four of the NCTQ’s key standards. Evergreen failed to meet standard on Elementary Mathematics because “it requires...teacher candidates [to] take little or no coursework designed to develop their conceptual understanding of elementary mathematics topics.” Within the Elementary Education endorsement credits are fairly evenly distributed with minimum requirements at twelve credits for social studies, twelve credits for science, and twelve to fourteen credits for math, with other smaller fields requiring a minimum of only four credits such as children’s literature. This may not provide the comprehensive mathematics education that the NCTQ is looking for in a student’s coursework, but the additional time spent in classrooms in their field may supplement this beginner’s knowledge.

Additionally, Evergreen failed to meet standard on selection criteria because “it does not exploit the potential for admission requirements (grade point averages, standardized tests commonly used for graduate admission and/or auditions) to provide assurance that teacher candidates in the graduate programs reviewed have the requisite academic talent.” Admission to the MiT program asks for a minimum GPA of 3.0 or strong evaluations for the last 90 credits of coursework, experience in the field including at least 40 hours spent in a public school classroom, specific coursework, and the passing of two State-required admission tests. The application additionally requires endorsement worksheets to prove proficiency in a candidates intended subject area, three letters of recommendation including at least one from an educator who can speak to the candidate’s presence in a classroom, and a thesis-based essay that deals with social-justice issues in American public education. Even though the NCTQ notes that Evergreen fails to use traditional admission requirements, the alternative methods they use may be even more effective in determining if a person will be a great educator.

        On Evergreen’s website, the program is described as “nationally recognized, academically rigorous, (and) state-accredited.” There are few other opinions on the quality of Evergreen’s MiT program. All of the alumni and current students of the program give wonderful reviews of their learning and most importantly, their preparation. For example, in the winter program newsletter Tiana Lacross, a MiT 2013-2015 candidate was interviewed about her first day as a student teacher in a high school English class. She said, “To be honest, I did not expect today to go as smoothly as it did. MiT really prepared me for everything" (The Connection). Students leave Evergreen feeling extremely prepared, especially because they continue to have support from the program, their cohort, and mentors throughout their first year of solo teaching.

While there may be improvements to be made in admissions or coursework, the structure of Evergreen's MiT program has little fault, especially when it comes to student teaching experience. This program provides a diverse range of experiences to give their students maximum exposure to situations that they will encounter while teaching. The use of narrative reports and conferences also create an environment in which teacher candidates have the greatest opportunity to improve their skills and note their shortcomings. Teacher candidates interact with one another within each cohort to tackle difficult problems together while also receiving support from Evergreen faculty and their mentor teachers. Overall, Evergreen produces well-prepared teachers for their first day of school, even if they are not as proficient in advanced mathematics as the NCTQ would like.

University of Washington

           The University of Washington Seattle’s College of Education (CoE) is a large program that offers a selection of educational degrees to both undergraduate and graduate students. The College includes programs such as elementary and secondary teacher preparation programs, special education training, and career development for certified teachers. The CoE also collaborates with the Seattle Teacher Residency and a program called the University Accelerated Certification of Teachers.

        The Elementary Teacher Education Program (ETEP) is a one-year program offered to students with a Bachelor’s Degree. After finishing 4 academic quarters, graduates earn a Master in Teaching degree and a teaching certificate. Student teachers start the program in the summer quarter and work through the following spring quarter with a cohort of other student teachers taking the same classes. The program is a total of 62 credits, 14 of which are for fieldwork. Overall, the coursework focuses on fairness in the classroom, classroom management, classroom dilemmas, and how to achieve academic excellence for students. Specific classes address the pedagogy of math (called numeracy), natural science, social science, and literacy, as well as instructional strategies, assessment strategies, and the integration of school subjects. Students spend over 800 hours in the field, mostly during the last two quarters. The CoE claims that, “Program graduates are flexible, committed professional teachers with deep content knowledge in the entire elementary curriculum and the ability to differentiate learning for the students in their classrooms” (Teacher Preparation).

        In the first quarter, student teachers spend about 75 hours in the field working at a bilingual elementary summer school with racial and socioeconomic diversity. By working individually with children, student teachers become accustomed to dealing with students who may come from a challenging backgrounds. The corresponding curriculum deals with teaching social studies, literacy, language arts, and physical education, as well as classroom management issues (Teacher Preparation).

        During fall quarter, student teachers once again spend 75 hours in a classroom setting. This quarter, they start at one of the UW’s designated partner schools, which are public schools with highly diverse populations. For the first month, student teachers work fulltime at their school, and then subsequently spend one day each week at the school. The coursework for future teachers focuses on literacy and numbers as well as classroom management and learning theory. Student teachers also learn about teaching methods for students with disabilities.

        The amount of time spent in a classroom substantially increases to 215 hours during winter quarter. Student teachers spend three days each week in the classroom at the same school that they joined in the fall. In addition to more coursework in literacy and math, student teachers learn the pedagogy of science. Student teachers also study how to differentiate instruction for children with diverse cultural, linguistic, or developmental backgrounds, such as students who are English language learners.

        In late March, the future teachers begin full time student teaching and spend a total of 440 hours in the classroom during spring quarter. The academic curriculum is limited to polishing skills with electives such as classroom management. Future teachers also have to complete a teacher performance assessment, which is a national requirement for program completion. Finally, the elementary program culminates with a Capstone Project that involves discussion, reflection, and documentation of teaching coursework and field experiences.

The University of Washington’s ETEP seems clearly structured and capable of producing effective teachers. Student teachers spend substantial time in actual classroom environments and take academic classes that cover many of the challenges that new teachers might face. The student teachers go through the program in a cohort, which should provide good opportunities for discussion and reflection on teaching experiences with peers. Another strength of the UW’s program is that a variety of programs and workshops are offered for certified teachers to continue improving their teaching. The CoE’s commitment to professional development helps the student teachers realize the importance of improving their teaching skills throughout their careers.

However, ETEP only lasts one year, unlike the much longer and more successful teaching programs in countries like Finland. Also, the elementary program seems to lack specific classes geared toward simply observing good teachers and discussing their methods, as student teachers do in Japan. In my personal experiences, a student teacher is often paired with a mentor who is less interested in helping the student teacher than in having the student teacher ease the mentor’s workload.

        Nationwide, the UW’s teacher preparation program has interesting reviews. In the 2015 U.S. News & World Report’s Graduate School Rankings, the UW CoE is 6th overall, with secondary education tied for 7th and elementary education at 9th. The U.S. News & World Report’s rankings consider things like applicant GRE scores, student costs, and research activities, where the UW is very strong. In contrast, the 2014 report by the National Council on Teacher Quality rates the UW’s programs for elementary and secondary education at 103rd and 113th respectively. The National Council on Teacher Quality seems to have very specific evaluation criteria that have less emphasis on research and focus more on the preparedness of program graduates.

        The UW could definitely improve its teacher preparation program. First, the master’s program could be longer in length to allow student teachers more classroom experience. Although the UW states, “Our teacher candidates [have] classroom practicum, community placements and a variety of field-based learning opportunities” (Teacher Preparation), the UW program seems very compressed. Only one year with 800 hours spent in a classroom is probably not enough for many people to feel prepared to teach alone in an actual classroom. The program only includes one quarter of full time student teaching, during which the student has full responsibility over the classroom only for the last few weeks. The UW program should give its students more time in charge of a classroom with an experienced teacher observing. Second, most good teacher training programs involve intensive mentoring that requires observation and feedback by experienced teachers. While student teachers in the UW program are paired with a teacher mentor, no classes focus on watching how experienced teachers approach teaching. Student teachers would benefit from observation that involves watching master teachers as well as other student teachers and then discussing their observations.

**Conclusion**

In Washington State, teacher preparation has evolved from virtually nonexistent to one of the largest industries within higher education. The development of teacher training began as a part of high school curriculum, then transitioned to separate “normal schools,” and finally was incorporated into college programs. Out of all aspects of teacher preparation, student-teaching has been reiterated in various studies as essential to creating well-prepared teachers. Key findings noted within the literary review include the importance of student teaching when it comes to first year teacher performance, and the quality of student teaching as the most critical factor when predicting new teachers’ feelings of preparedness.

        The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) provides a ranking of teacher preparation programs across the United States. The NCTQ chooses specific aspects of teacher preparation programs as necessary in creating well-prepared teachers. One of the most important factors that had to do with student teaching was the need for selectivity when choosing mentor teachers. This has proven difficult in practice for a number of reasons: a great teacher in the classroom may not be a great mentor; cooperating teachers are commonly not evaluated until the end of a student teaching experience; and the number of teachers who are willing and qualified to mentor student teachers is far too low to meet the needs of every teacher preparation program. Mentor teachers are a valuable part of student teaching process and should be chosen carefully and with the student teachers personality in mind.

        While there seems to be a lot of research on the topic of student teaching, little research directly addresses the questions: What teacher preparation programs, or program aspects, produce the most effective teachers? With our examination of three distinct programs, we hoped to answer this question and recommend changes to potentially help these programs better create well-prepared teachers.

           Our three case studies vary in their program requirements, and our analyses indicate that all of these programs could be improved to some extent. The greatest weakness for Seattle Teacher Residency is that this program is still relatively new, so the program faces many challenges in determining how to best support their future teachers. Eventually, it would be good for Seattle Teacher Residency to expand by including training for secondary education, but this addition should wait until the program has proven successful in the training of elementary teachers. Also, Seattle Teacher Residency requires students to commit five full years to the Seattle Public Schools, which could deter some students who want more options upon graduation. Seattle Teacher Residency could solve this shortcoming by offering flexibility with this requirement or reducing the required time commitment.

        Evergreen State College has a strong program with many progressive strategies for teaching future teachers. However, this program could improve by adding coursework that covers the teaching of elementary math topics, especially since math is a challenging subject for many students. For example, the UW requires its future teachers to take classes in numeracy to learn how to teach math to elementary students. Also, Evergreen State College might enhance the caliber of students in its teaching program by considering additional criteria for acceptance into their program.

Of the three programs we examined, our most urgent recommendations are for the University of Washington’s program. The UW’s program should be longer than 12 months in duration. More classroom experience comes from the 14 months (with additional support during the first year of teaching) students spend with the Seattle Teacher Residency or the 24 months that students are at Evergreen State College. Also, the UW should include more observation and mentoring, as done by both the Seattle Teacher Residency and Evergreen State College. Finally, the UW program should include more full time teaching. Future teachers in the Seattle Teacher Residency and Evergreen State College programs receive an entire year of teaching with the support of a mentor, but in the UW program, student teachers only teach full time for one quarter.

Though these training programs could be improved, they are the beginning of innovative, rigorous programs that will hopefully become more popular in the coming years. In the future, we hope teacher preparation programs take selectively chosen candidates and introduce them to thoughtfully chosen, challenging coursework and require ample time in a classroom. An ideal program would be made up of cohorts of student teachers studying under carefully selected master teachers. The apprenticeship would last for a minimum of one year and would include experience with diverse students and communities. Student teachers would start out as observers and take on more responsibility with time. The student teacher would end up becoming the lead teacher in their classroom by the end of the year. Their teaching lessons would be recorded and reviewed with their mentor to ensure that teachers are getting specific feedback on their performance. Additionally, the cohort would review each others lessons both to learn from one another, critique each other, and resolve complex issues together.

The in-classroom experience should be paired with coursework that compliments the experiences that student teachers have in the classroom. This includes information about the community that the student teachers will join and grade level specific lesson plans. The student teachers should be exposed to many diverse pedagogical concepts including Freirean philosophy, lab schools, and Japanese lesson study. For example, lesson study, or jugyokenkyu, “is a bucket of practices that Japanese teachers use to hone their craft, from observing each other at work to discussing the lesson afterward to studying curriculum materials with colleagues” (Green 126). A cycle of jugyokenkyu includes creating a curriculum based on potential student response, observing another teacher and other student teachers, teaching a lesson and discussing “observed events” (Green 132). Such dialogue is key to the process of producing well-prepared teachers. These discussions can last hours and often extend to beers after work. The analysis breaks down every aspect of the lesson and discusses how individual students responded. Seattle Teacher Residency utilizes this method within their “learning cycle.”

Student teachers must blend these philosophies into a pedagogy that works in their classroom. Training programs and mentors should continue to support teachers into their first year of teaching. Teacher preparation programs are worthwhile investments because, through higher satisfaction from improved training, there will be lower turnover rates and enhanced student learning. The best way to improve our educational system is to provide future teachers with excellent programs that offer challenging coursework, extensive classroom experience, and opportunities for observation and dialogue with skilled mentors.

**Individual Responses**

Alexandra Drury

My mom and several of my other family members are teachers, so I’ve listened to countless exasperated conversations over the dinner table about the current state of education. From my limited perspective, it always appeared that education in the U.S. was simply stuck. The constant cycles of new curriculum, standardized tests, and teacher evaluation systems just seemed like a huge waste of money, and according to my family members these changes never actually improved childhood education. I also couldn’t understand why the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was supporting education reforms that so many teachers didn’t support. I don’t think I’ve ever met a teacher who was even mildly enthusiastic about the work the foundation is doing in education. My teacher relatives were also disgusted with the fact that many of the people higher up in the school district chain seemed completely oblivious to the actual teaching process. There was a clear disconnect between teachers and the administration of the system they served, but until this class I couldn’t understand why it existed.

Several of the texts that we read in this class helped me understand that education is a business. At every level there are companies and foundations and consumers, and I was able to see how to some degree these factors have paralyzed education in the U.S. This paralysis, I believe, has led to a huge amount of cynicism and frustration surrounding education, which to me is extremely sad for an entity that has the capability to be so inspiring and so empowering. My own mother, who I look up to as a teacher, has told me over and over again that she hopes I never become a teacher because of the small salary, mistrust, and lack of respect that teachers receive.

When I did the historical research for my group’s final paper, I was extremely disappointed to learn that the University of Washington’s disrespect for teaching education goes all the way back to the institution’s beginning. The UW’s founders believed classical studies were the only true scholarly pursuits, but they introduced poor-quality teacher training in order to make more money to support their classical studies. Today’s “cash cow” education programs are just another example of how education has not been able to move on from these incredibly unproductive perspectives.

Paying teachers more respect seems to me like a large part of the solution because this would at least facilitate more dialogue between teachers and administrators. I believe that starting out the quarter with Freire’s *Pedagogy of Oppressed* in particular led me to this viewpoint, and generally led me to consider dialogue a solution to many problems of disrespect or paralysis. By the end of the quarter, I had completely surprised myself by how much I liked Freire’s principles. Usually I hold myself back from getting too excited about ideas from revolutionary texts, but since we’ve read Freire’s work I keep finding myself turning his principles over and over in my mind, thinking of new places in my life where I could incorporate them. His ideas are very widely applicable, and so far I’ve been trying to incorporate them into the Bollywood team that I dance on and sometimes choreograph for, but I’m positive that I will be incorporating them in my future career as well.

I’m planning on becoming a healthcare professional and this class has had a huge effect on how I hope to treat patients in the future. I’ve wanted to work with under-privileged kids for a long time based on my experience helping out in my mom’s school which is in a low-income area. At her school I saw connections between many of the students’ chaotic home lives, their behavior, and their health, and the ACE scores mentioned in some of the texts from this class really drove this point home. Hopefully I can learn to become an effective teacher so that the preventative efforts I make in clinical practice to educate families and their children about health will translate into these families taking action in their own communities. I’m convinced that utilizing Freire’s principles on respect and dialogue will help me to better connect with patients or anybody I work with in the future. After being exposed to both teaching and medicine in college, I can’t believe the discrepancy in respect and prestige that has developed between the two fields.

Katie Champoux

           The teaching of teachers proved an interesting and complicated topic to explore. There are so many elements involved in training good teachers, and so many of those elements are difficult to identify and teach in consistent ways. Through our research on the history of teachers in Washington State and the case studies of three teacher training programs, our group better understands how the best teachers are taught as well as how these programs can be improved.

        While I don’t see myself becoming a teacher at the elementary level, the topic of teacher preparation is fascinating to me because I have had so many experiences with both good and bad teachers. Now that I have done this project, I wish that I could know where my favorite teachers did their training, so I could see, in my small sample, if there was any correlation between teachers who I thought were excellent and their teaching schools. When I was an elementary student, I could clearly distinguish between good and bad teachers, and I think that student opinions could be valuable for helping teachers to improve. So, I think that primary and secondary teachers should receive feedback from their students as one way to improve their teaching skills.

        For this project, my research centered on the teacher preparation program at the University of Washington. I found it somewhat troubling that the program seemed to lack or compress many of the most important elements of a teacher training program, such as observation of both master teachers and other student teachers. When I compared recommendations for the UW with the Seattle Teacher Residency and Evergreen State College in the conclusion, I found that the UW certainly seemed the weakest program due to its shorter length and smaller emphasis on observation and mentoring. The UW College of Education seems to focus more on research about education rather than preparing its future teachers. I also learned that the UW is partnered with Seattle Teacher Residency, which seems to be the UW’s solution rather than adjusting their own program. In my opinion, the UW should incorporate ideas from other successful programs such as Seattle Teacher Residency and Evergreen to reform its program.

        Even before taking this class, I believed that teacher training should be more rigorous and that teaching should be a more respected profession. Now, I better understand the difficulties that teachers face and this project has shown me that many teacher training programs do not thoroughly prepare their teachers. This seems particularly true for big name schools, where the emphasis is on research and funding grants. These larger programs need to focus on producing effective teachers, which requires more time in the program to train them.

        Perhaps the biggest idea that I take away from this project is the challenge of good teacher preparation. Teaching is a complex task, which requires both excellent training as well as relevant experience. To excel, great teachers are always learning and improving their teaching throughout their careers. So, for me, the ideal teaching program would not just provide future teachers with a solid foundation in teaching techniques, classroom experience, and mentoring. An ideal program would provide teachers with skills in observation and reflection, and emphasize the importance of renewing their teaching skills with additional training.

        Overall, this project really helped me connect the ideas we learned together throughout the quarter. We thought about what makes a good teacher, and then my project examined the nuts and bolts of how teachers are trained. I appreciate how tough it is to teach, and have even more respect for my truly great teachers.

Katie Gwyn

I chose to take this course because I needed a VLPA credit and a girl in my *Intro to Honors* course recommended the professor. I had always diminished the teaching profession due to my own experiences in an underfunded public high school and the negative cultural view surrounding teachers in the United States. I had never really loved working with kids. Even when I was a kid, I always chose to play with my older cousins over the annoying, younger ones. I partially blame this distaste for children on the fact that I have two kid brothers, 11 and 13 years younger than me. Constantly being around two rambunctious little boys is enough to make any teenager want to steer clear of a career path that may place them in a room with 30 of those little monsters. Education was something, up until this course, I had absolutely no interest in.

After the first month in the course my opinions changed. After every book, we read I found myself coming to a new realization about teaching, education policy, and how it all could relate to my life and future plans. Amanda Ripley’s book was probably the most influential to me, specifically the way government interacts with education and how that can produce positive or negative outcomes. This quarter, in addition to this course, I took *Intro to American Politics* and *Introduction to Law, Societies, and Justice*, two courses I thought were more in tune with what I want to pursue as a major. The overlap of all of my coursework at this point of the course sparked an interest in the way politics are able to influence education in other countries as well as domestically. After taking note of this, I found myself extremely interested in the larger structures that form education, one of these being teacher preparation.

After reading *The Smartest Kids in the World*, I felt very strongly about the way the US goes about teaching teachers. Specifically after reading about Finland’s methods, I was appalled by the way people choose to go into and prepare for teaching in America, but the more I thought about my own experiences in made sense. I had met the teacher who only wanted to coach football, the teacher who got too comfortable and stopped learning themselves, and the college student who chose education because it was “an easy major.” Everything we have learned this quarter has led me to the conclusion that the best way to improve education is to improve teachers, and that this improvement needs to start at the beginning with great preparation rather than evaluations ten years down the road.

I chose to look into teacher preparation because it was something that stuck out as inadequate across the country, and affects every teacher and student. While there are many different aspects of teacher preparation, the student teaching portion is the culmination of most programs and determines whether a teacher is prepared to take on the challenges of running their own classroom. After looking into the reality of these programs, it is more difficult than I thought to determine the best way to prepare student teachers. While Evergreen, I believe, does a great job giving students classroom experience and preparing them to teach, they do not have very high standards for admission into the program—something I believed was crucial to the success of Finland. It is probably safe to say that the US is not going to look like Finland in regards to teacher preparation any time soon, so through this project I saw the need to determine what could be done right now. This change can come in better student-teaching programs that emphasize a diversity of experiences, cohort learning, and dialogue between mentor teachers, program faculty, and student teachers.

By completing this course, I have a much better understanding of teaching from teacher preparation to pedagogical philosophy. I still do not want to be a teacher, but I do want to use this knowledge to advance educational policy, hoping that I end up working in politics. Because of this class, I have a solid understanding of issues that surround education and will use this platform to learn more as I get closer to these issues later on in life.

Siena Traverso

Every time I tell someone that I want to be a teacher, I am either told, “Wow, you are going to be so poor!” or “Really? Why waste your intelligence becoming a teacher?” I’m frustrated with the prospect of a small salary, but made my peace with that comment long ago. Though I strongly believe that teachers deserve a much greater salary for the amount of work they put in and hope their salary increases soon, I understand that I am sacrificing wages for pursuing my passion. This brings me to the second question, which is insulting in a number of ways. Becoming a teacher is not a waste of my intelligence; who should be teaching the future leaders of tomorrow if not the best and brightest? As my ten year old brain reasoned when I decided to become a teacher, “How can there be doctors, lawyers, or even presidents without someone to teach them?” I put my teachers on the highest of pedestals and slowly have had my bubbled burst with the lack of respect for my dream profession. Now that I have researched training programs I see some of the reasons that people might question the intelligence the profession.

My interest in teacher preparation stems from my interest in Teach For America and my belief that their five week training program undermines the teaching profession. Claiming that five weeks is enough to prepare teachers for the one of the most demanding jobs undermines the nuances of teacher education. Teaching is a multifaceted profession, so it should take longer than a little over a month to train future educators. Changing the way we hire and prepare teachers is the key to improving the profession and children’s success, both academically and socially. The bar for becoming a teacher is set unfortunately low and should be raised in order to gain the most intelligent teachers for our future generations. Education majors aren’t taken seriously at many universities and are often the “easy” majors. I actually heard a student in one of my education classes say, “I can’t figure out what to major in, so I’m going to be an Early Childhood and Family Studies Major.” This mindset reinforces the popular yet inaccurate quote, “Those who can’t do, teach.” Teacher training programs are no more rigorous than undergraduate education majors and give minimal time in the classroom for hands on training. The combination of education seen as a cop-out profession and the lack of rigor in training programs, leads to a lack of respect for the teaching profession.

Both Seattle Teacher Residency and Evergreen State College promote rigorous selection and training to produce high quality instructors ready to teach in challenging schools. I am seriously considering applying to these programs. I am excitedly awaiting change in the field of education and can’t wait to help instigate that change. I think a key to making an impact in the field of education is to include actual teachers in the highest levels of the decision making processes. This paper, and course in general, has inspired me to consider becoming involved in the policy side of education. As Elizabeth Green points out in her book *Building A Better Teacher*, her research couldn’t have prepared her for what it is like teaching in an actual classroom. Before I enter the policy debates, I will become a teacher first. The day Ms. Traverso is written in environmental friendly whiteboard marker at the front of the classroom will be the proudest day of my life. See you in five years, room 3B.

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