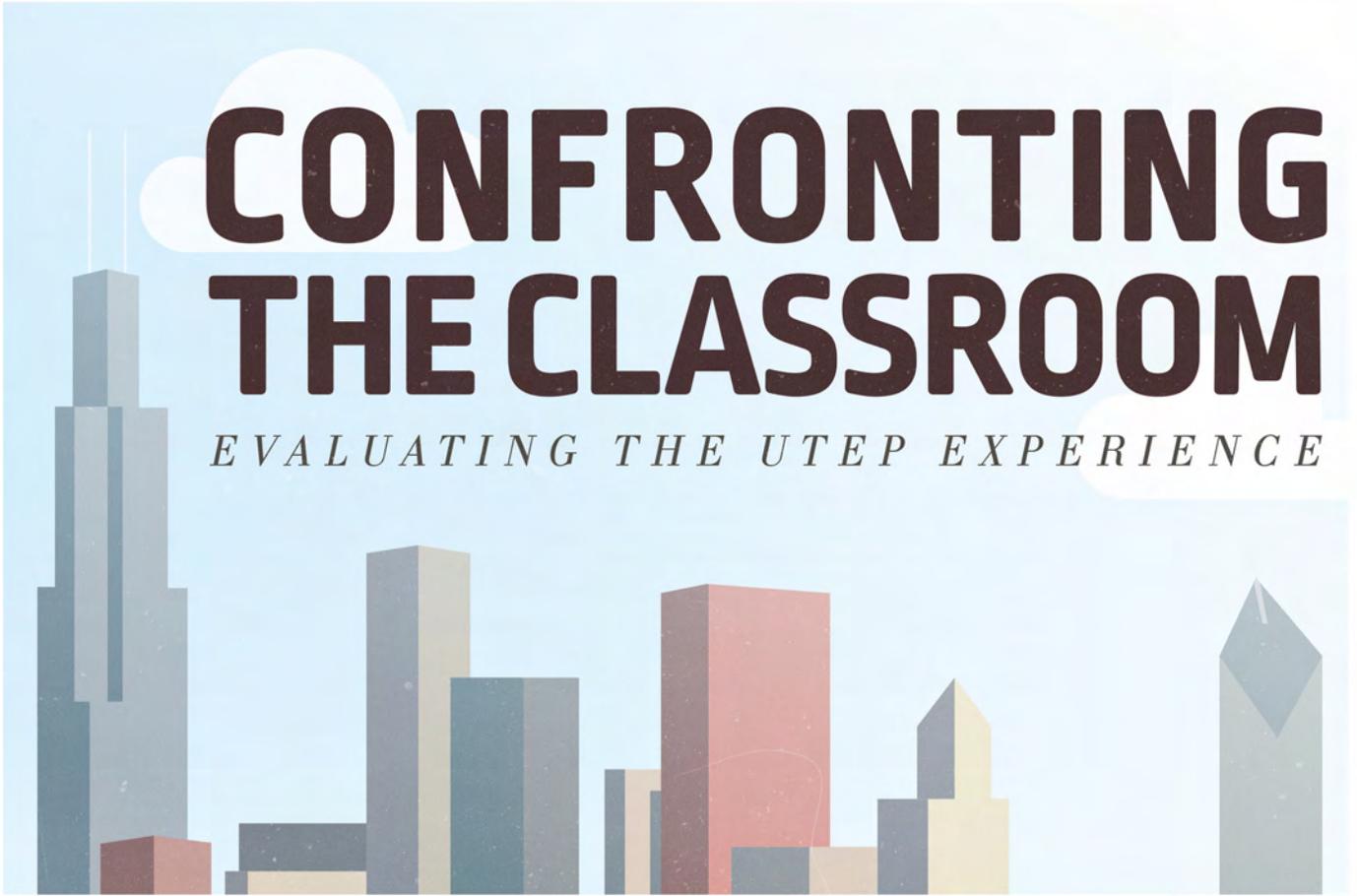


CONFRONTING THE CLASSROOM

EVALUATING THE UTEP EXPERIENCE



Confronting the Classroom:

Evaluating the UTEP Experience

Contributors and Acknowledgements

UTEP in Chicago: Teachers in their Social Context

Leah Ansel
Abena D Appah-Sampong
Alyssa Suzanne Cox
Maya Handa
Samuel G. Husman

The First Year: The Foundations Experience

Natasha Mireya Chandler
Katherine Anne Dowley
Jeremy Natan Pushkin
Christina Xiao

Into the Classroom: The Residency Year

Sneha Chebrolu
Jaclyn DiDomenico
Jane Elizabeth Huber
Chase Woods

A Classroom of One's Own: The Landing Years

Eleanor Carpenter
Maggi Heneghan
Breanne Ilise Johnson
Christina Leon
Tyler Ross

Practical Wisdom: Experienced UTEP Teachers

Ryan C. Krob
Dalton Schmit
Freddy Tsao

The Veterans: Leaders and Master Teachers from UTEP

José Pulido
Charles Gardiner Salmans
Gabriella G Snow
Rachel Katherine Vogt

The UTEP Model in Comparative Perspective

Elysa Bryen
Stephanie Antonetta Champi
Gregory Charles Guimaraes
Eyal Indra Hanfling
Randi Lawrence

We would like to thank UTEP Director Tanika Island for her support of and assistance with the project, and the UTEP students and alumni who provided their perspectives. We would also like to thank staff from the Indiana University Northwest Urban Teacher Education Program, the Memphis Teacher Residency, the Urban Education Institute, Urban Teachers, KIPP DC Capital Teaching Residency, and the UCLA Teacher Education Program. We would also like to thank our professor, Chad Broughton, for being a thoughtful and dedicated leader, and the teaching assistant, Aseal Tineh, for her feedback.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
1. UTEP IN CHICAGO: TEACHERS IN THEIR SOCIAL CONTEXT	7
2. THE FIRST YEAR: THE FOUNDATIONS EXPERIENCE	21
3. INTO THE CLASSROOM: THE RESIDENCY YEAR	27
4. A CLASSROOM OF ONE’S OWN: THE LANDING YEARS	39
5. PRACTICAL WISDOM: EXPERIENCED UTEP TEACHERS.....	55
6. THE VETERANS: LEADERS AND MASTER TEACHERS FROM UTEP.....	69
7. THE UTEP MODEL IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE.....	81
Appendix A: Interview Protocols	93
Appendix B: List of interviewees: UTEP Model.....	101
Appendix C: Data Tables.....	103
Appendix D: Maps	111
References	121

INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Urban Teacher Education Program (UTEP) is to effectively utilize context-specific teacher training to produce the next generation of Chicago Public School educators and change-makers through both rigorous academic training and cultural development. UTEP does this by incorporating various curriculum Strands, including the Academic, Fieldwork, Tutoring and Soul Strand, as well as a summer school experience and a one-year residency. For the last three years of the five-year program, students are placed in Chicago Public Schools, where they teach in their own classrooms and are guided by a UTEP coach. In support of this goal, the following evaluation sets out to explore how effective UTEP has been in achieving its desired program outcomes by interviewing current UTEP students and alumni.

Methodology

To conduct this analysis, we used a combination of quantitative and qualitative interview data from UTEP students, comparative techniques, ArcGIS mapping, and a variety of survey methods. We interviewed past and current UTEP students to gauge how different parts of the UTEP curriculum helped them as educators, and as educators acting within the Chicago Public School System. To ensure the validity and reliability of our results, we utilized a stratified random sample to select which UTEP students and alumni to interview. UTEP students and alumni were divided into five different groups. We then created a stratified random sample to determine which members of each group we would reach out to in order to schedule an interview. Because not everyone to whom we reached out responded to our interview requests, the data may not be representative of a complete random sample. Despite inherent selection bias, this sample provides a functional basis for analysis of UTEP.

Our interview protocol consisted of both global closed-response questions and open-response questions. The closed-response questions sought to determine demographic information and specific opinion-based responses regarding segments of the UTEP curriculum. The open-response questions aimed to elicit anecdotes and examples of how UTEP's methods served, or failed to serve, their students and alumni. The open-response format also provided a forum for interviewees to suggest changes and voice opinions on how UTEP could improve outcomes for its students. The data gathered in the closed-response questions was then quantitatively analyzed to supplement the qualitative data obtained from participant interviews.

In addition to interviewing UTEP students and alumni, we performed a comparative analysis of UTEP and similar teacher education programs around the United States. The analysis allowed us to examine UTEP relative to peer institutions. By analyzing UTEP in light of similar programs' results and structures, we have produced an comprehensive evaluation of UTEP and the program's ability to achieve its overall goals. Recommendations regarding the improvement of the UTEP curriculum and overall program are given with the intention of aiding UTEP as this program grows and moves forward with its mission to positively impact the Chicago Public School System.

Literature Review

Literature on urban teacher programs point to the history of urban education reform, the role mentors play in urban teacher residency programs, the importance of including programs like the Soul Strand into education models, and how to incorporate a university education with theories of community assets. The following literature situates the work UTEP does with regard to its requirement for a diverse education which contains fieldwork and a Soul Strand. It also provides suggestions for how mentorship and coaching should function, and on how to improve the effectiveness of Soul Strand.

History of Urban Education Reform

When writing about the challenges of urban teacher education in the 1990s, Lois Weiner identified the tension between the bureaucracy's desire for standardization and the educator's need for individualization as one of great importance. In her journal article, "Research in the 90s: Implications for Urban Teacher Preparation," Weiner asserts that "the most salient aspect of urban teaching then is that urban teachers must be able to accommodate the greatest diversity of student needs under conditions that continually subvert their efforts to personalize and individualize education" (Weiner 2000, 371). She continues to identify two areas that school reform efforts may fall into, the "ecological" or "service delivery" framework (Weiner 2000, 372). In the former, education is viewed within the context of the larger community, and the community is treated as a partner crucial to success. In the latter, education is seen as a single package, independent from the communities in which it is delivered.

Ultimately, Weiner concludes that the 90s was a decade filled with the manifestation of these two reform systems which sit at odds with one another. As Weiner notes in her conclusion, "Researchers stressed the complex, personal, individual nature of learning by teachers and students, and the need to attend to political and social contexts in which learning occurs, while the political climate became increasingly indifferent to students' psychosocial needs and an economic rationale for educational reform became ascendant" (Weiner 2000, 396). In UTEP, the reform system in which the community is treated as a partner, came to prominence. One way in which UTEP creates this partnership is through the context-specific nature, which acknowledges the political and social contexts through the Soul Strand.

The Importance of the Soul Strand

The Soul Strand (and similar programming in other teacher education programs) has been qualitatively affirmed as a necessary and important part of urban teacher prep programs. Discussions about the identity of teachers is important for those going to work in inner city schools because most teachers in these programs are white females from mid to upper-middle class backgrounds; it is important for teachers to address their identity and the stereotypes that they hold about inner city neighborhoods and their students. This should not, however, replace efforts for a robust method of recruiting minority candidates. According to one study, the Soul

Strand allows teachers to look at students holistically instead of through the stereotypes of what the students should be like. Additionally, through the understanding of a teacher's own identity, teachers can be better social justice advocates for their students and the communities they work for. The article defines social justice education as the "day-to-day processes and actions utilized in classrooms and communities centers in the critical analysis, action, and reflection amongst all educational stakeholders with the goal of creating tangible change in their communities, cities, states, nation, and the larger world" (Eleni et al. 2010, 142). In terms of being a social justice actor, it also means that teachers cannot be apolitical because that ignores the fact that schools are inherently political. This is a problematic aspect for UTEP because the Urban Education Institute (UEI) is apolitical, so UTEP must also be apolitical (Eleni et al. 2010, 150). According to this review of the training of teachers for context specific programs, teacher identity is a crucial part of context-specific training because it helps teachers to view their students more holistically and prepares them to be better social justice actors for their students and communities.

Although academic research conducted on "culturally-responsive" pedagogies suggests that UTEP's Soul Strand is a crucial component of any effective teacher preparedness program, it is also necessary for there to be robust a recruiting method for minority candidates as a complement to the program's multicultural teaching platform. Hui-Min Chou offers a few suggestions in a 2007 essay, "Multicultural Teacher Education: Toward a Culturally Responsible Pedagogy." Among other ideas, Chou writes about collaborations with historically-black institutions, the creation of a "culture" of diversity, and the notion of a typically-homogenous academic faculty core. While the Soul Strand prepares UTEP students for classrooms, perhaps a more institutional approach to multiculturalism would better serve the program and help it achieve its goals.

The Importance of Fieldwork and Teaching Community Assets

Two different types of urban education, university-community and university-school partnerships, can shed light on how UTEP interacts with schools, based on the previous notion of partnerships highlighted by Weiner. The fieldwork of UTEP is validated through -research which states that, "it is the responsibility of Colleges of Education to enhance teacher education programs through community building, making and sustaining authentic collegial relationships with parents and students in urban schools and community organizations" (Noel 2010, 11). Additional research recognizes that academic coursework alone, "no matter how transformative its intentions, may be insufficient to educate teachers of diverse students," and for this reason, "courses of study for urban teacher preparation have made knowledge of family, home, and community integral to teaching and learning" (Onore and Gildea 2010, 28). UTEP, as a context-specific program, aims to focus on knowledge of family, home, and community. Both texts introduce the terms "funds of knowledge" to refer to this new desire for aspiring educators to learn about community strengths and assets.

While research points to the need for teacher prep programs to enter communities to develop an understanding of the "funds of knowledge," it also points to potential risks of university-

community and university-school partnerships. One of the risks is inequality between the roles of a school and a university. Noel discusses that many efforts have been university focused rather than community focused. Another concern is that, “merely locating a program in a school does not automatically equate to strong connections with the neighboring community” (Noel 2010, 13). Noel highlights this by indicating that university students and faculty are primarily white, middle class and monolingual and often operate in highly diverse, low income communities. Onore and Gildea argue that by introducing students to the mindset of a community problem, there can be a solidification of the concept of “saving poor children” rather than working within the framework of community assets. While UTEP does not partner directly with a school, it does send students into schools as outside entities. Similar concerns, such as the inability for students to enter communities with a proper mindset, still apply to UTEP graduates.

To adapt to these limitations, programs should acknowledge “the impact of race, class, power and privilege” with a focus on whiteness, surveillance, subtractive schooling, and the discourse of lived cultures (Noel 2010, 13). Noel claims that a university-school partnership which addresses these concepts will be more successful in engaging with the community. The Soul Strand of the UTEP program attempts to grapple with concepts indicated above.

Gilda and Onore also suggest that a stronger community partnership can be developed when a preservice teacher is not in the *classroom*, but rather when they are working with students *outside* of a teaching setting, such as in an afterschool program, or in partnership with a community organization. UTEP has started to incorporate this idea into their program for this academic year.

There is diverse research on how to adequately integrate preservice teachers into an urban community. Noel, Onore, and Gildea point to multicultural and diverse education with a focus on community assets and community goals as opposed to solely university and student goals and achievements. UTEP can take these theories into account when thinking about how to properly integrate students into communities without the potential for backlash against the system.

The Importance of Mentors in the Urban Residency Model

At the core of the UTEP program is the mentor-resident relationship and dynamic. Mentors evaluate, monitor, and guide their residents with the goal of creating effective future teachers for the urban setting within Chicago. Davis et al argue that mentorship provides the necessary environment for teacher-leaders through the exposure of residents to a tangible form of experience under the supervision of their more experienced mentors (Davis et al. 2005). According to Urban Teacher Residency United (UTRU) Network impact report, there are a number of reasons why Urban Teacher Residency (UTR) mentorship structures elicit a number of positive response within each program:

- “Mentors are a critical component of the UTR model”
- “UTRs are selecting highly effective teachers as mentors”
- “The mentor role in a UTR provides effective educators with a unique teacher-leader opportunity”
- “Mentor Feedback illustrates a very positive, professional experience in UTRs”
- “Student learning and mentor performance are not negatively impacted by the yearlong presence of a teacher resident in the classroom” (Mentors in the Urban Teacher Residency Model)

Perhaps most importantly, mentorship provides a necessary platform for “new teachers to learn, practice, and execute strategies that lead to improved student learning” in a monitored environment (Mentors in the Urban Teacher Residency Model 2013, 2). The invaluable lessons of the mentorship program refine the teaching practices of residents, encourage collaboration between residents and mentors, and most importantly, instill confidence within residents. Confidence is cultivated through the immersion of students into live classrooms; it helps students gain real experience and also helps them determine for themselves effective teaching practices (Davis et al. 2005). Confidence in the belief that you have the ability to successfully fulfill your role as an effective teacher is the most significant factor when it comes to the development of teacher-leaders.

Mentorship has become a fundamental element of effective teacher education programs. The mentor-resident relationship has unique qualities. As well as providing constructive input for residents, mentorship inspires student teachers and mentors to be “more reflective and metacognitive about [his or her] own teaching practices” (Mentors in the Urban Teacher Residency Model). Mentorship, in addition to cultivating successful new teachers, provides a platform from which mentors become better teachers themselves. Accordingly, UTEP should endeavor to maintain and even foster the growth of this element of their program.

1. UTEP IN CHICAGO: TEACHERS IN THEIR SOCIAL CONTEXT

In order to fully evaluate the UTEP program, we must understand who makes up the UTEP program and the environment in which UTEP operates. This chapter will provide background on the UTEP teachers, including their demographic information, where they live, where they teach, and what they think about the structure and organization of the UTEP program. In addition to analyzing our data with respect to all 56 interviewees, we have included analysis on the race and gender of our interviewees. All of our data is derived from the closed-response questions that were given during each alumni interview (Appendix A). This chapter will conclude with brief, preliminary recommendations. Additional demographic tables and spatial analysis regarding UTEP teachers and schools can be found in Appendices C and D.

1.1 DEMOGRAPHICS

This section will cover four aspects of UTEP participant demographics: race, gender, age, and primary educational background.

Given that UTEP's primary goal is to provide effective context-specific teacher training, it is important to analyze the demographics and background of the teachers participating in the program, in order to gain a better understanding of the full classroom context and assess the way it might impact UTEP's ability to accomplish this goal. It is important that UTEP's administration has a good understanding of who UTEP's students are, and whether the demographics of the UTEP cohorts represent a group likely to be successful in achieving the goals of the UTEP program. At this point, it is also important to consider one of the limitations of this study. In light of the limited timeframe and complications stemming from inconsistent contact information, only 56 UTEP students/alumni were interviewed—not necessarily a representative sample. Correspondingly, the analysis presented may not accurately reflect the overall demographic makeup of UTEP but will provide a good foundation for analysis.

Demographic Methodology

We asked each UTEP student and alum we interviewed to fill out a demographics/background form. Additionally, all interviewees were asked to complete a closed-response survey, which allowed them to express their opinions about various aspects of the UTEP program.

Analysis of the survey results was performed using STATA and Microsoft Excel. In several cases, numbers were omitted in favor of percentages, in order to preserve anonymity.

Interviewees were selected based on a sampling process and then contacted by Practicum members. We decided to interview between 12 and 15 students/alumni from each of the following subgroups: Foundations Year (Cohort 13), Residency Year (Cohort 12), Landing Years (Cohorts 10-11), Experienced Teachers (Cohorts 7-9), and Veteran Teachers (Cohorts 1-6). We then created a stratified sample of interviewees that included balanced percentages of interviewees from each category—and, within each category, from each cohort. However,

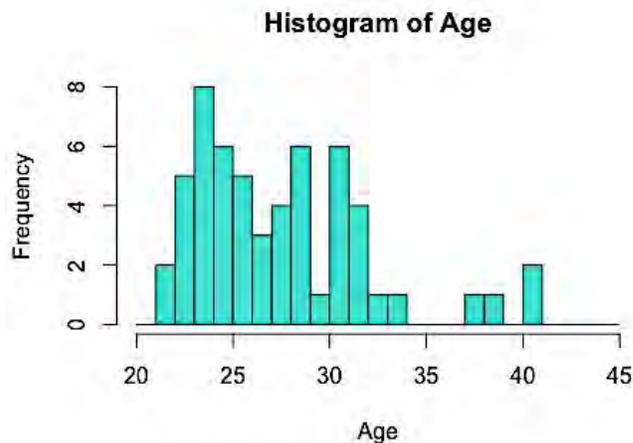
Practicum interviewers were limited in the number of people they could contact and ultimately schedule interviews with.

The sampling process was performed in STATA. Each UTEP student/alum was assigned a random number between 0 and 1, and then students/alumni were sorted based on cohort and category. We then drew samples based on the random numbers (the students/alumni assigned the highest random numbers were highest on the list).

Demographic Findings

The majority of the UTEP participants that we interviewed are white; in terms of gender, the majority are female; and in terms of age, the majority are between the ages of 20 and 30. Figure 1, which shows the age distribution of the interviewees, indicates that over $\frac{2}{3}$ of all interviewees are under the age of 30. Figure 2, which shows the racial breakdown of all of the interviewees, shows that over half of the interviewees are white, while Figure 3, which gives the gender breakdown of the interviewees, shows that almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of the interviewees are female. Cross tabulation of the data reveals that 19 out of 56 interviewees—over a third of the respondents—are white, female, *and* under the age of 30. For a more comprehensive breakdown of race and gender distribution by cohorts, please see Appendix C, Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1: Age Distribution



The data in Figures 1-3 suggests that UTEP is largely recruiting young, white females. This tendency may occur by nature of its connection to the University of Chicago or by nature of its marketing techniques. Additionally, these demographics mirror the national trend of more young, white females entering teaching fields over people of other backgrounds. It is necessary to note that the limited response rate limits the ability to draw significant conclusions about this demographic trend.

Figure 2: Racial Demographics

Race	Percentage
White	55%
African-American	7%
Latino/a	21%
Asian	2%
Middle Eastern	4%
Biracial	9%
Unknown	2%

Figure 3: Gender Distribution

Gender	Percentage
Female	73%
Male	27%

We found that most of the interviewees come from a public school background, including many from the Chicago Public School system (Figure 4). The large percentage of public school educated participants may suggest that these UTEP individuals have a better understanding of the issues facing CPS as a public school system than people coming from private primary education institutions. For more information regarding primary education by cohort, please see Appendix C, Figure 3.

Figure 4: Educational Background

Type of Primary Education	Percentage
Public (CPS)	30%
Public (Non-CPS)	43%
Private/Parochial	20%
Both	7%

If UTEP’s population mirrors the interview sample, the preponderance of young, white, female teachers may preclude a diversity of opinion and background from entering discussions about how to incorporate the UTEP program’s fundamental characteristics, including the Soul Strand. When demographic groups interact mostly with others of similar background, their opinions may be cemented—through a type of confirmation bias—rather than challenged and transformed.

This might potentially pose a problem for the UTEP program’s commitment to preparing teachers to deeply understand problems in CPS. Most of the UTEP participants interviewed do not mirror the populations they will be interacting with in CPS schools, creating an outsider

environment. If this data reflects UTEP generally, there is potential that the outsider environment may lead to conflicts once teachers are placed in residency.

1.2 GEOGRAPHY

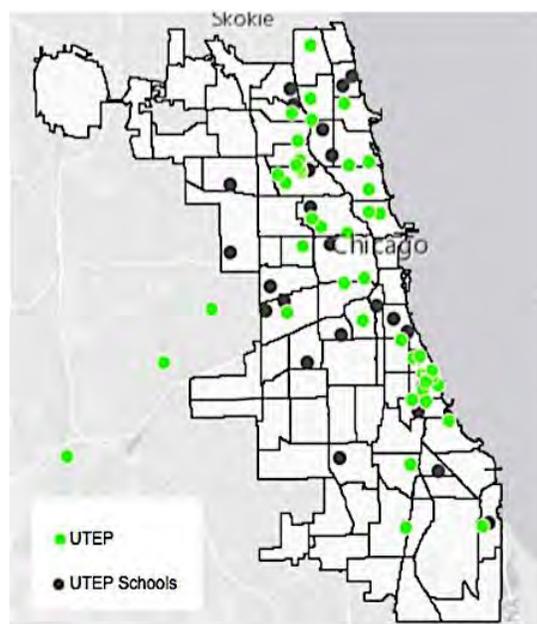
This section presents a spatial analysis of where UTEP teachers choose to live and where they choose to teach. This was executed by mapping where our UTEP teacher sample lives relative to their schools while exploring different variables like race and opinion regarding context-specificity.

One of the goals of the UTEP program is to create change in the greater Chicago Public School System. Therefore, an indication of UTEP's success may be a presence of its teachers throughout the entire city. Additionally, as a part of UTEP's context-specific training, the program tries to introduce students to the ways a community's "leadership, organization, and ethos affect teachers, students, families, and learning." (Matsko and Hammerness 2014, 135). Teachers who live in the same neighborhoods as their students may have more opportunities to understand and connect with the communities in which they teach.

Geographic Methodology

To evaluate UTEP in relation to their goal to effect change in the Chicago Public School system, we used ArcGIS mapping software to map where the UTEP teachers we interviewed teach relative to where they live. We also looked at teachers' home addresses, schools, commutes, and race, to evaluate UTEP students/alumni' presence in their different communities.

Figure 5: UTEP Home Locations v UTEP School Locations



Geographic Findings

UTEP teachers show a preference for schools located in Hyde Park - Kenwood - Woodlawn area and the North Side. Additionally, there is a lack of UTEP teachers in the Southwest, Far South, and Far Northwest of Chicago. These results are noteworthy since the areas of the Southwest and Far South Chicago tend to have poorer school ratings than those located in the North. Although there are limitations with the small sample size, the data suggests that UTEP teachers are not evenly spaced through the city. For more information regarding CPS school performance based on geography see Appendix D, Figures 1-6.

In addition to choosing to teach in similar areas, UTEP students and alumni also choose to live in similar areas, as demonstrated by Figure 5. There is a heavy concentration of UTEP teachers in and around Hyde Park and in the North Side. Despite living and teaching in similar regions of Chicago, UTEP teachers are not living in the same neighborhoods as their students.

When we break down this data based on race, racial minorities (Black/African American, Latino/Hispanic, Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander) are more likely to be found outside the Hyde Park and North Side areas (Appendix D, Figure 8). When we combine this demographic data with the data regarding teacher commutes in Figure 6, we hypothesize that, given that most UTEP alumni have a commute that is under 20 minutes, these racial minorities are more likely to also teach at schools outside of Hyde Park-Kenwood-Woodlawn and the North Side. These results suggest one of two things: either the UTEP program is not preparing non-minority students to teach in schools located outside of the North Side and Hyde Park area or UTEP is selecting students that trend towards schools on the North Side and in Hyde Park.

Figure 6: Commute Times

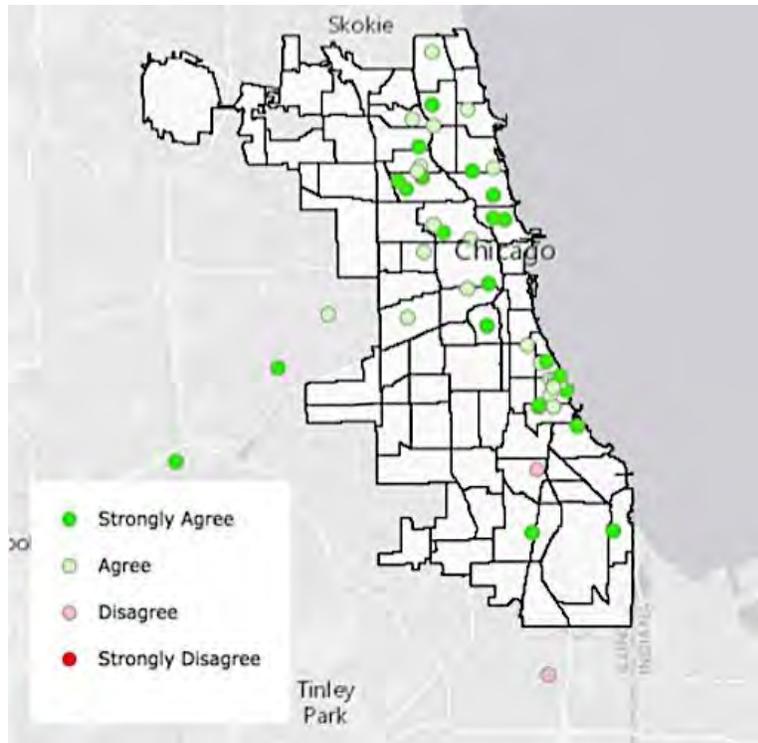
Commute Time to School	Percent
Under 10 minutes	33%
11-20 minutes	28%
21-30 minutes	16%
31-45 minutes	9%
Over 45 minutes	14%

Our interviewees unanimously agree that the context-specificity of the UTEP program has been beneficial, regardless of where they live or teach. This data, which is shown in Figure 7, suggests the UTEP program is likely preparing all of its students to teach in all areas of Chicago, and that the trend in geographic school preferences may be related to selection.

Overall, UTEP teachers are more likely to land at schools located in or near Hyde Park and on the North Side. Since one of UTEP's goals is to produce teachers who are passionate about education reform and are change-makers, it is important that the program lands teachers across the city to ensure that UTEP reaches all of CPS and not only certain regions. This is

especially important, given the lack of UTEP teachers at the struggling schools on the Southeast and West sides.

Figure 7: “UTEP’s Context-Specific” curriculum is useful to me as a teacher by home address



1.3 THE STRAND STRUCTURE

This section will focus on our interviewees’ opinions of the Strand Structure, including data about each individual Strand, and will be analyzed by both race and gender.

The Strand Structure, which makes up the entirety of the first year curriculum, represents the core of UTEP’s Foundations of Education. The Soul Strand, which focuses on navigating racial and class boundaries as a teacher, was evaluated in-depth in order to further examine the context-specific curriculum of UTEP. This analysis will focus on both the global response regarding the Strand Structure, as well as opinions broken down by race and gender.

Strand Structure Analysis Methodology

This portion of the data was taken from the second part of the global closed-response questions. Interviewees were asked whether they “strongly agree,” “agree,” “disagree,” or “strongly disagree” with a statement regarding the Strand Structure of the UTEP program. We did not include a neutral option, in order to ensure that interviewees gave an opinion leaning one way or the other. As such, a strong tendencies toward moderate answers may reflect only

slight preferences. In addition to analyzing the data across race and gender, we also looked at some aspects of the Strand Structure across sub-groups.

1.4 STRAND STRUCTURE FINDINGS

This section analyzes the Strand Structure as a whole and each individual Strand, therefore the findings section will be divided accordingly.

At the global level, most of the UTEP alumni surveyed thought the Strand Structure of the first year was helpful. The majority of respondents agreed, rather than strongly agreed that the structure was helpful, which may indicate that students do not feel that UTEP's Strand Structure is essential to the goals of the program (Figure 8). On the other hand, students' positive attitudes towards the Strand Structure are consistent across all working groups, suggesting that the Strand-Structure is a beneficial part of UTEP's teacher preparation program (Appendix C, Figure 8).

Figure 8: Question Responses

The "Strand" Structure of UTEP is meeting/met my needs as a teacher in training	
Response	Percent
Strongly Agree	29%
Agree	67%
Disagree	4%
Strongly Disagree	0%

When these global responses are subdivided into racial categories, it becomes evident that respondents of African or Asian descent were more likely to find the Strand Structure helpful than those who self-identified as Hispanic, Multi-racial, or White. These results can be found in Appendix C, Figure 4. This pattern, however, is tempered by the low response rate among minority alumni and the population of alumni. When we subdivide the global data by gender, as in Appendix C, Figure 5, male respondents were more likely to find the Strand Structure of the foundations year helpful than female respondents, with 53% of males strongly agreeing compared to 20% of females.

The Academic Strand

The Academic Strand of the UTEP curriculum consists of coursework in different subject-areas and methods for teaching.

Figure 9: Response Question

The Year 1 Academic Strand is preparing/prepared me to be an effective teacher	
Response	Percent
Strongly Agree	29%
Agree	64%
Disagree	6%
Strongly Disagree	0%
Not Applicable	1%

Similar to the results of the Strand Structure, we found that there was a fairly strong consensus regarding the success of the Academic Strand. As demonstrated in Figure 9, a majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Academic Strand was helpful, with only a few alumni disagreeing. This pattern also holds when the data subdivided by race and gender, which can be found in Appendix C, Figures 6 and 7. The only inconsistency in the data is that female respondents were less likely to find the Strand Structure helpful than their male counterparts, but given the relatively low male response rate, we cannot draw any significant conclusions from this discrepancy.

The Fieldwork Strand

The Fieldwork Strand of the UTEP curriculum guides students through up to twelve observations of Chicago Public and Charter Schools. Similar to the Academic Strand, almost of all of our respondents had a positive impression of the Fieldwork Strand, as over 90% of respondents either “strongly agree” or “agree” that the Fieldwork Strand was helpful. This data can be found in Figure 10. Additionally, unlike the Academic Strand, this data did not vary according to gender, as seen in Appendix C, Figure 9.

Figure 10: Response Question

The Year 1 Fieldwork Strand is preparing/prepared me to be an effective teacher	
Response	Percent
Strongly Agree	46%
Agree	45%
Disagree	9%
Strongly Disagree	0%

However, there were differences in responses among UTEP alumni of different races, as shown in Appendix C, Figure 10. Hispanics, who generally did not favor the Strands, found the

Fieldwork Strand to be particularly helpful, with the majority responding “agree.” Other minorities (Blacks, Asians, and multiracial individuals) also tended to respond “strongly agree.” However, although White respondents “agree” the Fieldwork Strand was helpful, they were not as enthusiastic about it as their minority counterparts. Although the Fieldwork Strand was received well, UTEP could likely benefit from a specific evaluation of the fieldwork Strand to determine how it might better serve all students.

Tutoring Strand

During the Tutoring Strand portion of the UTEP curriculum, UTEP students engage in an after-school program where they are responsible for tutoring three children twice a week. Responses regarding the Tutoring Strand were much more varied than the Academic and Fieldwork Strands. As noted in Figure 11, approximately 14% of respondents did not find the Tutoring Strand helpful. Additionally, although there are no clear patterns regarding race or gender, as shown in Appendix C, Figures 11 and 12, UTEP could examine the Tutoring Strand and look at benefits, such as student interaction, while also looking at possible areas for improvement.

Figure 11: Response Question

The Year 1 Tutoring Strand is preparing/prepared me to be an effective teacher	
Response	Percent
Strongly Agree	29%
Agree	56%
Disagree	11%
Strongly Disagree	4%

Soul Strand

The Soul Strand encourages UTEP students to explore issues of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and culture and the way these elements affect teachers and students. The Soul Strand was the most contested Strand of the UTEP first-year curriculum. As shown in Figure 12, approximately 21% of interviewees did not find the Soul Strand to be helpful. However, despite these results, those who felt the Soul Strand had benefited them were more likely than not to “strongly agree” that the Strand was helpful.

Figure 12: Response Question

The Year 1 Soul Strand is preparing/prepared me to be an effective teacher	
Response	Percent
Strongly Agree	45%
Agree	34%
Disagree	16%
Strongly Disagree	5%

While minority students were less likely to find the Soul Strand helpful than their White counterparts, this is especially true among Hispanic students (Appendix C, Figure 13). Even so, the majority of each race of UTEP alumni had a positive impression of the Soul Strand. When we break down the data by gender, women are more likely to find the Soul Strand helpful than men; though the majority of males did find the Soul Strand helpful, as shown by Appendix C, Figure 14.

Additionally, responses regarding the Soul Strand varied by cohort, as seen in Appendix C, Figure 15. Because the responses vary widely from cohort to cohort, it might be useful to look at how the Soul Strand has changed from year to year in order to analyze the results.

Overall, the Strand Structure is positively regarded by UTEP students and alumni. However, there are areas within the Strand Structure that could be improved. Within the program, race appears to have a strong correlation with how helpful alumni find the soul and fieldwork Strands, though it is not a singular factor.

1.5 OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE UTEP PROGRAM

This section will analyze the findings regarding the overall effectiveness of the UTEP program: How UTEP alumni felt about the workload, preparation for classroom management, the check-in schedule, and UTEP’s context-specificity.

Overall Effectiveness Findings

Similar to the section on the Strand Structure, this section will analyze many aspects of the UTEP program, and will be divided into several sections.

Workload

Overall, most UTEP alumni felt that UTEP provided an adequate workload. As shown in Figure 13, 91% of respondents responded positively to the statement. Additionally, this positive response was fairly consistent among different sub-groups, although the Foundations Years group, as shown in Appendix C, Figure 16, had a more negative response than any of the other subgroups. Absent significant, recent changes to the Foundations Year curriculum, this may be

the result of the lack of a point of comparison to the average teacher’s workload. However, because the responses were pretty consistent, this is not a huge issue.

Figure 13: Response Question

The workload during UTEP is/was manageable	
Response	Percent
Strongly Agree	27%
Agree	64%
Disagree	7%
Strongly Disagree	2%

Classroom Management

Based on anecdotes during the interviews, many UTEP alumni and students feel like they struggle with classroom management. While over 70% of interviewees said that UTEP prepared them to manage their own classroom, more people responded negatively to this prompt than to other prompts, as shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Response Question

UTEP is preparing/prepared me to manage my own classroom	
Response	Percent
Strongly Agree	20%
Agree	55%
Disagree	21%
Strongly Disagree	2%
Not applicable	2%

Responses regarding classroom management varied among cohorts. 56% of respondents from the Landing Years gave a negative response to the prompt, as compared to 15%-30% of members of the other groups, as noted in Appendix C, Figure 17. One interviewee noted that, in their experience, UTEP tended to teach classroom management techniques that were more effective for established teachers. This discrepancy is noteworthy, and it is also important to underline that the responses to this prompt were more negative than other prompts and may highlight an area of potential improvement.

Checkpoint Schedule

Second to Classroom Management, the Checkpoint Structure was not as well regarded, as 17% of interviewees gave a negative response, as indicated by Figure 15. The relevant statement also got the most non-responses of any prompt, with nearly 20% of interviewees responding

“not applicable.” The lack of response is especially important when comparing across sub-groups, as the data in Appendix C, Figure 18 notes, 36% of those in the Residency Years group did not respond, while the other 64% responded favorably.

Figure 15: Response Question

UTEP's Checkpoint Structure is/was well Structured	
Response	Percent
Strongly Agree	18%
Agree	45%
Disagree	14%
Strongly Disagree	3%
Not Applicable	20%

Thus, while it is important for UTEP to improve the Checkpoint Structure, there are too many non-responses to give a clear depiction of the problems within the Checkpoint system.

Context-Specific Program

Finally, we looked at how interviewees felt about UTEP’s context-specific curriculum. Overall, the response was overwhelmingly positive. As shown in Figure 16, 89% of interviewees responded positively to UTEP’s context-specific curriculum. Additionally, as shown in Appendix C, Figure 19, only those in the Residency Year group responded negatively, so it may be worth looking into what happened in this group. But outside of that isolated incident, UTEP alumni felt that the context-specific curriculum helped them perform better as CPS teachers.

Figure 16: Response Question

UTEP's context-specific curriculum will be/is useful to me as a teacher	
Response	Percent
Strongly Agree	49%
Agree	45%
Disagree	4%
Strongly Disagree	2%

According to this data, most of the interviewees had an overall favorable view of UTEP’s structure and ability to prepare them for a career as a teacher. Interviewees responded positively to statements about UTEP’s workload, and UTEP’s context-specific curriculum. However, while most respondents still had favorable opinions of UTEP’s ability to prepare them to manage their own classroom and the Checkpoint Structure, these two prompts gave the weakest responses.

1.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data presented above, we offer the following preliminary recommendations:

Demographics

- Extend UTEP's marketing reach beyond the University of Chicago environment. UTEP should market to alumni of other institutions as well in order to attract a more diverse set of voices and backgrounds.
- Perform a more in-depth analysis of demographics in the entire program to see if the total demographic data mirrors the distribution of the demographic data from our sample. If it does, UTEP might want to consider restructuring the program to place special emphasis on diversity.

Geography

- Prioritize initiatives to increase the diversity of incoming UTEP cohorts. UTEP's context-specific curriculum is beneficial, which suggests that the trend towards living and teaching in certain regions of Chicago may stem from preferences of UTEP teachers themselves. Since racial minorities stray from these geographic trends, increasing racial minority representation in the cohorts could successfully expand UTEP representation across the Chicago Public School system.
- Build relationships with schools located in the South West, South, and Far North West regions of Chicago. Since UTEP sends students to Chicago schools for their residency, establishing relationships with schools in these underserved areas will promote students landing in these regions once they begin teaching.

Strand Structure

- Improve minority engagement with the Soul Strand. Additionally, work with male students to develop assistive programming in the Soul Strand. Given that teaching is viewed as a traditionally feminine occupation, men may have greater difficulty fulfilling the goals of the Soul Strand.
- Reach out to Hispanic students in an effort to improve the Foundations of Education year, as they have found the Strands to be broadly less helpful than other racial groups.

Organization

- Work to incorporate more practice with classroom management into the curriculum. Since this is especially a problem with those in the Elementary Landing Years, or those who just started having their own classroom, it is important that UTEP address this issue.
- Try and learn how the Checkpoint program can be improved. Evaluate whether Checkpoints need to be added/taken away to better prepare students for their future as CPS teachers.

2. THE FIRST YEAR: THE FOUNDATIONS EXPERIENCE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to evaluate how the UTEP program can improve for students in their first year of UTEP, we interviewed approximately half of Cohort 13 (12 students) to hear their thoughts so far and what they hope to achieve out of the program. We asked open-ended questions on the themes of how and why members of the cohort chose UTEP, the orientation experience and bonding between cohort members, and strand content and structure.

2.2 CHOOSING UTEP AND EXPECTATIONS PRIOR TO THE PROGRAM

Before choosing UTEP, cohort members found out about the program through a number of ways including: college advisers, UTEP workshops at different CPS schools, City Year graduate school fairs, principals, and looking up teacher residency programs online.

After learning more about the program and researching other teaching programs, the main reason why Cohort 13 members chose UTEP was because it was context-specific to urban schools and because of how long the program has lasted. The UTEP interview model has attracted the best and the brightest prospective teachers that want to do good and do it well. One student claimed UTEP was “the longest application by far but it made me really reflect on why I wanted to be in an urban setting and convinced me that UTEP actually cared about us and wanted us to succeed and was the only option for me to achieve what I wanted to achieve.”

Another student reflected on the interview process as one that is reminiscent of how UTEP develops students and commented, “[the program] pushes but also encourages you in your development as a teacher.” Teachers also felt a calling to serve in Chicago Public Schools, and wanted to meet the need for new, innovative, and socially and culturally-conscious teachers.

We found that many of the students committed to teaching in CPS grew up in Chicago and went to CPS schools, or saw relatives who went to CPS schools who were not thriving academically. One student explained that she wanted a program that prepared her to teach in CPS:

When I was growing up, I lived in the suburbs [of Chicago] and went to a public school and had a pretty awesome educational experience. I felt really supported but all of my family was in the city in Chicago. What struck me a lot as I was getting older at family parties talking to my cousins about their experiences, I could tell right away that I was receiving a higher quality education.

Similarly, another UTEP student said, “based on the experience I’d had at my school, I’d seen teachers who I felt weren’t fully prepared... I was born and raised in Chicago. I went to CPS schools and I knew I really wanted to teach in CPS schools.”

Therefore, several students come to UTEP because of its niche focus on Chicago Public Schools. All students that we interviewed, if not interested in CPS specifically, were drawn to UTEP because they wanted an urban school environment.

Students also liked that there was a high level of teaching support and that the program strand structure was balanced and highly organized. They mentioned that it was one of the aspects of the program that really stood out to them when comparing teaching programs to apply to. As one UTEP student responded, “I think they seemed very clear what each year was, and for other [teaching] programs it was very vague. And so I saw on their website that they had a year by year model about what you do each year and how that is applicable, so that was helpful.”

Once accepted, UTEP students generally felt that the program would be academically rigorous and that their peers would come in with the same mission and vision. One respondent even mentioned that often times outside of formal class discussions her cohort members would get together to speak about the readings and have less formal discussions.

Finances did not play a large role in deciding whether to join UTEP, as most had University of Chicago scholarships or government loans that would be forgiven as long as they stayed within the program and continued teaching. Additionally, most believed that finances should not be a factor in deciding to pursue their dreams and affect change in communities they cared about. A foundations student even commented that she thought UChicago gave grants to everyone in UTEP, and she was not aware of this grant being available. However, she conceded that while finances did not play a huge role in *her* decision to attend UTEP she knows, “a lot of people who want to apply and they don’t because of how costly it is.”

2.3 ORIENTATION AND CLASSES

Initial cohort bonding occurred at orientation week, and UTEP students generally appreciated the reading assignments and discussions.

Orientation Week

While many students appreciated orientation week, and found it to be incredibly helpful in adjusting to the UTEP program, there were a couple of observations that were recurring themes in the interviews. The first observation was that the term “orientation week” was a bit of a misnomer, as it suggested to many that it would be a more relaxed week, mostly consisting of getting oriented to the City of Chicago and to the program.

A positive attribute of orientation week was that it set the tone for what the rest of the year was going to be like. Students stated that they appreciated the content of the readings, and that the demanding schedule of orientation week also helped to prepare them for their future classes. One student further stated, “There was homework that we had to do to acclimate for orientation week and I felt like everything was a good use of our time and no time was wasted.”

However, one first-year participant stated plainly, “they tricked us.” She went on to say that “it was fine for what it was” but that she wishes she had had a clearer idea of what the program actually entails, as she compared it more to a first week of classes rather than an orientation. In the same line of reasoning, another participant added that she enjoyed the program, but would have liked more information prior to the beginning of orientation week so that she could plan out her schedule and buy the books she needed in advance. She felt stressed by the fact that she didn’t know what was coming, which is an added burden that should be eliminated when undergoing a major life change (as most first-year UTEP students are). Many students are also required to take additional certification classes during the year and summer and felt that they were not provided with enough scheduling information to make prudent plans.

Students also felt that orientation week was overwhelming because they had events scheduled every day from 9:00am to 5:00pm. One respondent concisely reflected, “orientation week... it was long!” and another added, “Orientation week was, I think, one of the most intense weeks of my entire life.” However, all students who found orientation week overwhelming also reflected that they learned a lot during that time and enjoyed their experiences overall.

The final theme that came up during interviews was the level of comfort with other students when discussing serious issues related to race in class. Thus, there needed to be a higher level of cohort bonding, as this affected the depth and content of orientation discussions. On that subject, a student said:

I think you need to know people a little better before you can have an honest open discussion, so I think starting off with the logistics will help people warm up to each other, and by the time you start having the content based discussion, you know each other’s names and are a little more comfortable saying what you think and what you feel, because I don’t think we got at anything really valuable in that first day or two because we still didn’t know each other well enough to dig deep.

The interviewees found that they would have liked to know each other more before having to go into personal conversations regarding sensitive topics.

Beyond Orientation

Outside of orientation, cohort members feel like they are a tight-knit group, as they spend all of their class time together and have deep classroom discussions as well as small group discussions.

One student stated that their favorite aspect of the program was the cohort model, because “it’s a built-in support system and the connections are going to last when [they] are teaching and are at different schools.” Because cohort bonding is so crucial to the UTEP experience for most students, they would also prefer UTEP to offer more UTEP-sponsored events to facilitate more bonding between the cohort and with previous cohorts. One student also suggested that

having a database available with contact information would be helpful to find older mentors and make deeper connections outside your cohort but still within UTEP.

2.4 STRAND CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

Students appreciated the organization of the strand structure. Most preferred the Academic Strand since it provides them with a theoretical foundation that “puts [them] in context of everything that [they] talk about.” They like that it is not competitive and that there is a lot of support for classes. The majority of the cohort goes to office hours that are offered by the professors and meets regularly for group work and discussion.

Several students reflected on a certain class within the Academic Strand that they found challenging, Numbers Theory. One member of Cohort 13 said office hours for Numbers Theory were almost a tradition for Cohort 13 because, “it’s like our whole class sitting in a big room working out the problems together and the professors are both there so it’s really nice.”

Theoretical vs. Practical Education

An interesting observation came up regarding the theoretical and advanced nature of the UTEP Academic Strand. A number of the participants interviewed mentioned that that was part of what they liked about UTEP, because it found a balance between the teacher residency and traditional Master of Education programs. However, once it came to actually being in the classes, there was less overall enthusiasm about the nature of the Academic Strand and the practicality of that strand in a classroom setting. For instance, one student mentioned that “right now it’s difficult to draw practical connections to what we’re doing. We’re having a lot of existential discussions, but I’m not really sure what that looks like in a 6th grade classroom.” Another interviewee added, “On more of a meta-level we’re getting prepared to be teachers, but not necessarily the day in, day out practices with kids.” They would like for the program to be a little clearer on why they are learning what they’re learning, and how it will help them, as it is not completely apparent as to why they are learning what they are learning. This discrepancy in what they said they wanted and what their actual experiences in the program have been like suggests that more of a connection needs to be made between certain Strands and their use in the classroom; students want to do the academic side of the program, which is part of why they chose UTEP, but they want to ensure that their time is being well spent.

Of course, some students conceded that because they were only about a month into the program when interviews were being conducted, they did not feel qualified to make a definitive judgement about the Academic Strand. One UTEP student reported that, “it is really focused on big ideas and it hasn’t really transitioned to what does this mean in the classroom, what are the implications, what are you going to do about it? But I certainly feel like we’re going to go there. That’s the next step. We just haven’t gotten there yet.”

However, a few students felt that the level of conversation should include deeper analyses of race and social issues. One student also felt that the professor should be more critical and

challenge opinions during discussions. This student felt as though the discussion about the reading was very one-sided and it was more of a “teacher telling us what to think and/or how to think, rather than us discussing it and exploring our opinions.”

Out in the Field

Students feel that the Fieldwork Strand directly applies what they learn in the classroom to the neighborhood context. Many students attribute this to being their deciding factor in attending the UTEP program. One student said he had not previously encountered a program “where you actually go and meet community organizers and go to these neighborhoods and talk about the history like political history, music history, etc.” and believes that this is the main thing that will prepare him better to teach in the Chicago Public School system. Most are very connected to the Chicagoland community and think that the Fieldwork Strand has been able to open their eyes to the real struggles and inequalities faced by the certain parts of the city. One student believes that UTEP will enable him to further connect with the students he grew up with and show them that there are teachers who believe in their desire to be academically successful and attend college.

Initial Thoughts on the Soul Strand

Because this cohort has only had two Soul Strand classes, they have not formed a complete opinion about the Strand. Feelings about Soul Strand are mixed. One student said that it “forced [her] to step out of the way [she] see[s] different parts of Chicago.” Another student said she doesn’t know if “we have, as a cohort, had that breakdown of all our walls and barriers to really have a productive discussion about these issues.” A third reflected: “...you come here, you don’t know what to expect and suddenly you’re sitting in these deep conversations with people you’ve never met for like six hours a day for a week of your life and you’re just like, ‘I have no idea what I’m doing.’” Many students are optimistic about Soul Strand, but are currently skeptical because their first class was during orientation week and at that point they did not know their cohort very well.

Recommendations:

- Allow for students to familiarize themselves further in more relaxed or casual activities during orientation, instead of jumping right into deep and probing discussions about academic texts.
- Offer more events such as cohort dinners and seminars with previous cohorts to promote further inter and intra-cohort bonding. Because half of Cohort 13 lives in downtown Chicago and the other half lives in Hyde Park, it is difficult for them to hold outside events on their own.
- Hold outside events or allow the cohort to feel more comfortable expressing their opinions, as this will affect classroom discussion and how they interact in the Soul Strand.

- Allow students to provide feedback and curriculum suggestions to professors on a regular basis.
- Send out a full schedule and more comprehensive introductory materials on what orientation week will actually entail.
- Create events other than icebreakers that help the students know their peers' backgrounds and become more comfortable with each other to help promote open and honest conversation.
- Explicitly highlight the connections between the Strands and their practical usage in the classroom.
- Relate everything back to how it is helping the UTEP students to help their future students.

2.4 CONCLUSION

Cohort 13 is a tight-knit group that came into the program for similar reasons of wanting to study how to teach in an urban context. The orientation experience allowed for cohort bonding to begin, and because it was intensive it set the tone for upcoming classes. The Strand structure is highly appealing to students, and students prefer different Strands above others. However, since they spend most of their time working in the Academic Strand, and most seem to prefer this Strand because they feel it gives them a solid foundation.

3. INTO THE CLASSROOM: THE RESIDENCY YEAR

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Residency Year acts as the keystone of a UTEP student's preparedness for teaching. It is the first time students use skills learned in the Foundations Year and apply them to a classroom setting; lessons learned during Residency guide UTEP graduates throughout the rest of their teaching careers. In order to effectively analyze UTEP, the Residency Year requires special attention as it is such a critical part of preparing students to independently lead classrooms.

Unique to UTEP, the Residency Year allows students more hands-on time in the classroom than other teacher certification programs. While only one semester of shadowing a teacher is required from Chicago Public Schools (CPS), UTEP places students in the classroom for two semesters, and in two different schools. With increased exposure to real classroom situations in different neighborhood and school cultures, UTEP students are better prepared to manage their own classroom.

Over a two-week span, 11 interviews were conducted with current residents. The questions focused on teacher preparedness, the Foundation and Residency Years, and allowed residents to provide feedback about the UTEP program. From these interviews, the three most critical components of UTEP that merit attention are:

- Foundations Year
- Residency Year
- Organizational Structure of UTEP

3.2 FOUNDATIONS YEAR

The Foundations Year section will explore findings relating to the strand structure and preparedness for Residency Year. The four strands elicited varied responses from the residents. Generally, residents spoke positively about the Tutoring and Fieldwork Strands. They found that the experiences from these two strands provided them with useful skills and insights that have guided them through Residency thus far. The students, however, had more critical thoughts about the Academic and Soul Strands.

Academic Strand

The Academic Strand is an important part of the UTEP program and, having just finished their Foundations Year, the 2015-2016 residents are well-positioned to reflect upon their experience. There was a general sense of appreciation for the context-specific aspects of the Academic Strand and students felt prepared for certain things, such as teaching literacy. In contrast, there were mixed feelings regarding the utility and difficulty of the coursework.

UTEP students enter the program with varied expectations as to how rigorous the coursework will be. Some imagined having “class like once a week,” while others with more comfort in formal academic settings had more accurate assumptions about coursework. This lack of clarity around the demands of UTEP made it difficult for residents to accurately plan their schedules and created misunderstandings around whether or not they could hold part-time jobs while in school, which contributed to difficulties in financial planning.

Once in the classroom, students were confronted with a great deal of philosophical and theory-based content that provoked mixed responses. As one resident claimed, “if you aren’t someone with an academic background, you’re gonna struggle. A lot.” Many had difficulty translating the theory and philosophy heavy content into practice. This frustration was captured in the sentiment: “sometimes I feel like I want really concrete things.” While many struggled, overall, residents recognized that that this aspect of academics was important for building a strong background to become a good teacher and has proven important during residency. One student, however, posed the question of whether the emphasis on theory took away from time that could have been spent learning classroom content:

And those conversations [that are more theoretical and philosophical] are ones that incorporate themes of social justice that UTEP likes to harp on, which I think is really important, but I think going into residency I was really scared that I didn’t have the concrete skills that need to teach math, science, or literacy.

Concerns around the applicability of UTEP academics in the CPS classroom contributed to the general demanding and challenging nature of this strand. Some residents felt that the ability to navigate that standard, however, can be related to privilege and previous academic exposure:

I’m a young white woman who has a lot, a lot of experience with academic work. So coming in, I’m already like a thousand times more privileged than my cohort mates who come from different racial and lower privilege backgrounds. Like I know how to read an academic article really well because I was taught how to read an academic article really well by my parents. As a result of that, my ability to know what I’m doing is higher.

In terms of specific course-work, students praised the literacy class and residents felt comfortable teaching this subject. Additionally, the methods course helped students learn different teaching structures that proved useful in the classroom. On the other hand, students felt unprepared to teach math:

I entered this year thinking: “Oh my god, I have no idea how to teach math,” and I still kind of feel that way. We’re in a math methods course now but it should have been prior to this year.

Beyond this, UTEP excels at providing context-specific information. The students valued being able to understand the history and diversity of Chicago, and how that interacts with CPS

students today. This emphasis was called “refreshing,” and provided a critical perspective that is useful in understanding Chicago and creating a connection to CPS, an important UTEP goal. One resident stated:

Everything we do is contextual and so, just talking a lot about how the neighborhoods we teach in, and the histories of those neighborhoods and communities, impacts the experiences...of those families and the kids that are coming to the classroom...I think all teaching programs should be like that, context-specific; it matters when teaching. I feel more prepared to teach in CPS and I learned so much about Chicago and the history of education here and just the history of the city in general...I feel it's appropriate, or necessary even, when teaching in CPS.

The Academic Strand is an integral part of the UTEP program, so it is imperative that UTEP provide a balanced experience for their students. Components of the Academic Strand seem to be well intentioned and students recognize the importance of each of the topics they are learning. However, UTEP can do a better job providing students with hard skills and offering more opportunities for applied learning.

Recommendations

- Clearly outline the expectations and standards of academics before students begin the program.
- Add case-based components to classes that allow students to apply theories they learn to real situations they may later encounter.
- Determine how to adjust the Academic Strand to support individuals with less rigorous academic backgrounds.
- Examine the math preparedness curriculum to ensure it is effectively constructed and prepares teachers.

Tutoring Strand

The feelings towards the Tutoring Strand were largely positive. Many residents emphasized this experience was their first time directly interacting with students as well as integrating classroom material into their teaching practice. The residents valued having this experience at the beginning of the UTEP program as it provided them with new skills that they have continually developed. One respondent stated:

That was one of the early times where I was really in the classroom. I didn't get to do all that much in front of the classroom work but we did a lot more working group to group and I think that really gave me some very valuable skills because now as an educator, the overall profession of education is moving more away

from being in front of the chalkboard and lecturing so a lot more focus on small group.

The Tutoring Strand built upon the previous academic coursework well by providing students concrete structures to use in the classroom. During tutoring, students practiced utilizing different teaching methods by working with students in a one-on-one setting and were able to modify their teaching style accordingly. The Tutoring Strand kept students motivated and looking forward to Residency.

Recommendations

- Continue implementing Tutoring Strand in the same manner.

Fieldwork Strand

The general consensus among residents was that the Fieldwork Strand provided both an enjoyable and informative experience during the Foundations Year. The residents were able to visit different types of CPS schools and compare them. Some residents stated:

Our fieldwork class, I loved. We got to go a different school almost every week and that was just eye-opening to see first-hand, not only different models of school- because we would see charters and like, we saw Montessori School of Englewood- things like that, but then also different demographics and neighborhoods.

Fieldwork Strand was incredible in that it shows you just how diverse CPS can be and what the different types schools are. It was incredible to compare the Lab School to all these other public schools . And it gave you a vision to see like, “This is what education can be.” Maybe not public education, but education in general. This is what people are capable of creating. How do we take components of that system and apply it to other schools that need it?

Fieldwork pushed students to explore various Chicago communities and observe the cultures of different schools within CPS. Some residents also visited the school they were later placed in for residency. One said that visiting the the school and discussing relevant issues from an outsider perspective really helped prepare them to work there as a teacher and address the students in a way that is not offensive or demeaning; it made her think differently.

By and large, the Fieldwork Strand was popular among the residents and provided a valuable learning experience. It was the first time many students were introduced to different types of CPS schools and helped them contextualize their academic knowledge.

Recommendations

- Continue implementing Fieldwork Strand in the same manner.

Soul Strand

Similar to their perspectives on Academic Strand, residents held scattered opinions about the Soul Strand. At first, many expected “the Soul Strand to be...where we would reconcile our own identities with the identities of the student bodies we would be working with, and other teachers and administration in the building.” However, the execution made the course “very ambiguous” to the point where people weren’t “sure what the function of Soul Strand was.” In essence, the perceptions of Soul Strand differed from reality.

Soul Strand for most residents did not provide a space for meaningful exploration of their own identities. The delivery of Soul Strand was mostly lecture-based and, to the frustration of many students, “If you are going to go into teaching, especially CPS, you can't have a lecture class, you need it to be dialogical.” As one student put it: “It was very academic, almost like an anthropology/history class than a space to talk about our identity.”

An important aspect of Soul Strand not meeting expectations was confusion around the professors delivering content. Residents were unclear as to why teachers flew in from Boston to lecture in a program that emphasizes context-specific learning in Chicago. More importantly, the approach some professors took to discuss difficult topics, such as race, class, and gender, was not executed in a way that felt sensitive and inclusive. According to one resident’s experience in the classroom:

[The professor] was in class one day and...I forget the details, but everyone was cringing in the room. And it was weird. It was a weird moment. And it wasn’t racist, it just felt like...ignorant. It was uncomfortable.

Residents overall felt that the Soul Strand was an essential part of their learning experience at UTEP, but actively voiced concerns to improve their experience. UTEP staff “showed up with a notepad, taking down everything we were saying” and made thoughtful adjustments to Soul Strand so that the classes were more beneficial to them. One interviewee outlines what that experience was like:

By the spring they heard how unhappy we were and they turned it over to us. What ended up happening was we taught the classes in groups and focused on different topics. One was on gender, race, sexuality, and we structured the class around those topics and how it was related to us and us in the classroom. It ended up being a great learning experience.

While there is room for improvement to the Soul Strand on UTEP's behalf, the idea of Soul Strand is widely appreciated by the residents. In summation, "I'm glad I experienced Soul Strand, but I would not want to experience it again, in that particular way."

Recommendations

- Shift the Soul Strand from lecture-based learning to open discussion and conversation.
- Ensure UTEP Professors provide an discussion environment that makes everyone feel comfortable.

3.3 RESIDENCY YEAR

The Residency Year encompasses a range of experiences that are indicative of both the UTEP student's preparedness and their ability to excel as a CPS teacher in the future. This includes summer school, interactions with Clinical Instructors, and the transition from the first to the second year of the UTEP program. The opinions of residents regarding these issues were divided among interviewees depending on their personal experiences in summer school placement, Clinical Instructor matching, and the culture of their Residency school.

Summer School

There was a wide range of responses within the cohort concerning the two weeks of summer school. The variety of experiences were a result of classroom placement, the summer school teacher, and the expectations of the resident.

One resident noted that summer school was an "exhausting experience, but it was rewarding." They found the experience to be manageable with the assistance of their classroom teacher and fellow resident. In fact, they went on to talk about how enjoyable and beneficial summer school was in that they were able to work with other UTEP students and give individual attention to the kids.

In contrast, other residents felt that summer school offered little value to them as teachers in training, describing their experiences as "unsavory" and "terrible." One resident "felt like I was a volunteer or an aid [rather] than a real teacher."

A contributing factor to these experiences was the lack of communication between residents and UTEP staff. For instance, one resident noted that she was not informed that one of her students had an Individual Education Plan (IEP) until halfway through summer school: "Now, this kid is struggling because a) it's summer school, and because b) he needs an individual plan... I'm at a loss for words of what to do at this point."

Similarly, several students said that they were disappointed with the lack of structure in the summer school program. One resident described walking in on the first day of summer school: "The teacher said, 'Oh, do you know what we're supposed to be doing for summer school?'"

Well, aren't you supposed to be telling us what we're supposed to be doing? So, that was problematic."

Residents said that they were not told specific details about summer school such as whether or not they should plan a lesson, how to prepare a lesson for summer school, what goals to meet, and what common core standards should be met. These sentiments can be summed up in one resident's perspective:

And the lady who was there, didn't really have a lesson, she kind of pushed it back on me and my partner, like "figure it out." And, eventually, we figured out something to do, but it was like, at the end of the day, how effective was two weeks for them? What did I really accomplish?

These frustrations were heightened when students were attempting to find jobs over the summer, when "you can't work. Those seven weeks were just 'penny pinching'", even with the work-study component of Summer School. This begs the question, as emphasized by one resident, "just what the function of summer school was." It would be beneficial for the UTEP administration to assess the viability of continuing summer school, as it impedes upon many residents ability to obtain summer employment, and may not leave many residents with concrete skills and experiences to carry into their teaching careers.

Recommendations

- Pair residents with former UTEP students and ensure that non-UTEP teachers demonstrate competence and are experienced.
- Establish a clear set of expectations for UTEP residents.
- Create a "mini-takeover" for residents where they observe the first week and implement lessons during the second week of summer school.
- Consider ways to support students who struggle financially over the summer.

Relationships with Clinical Instructors

In general, residents had very positive experiences with their Clinical Instructors (CIs). Many residents sighted that they received positive feedback from their Instructors, and had good working relationships with one another. One said:

My CI is great. She is always there with encouraging words...She's able to bend to my needs. I have felt super supported. She's so much like me it's hysterical...I'm almost 100 percent sure that after this I'm going to call her.

The CIs that some students have been placed with are highly experienced (some teaching for close to 35 years), and committed to teaching in meaningful ways. One resident said that her Clinical Instructor is "leading by example." She continued, "Most work as a teacher is to teach students to be empathetic, accountable, complete their work and follow directions. Working

with students in this way is most of the day.” Similarly, another resident detailed the praise she heard about her CI prior to teaching alongside her. Some people went as far as to say, “she’s the best teacher I’ve ever seen.”

That being said, there is a lack of consistency in the relationship residents have with their CIs. While extremely rare, a bad CI can jeopardize the residency experience. One resident describes an alarming example of negative CI behavior in the classroom:

We talk about all these things we want teachers to be like and then sometimes the teachers themselves, that we are working with, are not necessarily like that. I work with a white teacher and I hear racial microaggressions everyday from her and, you know, that sort of thing. I think in one way, everyone does that, but even though she's a very strong teacher and her instructional practice is really strong, a lot of that racism we talk about that is happening in CPS, I see that playing out in the school I am at and with my CI.

However, students who were not personally close or had difficult experiences with their Clinical Instructors, still felt they had good professional relationships. They noted that their Instructors always frame feedback in a positive manner, and are always willing to answer questions, and provide assistance. Even when there is a difference in opinion, these differences are handled in a civil way, and with understanding between the two parties. One resident said that it was, in fact, beneficial because it clearly illustrated to him what he wanted his classroom to look like in comparison.

Recommendations

- Continue to match Clinical Instructors and residents with care and precision.
- Make note of troubling CI behavior for future placements.

Transition from Foundations Year

A common theme for many residents was striking a healthy balance between work for the UTEP program and the rest of their everyday lives. Many residents felt an increase in their workload between submitting assignments for UTEP and actually teaching in their classrooms: “the challenge is going to be balancing the two: I'm a teacher and a student. Doing both at the same time has been challenging.” This added pressure has made Residency Year understandably frustrating: “The first all-nighter I pulled, and then went to work, I had a meltdown. I learned a hard lesson that day. Once all of my kids left, there were like 20 minutes of tears.”

Other residents have shared similar stress and report a mounting pressure to be perfect. A lack of group dialogue about this hides the struggles that exist and can produce feelings of alienation: “And it’s hard because I’m looking at my classmates who are accomplishing and achieving, and I’m like, what did I do wrong?”

There is a discrepancy between UTEP's expectations of residents and what these residents can reasonably accomplish. Residents struggle to manage both be in the classroom and remain a student, which makes the transition from Foundations Year to Residency particularly difficult.

Recommendations

- Reevaluate the assignment schedule for UTEP residents.
- Make sure advisors are accessible to UTEP residents to provide support.

3.4 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF UTEP

The organizational structure of UTEP is a unifying feature of the student experience. An important facet of the UTEP program is the cohort community; the relationships developed within the cohort are critical in supporting students and creating a positive experience as they become teachers. Additionally, advisory groups play an integral role in providing students with a voice and offers a formal space for discussing problems. Despite feeling supported, UTEP students still struggle to answer the larger questions about the identity of UTEP as an organization.

Cohort

A cohesive cohort is a defining element of the UTEP experience— the importance of meeting like-minded people with “the same kind of goals” and developing friendships cannot be understated. During interviews, residents spoke often of other members in the cohort, referencing jokes made, Facebook posts, conversations, and what they learned from each other. As one resident put it, “It’s good to have great people around” and another lovingly described a fellow cohort member as a “partner in crime.”

This sense of community helps UTEP students navigate the UTEP program, especially as they develop as teachers. For some residents, it is professional, “absolutely incredible and wonderful” to be surrounded by people who “have been going through the same thing... together.” Simply said, “that’s powerful.” While the diversity of students relates to the cohort’s success, it also highlights concern around UTEP’s ability to accommodate varied backgrounds:

I think our cohort is better and seeing a lot of success because we’re really diverse: racially, socially, [and] education. The problem though with the program, is that if they’re going to take in more diverse cohorts, how are they going to meet those wide range of needs?

The current residents are also very close. They have described their cohort experience as “great” and emphasize the strength of the group as a whole. The support the residents provide each other “dulls all the other issues [because] the cohort is so strong.” One resident clarified:

It's been so much easier...that we as a cohort get along really well, generally as a big group. And so we've had an easier time, I think, dealing with whatever problems come up. I'm sure if we hadn't 'jammed' well together, it would have been a lot worse.

The cohort structure of UTEP plays an essential role in developing successful teachers. It provides useful support and helps residents better understand aspects of teaching that may be less apparent: academic backgrounds, cultures, personalities and how they relate to the classroom experience. While many residents appreciated this aspect of the program, UTEP can continue to improve the cohort experience.

Recommendations

- Maintain small cohort size to develop a strong, supportive environment for students.
- Encourage diversity through the admission process to create a unique group of students that can challenge each other and shared varied perspectives.
- Ensure students from different backgrounds are assisted through the academic, personal, and professional experiences of UTEP.

Advisory Groups

In addition to a having a strong cohort, residents were also supported by their advisory groups. One resident described the six-person groups as "amazing." Several students mentioned talking to their advisors about issues that arose during the program. A resident said their monthly advisory meeting "became a dumping ground" and felt their advisor took their concerns very seriously and worked to make improvements. Residents, in general, seemed comfortable discussing problems with their advisors, which is critical in creating a supportive atmosphere.

The advisory experience varied on the availability of the advisor. Some residents stated that they met with their advisors weekly, while others only met once a month. This was a result of staff members having a large number of additional responsibilities; they were overstretched and consequently, were often unavailable. This produced a discrepancy within the UTEP experience. One resident said they felt alienated during the program and were frustrated by not receiving more support:

For a program that...says words like "equity" and [wants you to] make sure your students have the best chance to succeed, and pushes you to care about your students on a level that goes beyond a job, [it] doesn't feel like they're practicing what they preach.

The residents enjoyed having a smaller group within the larger cohort to discuss sensitive issues more closely and benefitted from having an advisor within UTEP to support them. The experience, however, varied greatly between students. UTEP should work towards providing all residents with uniform advisory interactions.

Recommendations

- Require advisors to meet with students on a consistent and frequent basis.
- Ensure that all advisors provide the same level of availability for students.
- Encourage advisory group to meet independently, without advisors, to develop intra-cohort relationships.

Identity of UTEP

The students in the UTEP program come from diverse backgrounds, which produces a rich mix of perspectives and opinions but this leaves unanswered questions concerning the identity of UTEP as an overall organization. One resident posed the following series of questions:

What are our defining beliefs [at UTEP]? What are the things we all walk out with believing as a cohort, as a program, and I feel like those questions aren't answered. They present us with a bevy of choices and they push us to engage with them critically, but it's like, to what end isn't always clear... I think there needs to be a clear discussion about what it is to be [in UTEP]: Who are you admitting? What does that mean? What are you leaving UTEP with? What are your core values? And maybe to talk about the hypocrisies to be with UEI... [and] the fact that you use the charter schools as a sort of laboratory for your residents. And those are real kids struggling to learn real things. It's a lot of stuff.

It is critical to think about these questions and better define what UTEP should be as an organization. For example, another resident claimed that there is no "sense of diversification that reflects CPS" in the staff; the only Latino staff member was cut. In order for UTEP to develop culturally competent teachers, the organization itself should also reflect the qualities it hopes to instill in its graduates.

As it currently stands, the goals of UTEP are mixed and need to be outlined clearly. This will ensure that both the components of the program are aligned and that the students receive an experience that meets their expectations.

Recommendations

- Facilitate conversations on the identity of UTEP during Soul Strand.
- Form a task-force including staff and students that works towards creating a clear identity for UTEP.
- Diversify the staff pool to reflect heterogeneity of CPS.

3.5 CONCLUSION

UTEP has done a great job in preparing their students to be urban teachers in Chicago, and interviews with Cohort 12 underline this accomplishment. With this in mind, however, there are several elements within Foundations Year, Residency Year, and the institutional structure itself that could change and would greatly improve the UTEP experience for students. As UTEP seeks to grow and reach more students, the experiences and feedback of Cohort 12 provide excellent guidance on what to keep, what to change, and how UTEP can continue its success in the future.

4. A CLASSROOM OF ONE'S OWN: THE LANDING YEARS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The first two years in the classroom are an absolutely critical period in a teacher's career. This is the time that leaves many teachers shell-shocked, feeling unprepared for the challenges new teachers face. For UTEP alumni, this is their first time being in charge of their own classroom, and it is the first test of the skills they learned during their two years as students in the program. UTEP alumni in this period differ from their other first-year colleagues in that UTEP assigns them coaches as a valuable support.

Nine teachers were interviewed from these two cohorts. The data gathered from their interviews fall within a few important categories, which we will cover in this chapter:

- Closed-response data analysis and demographics
- Beginning experiences in the classroom and preparedness
- Coaching experience and engagement with UTEP
- Engagement with the community

4.2 CLOSED-RESPONSE DATA ANALYSIS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

This section will cover:

- Big Picture data findings for UTEP teachers in their first and second years of teaching
- Analysis of coded open-response questions
- Insight into how demographics affect respondents' reflections of UTEP

Closed-Response

Both the closed-response and open-response questions revealed a surprising amount of consistency with regard to reflections and thoughts about UTEP. For example, at least 78% of respondents (seven out of nine) agreed or strongly agreed that the checkpoint schedule was well structured, that the Fieldwork Strand (78%) and the Academic Strand (89%) were useful, and that the residency year helped prepare them to be effective teachers (89%). A full 100% of respondents (all nine) agreed or strongly agreed that the context specific curriculum was helpful as a teacher in training and all agreed or strongly agreed that the workload during UTEP was manageable.

On the other side, however, five out of nine respondents disagreed with the statement that UTEP prepared them to manage their own classroom (only two respondents agreed, and two respondents strongly agreed). And only five out of nine respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Soul Strand was helpful to them.

Among the closed-response questions, there were only two instances of ‘strongly disagree’. One respondent strongly disagreed with the statement asserting that the checkpoint schedule was well-structured and another strongly disagreed that the Soul Strand was helpful in preparing to be an effective teacher.

The closed-response data appear largely consistent with UTEP Director Tanika Island’s prediction that the fundamentals of teaching are taught well, but UTEP students feel underprepared when it comes to classroom management.

Coded open-response

Open-response questions were coded as positive, neutral, or negative. Some answers were assigned multiple classifications. For example, consider the following hypothetical answer: if a respondent said, “I felt very prepared. With classroom management, however, things were shaky, but lesson planning was okay. I wish I had had more practice.” The first sentence in response to the question would be coded positively (green), while the clause about classroom management would be coded negatively (red) and the clause about lesson planning would be coded neutrally (yellow). Not all interviewees addressed all questions, thus some areas were coded with fewer than nine responses.

When asked the first open-ended question about how well-prepared they felt during their first month or year in the classroom, the response was generally positive. Six out of nine respondents for this question answered positively, indicating that they felt well-prepared. Two teachers, however, qualified further with either a neutral or negative response about classroom management. One respondent indicated that they only felt prepared because they had been matched with strong mentors and were well-matched as a student teacher. Two respondents answered neutrally about their sense of preparation, but explicitly did not fault the UTEP program, noting problems and complications with their school. Only one respondent said that they outright did not feel prepared for the classroom.

When asked to compare how well-prepared they felt compared to other beginning teachers, the responses were strongly positive. Six out of nine respondents for this question responded positively. Three responded with qualified answers, remarking that they did not feel more prepared than other teachers. For example, one respondent noted feeling just as prepared as a Teach For America (TFA) teacher, suggesting that the two years of UTEP was not significantly more helpful compared to the summer training that TFA teachers receive.

When asked about classroom management, five out of nine interviewees responded negatively, noting either difficulty in managing particularly disruptive students or not having enough techniques or strategies to put into practice. Three responded with positive answers, but one noted not having been taught the balance between being caring and supportive, but also strict enough “so that my classroom is a place where students can learn, and aren’t rolling around on the floor throwing paper at each other.” One alum gave a neutral response saying, “I think it’s

almost impossible to teach [classroom management] because what might work well for one set of students in a given context may not work for the next in the exact same context.”

When asked about lesson planning, all but one responded with unambiguously positive answers. The one negative respondent said:

I think lesson planning has been difficult because of the teachers I was paired with. For my first placement I was in the classroom of someone with twenty years in. She had bullet-pointed lesson plans and went in already set with a plan on what she wanted to do. There was really no insight into the process. As a pre-teacher I felt like I could have used a lot more support.

When asked about evaluating students as individuals, five of five interviewees responded with either generally positive or largely positive answers. Finally, UTEP’s context-specific instruction was regarded positively by six out of seven respondents. Regarding preparation, classroom management appears as a clear weak point while the fundamentals of teaching were widely regarded as strong.

On the remaining two points, when asked what they wished they had known, three of five respondents mentioned a desire for more tangible techniques and strategies for classroom management, and two wished they had been taught more about work-life balance, including one teacher who wished he had learned more about taking care of himself, in addition to his class, during the first year teaching. Lastly, most teachers (seven out of eight) responded positively about their ‘fit’ in their school.

Demographic Data

The average age of respondents was just under 26 years old, and six out of nine respondents were female. Five had gone to public school themselves (two in CPS), and four went to private or parochial school. One-third (three out of nine) live in the same neighborhood as their students and two-thirds (six out of nine) live within 10 minutes of their school.

Because ‘agree’ was the most widely received response (59 ‘agree,’ followed by 30 ‘strongly agree,’ and just 15 disagree and two strongly disagree), we analyzed the disagrees (aggregate) against the strongly agrees.

The following are some interesting correlates in the data:

- The two teachers who disagreed the most with the given statements had both been educated in the CPS system themselves
- Female respondents averaged one and a half times as many ‘disagrees’ as male respondents (an average of two disagrees per female respondent compared to 1.33 per male), but there was no statistical difference for the strongly agrees (an average of 3.16 strongly agrees per female respondent to an average of 3.33 per male respondent)

- Teachers above the median age (25) were more likely to disagree than teachers below the median age (average of 2 disagrees, to 1.5), but were also more likely to express strong agreement than teachers below the median age (an average of 4 strongly agrees to 3.5)
- Only two teachers exclusively expressed agreement or strong agreement, but neither race, nor age, nor gender were predictive in this regard

Summary of Findings

UTEP alumni had largely positive and encouraging things to say about the program. That being said, UTEP alumni identified two areas in need of improvement: classroom management and the Soul Strand. Because everyone agreed that residency year and its supports were helpful, the issue was not about the amount of time in the classroom; what teachers expressed was a desire for more training in practical management strategies — tools and techniques that might not simply be learned with more experience in the classroom. On the flip side, coaching and UTEP’s context-specific curriculum were unambiguously positive aspects of the UTEP program.

4.3 BEGINNING EXPERIENCES IN THE CLASSROOM AND PREPAREDNESS

This section will cover:

- Classroom management
- Lesson planning
- Student evaluation
- Conversations about identity and community tensions (Soul Strand)
- Context-specific teaching

Classroom Management

Among the nine teachers we interviewed, opinions were divided on classroom management. Five teachers disagreed with the statement “UTEP prepared me to manage my own classroom.” One Southside teacher mentioned that she felt unprepared, in part because she felt that UTEP gave her unrealistic expectations. She stated that UTEP taught management for a classroom in April as opposed to one you would see in September. This same teacher also mentioned that her clinical instructors were “really exceptional teachers,” which did not let her see the kind of management techniques that she needed to see as a first year teacher.

Many teachers mentioned that they wished they had been better taught how to structure a classroom through the creation of daily classroom routines, appropriate boundaries between teachers and students, etc. Of the five teachers who felt unprepared in classroom management, however, three agreed that it is a difficult skill to explicitly teach and is something that can really only be learned through experience. A few teachers mentioned specific things they felt UTEP could have improved in this area. One teacher mentioned, “...they save a lot of that procedure stuff for the summer before, in a class called *Transitions to*

Teaching, and I think starting that a little earlier would've helped too. Because in the summer we're all so burnt out, that I didn't necessarily take it seriously."

Another mentioned that he "was never alone in the classroom with children at any point through UTEP" and that he wished he had been given more independence in the classroom during the program. Another stated that she felt there was a lack of practice in systems management; something she stated that her cohort felt was specifically missing versus previous cohorts. Yet another teacher mentioned that she wished she had been taught more about the specific developmental ages of children *in the context of the classroom*, as opposed to just theoretical developmental stages.

Lesson Planning

Our inquiries into lesson planning preparation were met with a more universal answer. All but one of the teachers we spoke with agreed that UTEP had more than adequately prepared them for lesson planning. One second year teacher said that "Everybody seems very impressed with the things that we know" and that because of her extensive knowledge in this area after UTEP, that "it's been nice to know those things, and to be able to act as a leader in some ways in my school even though I am really new." Only one teacher stated that they felt unprepared in this area. His elaboration was similar to what another teacher said about classroom management—that he was paired in residency with very experienced teachers (two veteran teachers with 20 and seven years of experience, respectively) and he felt that "there was really no insight into the process" of lesson planning. However, much like what was stated about preparation for classroom management coming up short, he believes it was not so much the fault of UTEP's programming itself.

Evaluating Students as Individuals

We asked most of our interviewees about how comfortable they felt evaluating students as individuals. Most said they felt comfortable, but a few stated that they wish they had had more practice with the STEP literacy evaluation program that CPS uses. One teacher stated "we could have used some more assessment creation and all that as we go along and the practicalities of it." On the positive side, one teacher stated that "looking at students as whole children" was a "very large component of [her] UTEP experience." Overall, the feeling was one of solid preparation.

Conversations about Identity and Community Tensions (Soul Strand)

Every teacher we asked stated that they felt comfortable at least attempting to have conversations about issues of identity (race, class, sexuality, etc) and community tensions in their classrooms. Despite the strong universal nature of this answer, there was a stark divide among teachers as far as how they felt about the Soul Strand part of the program. This was by far the most controversial piece of the UTEP program we encountered. Four out of nine teachers disagreed with the statement "The Year 1 Soul Strand helped prepare me to be an

effective teacher.” Even within this group, there were differences of opinion on what Soul Strand did wrong. Three teachers who came from more ethnically diverse backgrounds stated that their previous experiences helped them just as much or more than Soul Strand did. Two of them had no issue with Soul Strand however, with one even stating:

It gave a set of language and vocabulary to talk about it that would be accessible both to adults and to children. As opposed to kind of just going at it blindly, having practiced those conversations a little bit was helpful now in knowing how to articulate myself.

The one that did have an issue stated simply that the programming was redundant to him:

As someone who worked for four years in these schools and grew up on the Southside of Chicago and attended these schools, it wasn't really beneficial to me to read about these stories or authors, when I have already lived them.

There were two rather striking dissenting opinions among those who did not like Soul Strand. One Northside teacher, Sarah (not her real name), had a very negative reaction to the programming. She blamed a lot of it on relationships between UTEP instructors. Sarah spoke in depth about how conflicts between them often spilled over into and disrupted their instruction. She also felt that her cohort was “very racially divided,” and that “there was a lot of shaming, or calling people out in a way that was not productive.” She went on to state that the Soul Strand “just showed [her] everything that could go wrong when you try to talk about race.” In contrast, another teacher, Talia (also not her real name), believed that UTEP was too soft on people when it came to these kinds of conversations. She told us that one thing UTEP should focus on is, “how do we have these tough conversations without letting people back out of them?” While Sarah said that UTEP needs to work on being less aggressive in its approach to the topics raised by Soul Strand, Talia took the opposite perspective, saying that UTEP needs to get more upfront about these conversations and not let people “run away” from them.

Despite a lot of the controversy surrounding Soul Strand, it is important to note (as stated at the beginning of the section) that UTEP alumni almost universally feel comfortable broaching these subjects with their students, which probably speaks to the overall success of Soul Strand's mission.

Context-Specific Teaching

When asked about the context-specific programming of UTEP, the universal response was positive. All teachers either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “UTEP's context-specific curriculum is useful to me as a teacher.” Responses varied in terms of how they applied this learning to their own classrooms, but were fairly similar overall. One teacher stated that knowing the background on the type of schools she would be working in gave her more confidence in the classroom. A couple of teachers talked about how it helped them make sure that their students were reflected in their curriculums, and others said it helped them

understand that their students are individuals coming from different places with a lot going on in their lives.

Summary of Findings

Many teachers did not feel prepared to manage their own classrooms. Many felt that they could have used more hands-on experience. All felt very prepared for lesson planning. Most felt prepared to evaluate students as individuals. Soul Strand is controversial as a method of preparation. Many felt the programming was redundant, but others felt shamed by their lack of experience with the subjects. Despite this division of opinion, all teachers came out of UTEP feeling well prepared to at least attempt to have the conversations that UTEP wants them to have in their classrooms about these topics. All felt well-prepared by the context-specific programming.

Recommendations

- Improve classroom management preparation by
 - Giving teachers more independent hands-on time alone in classrooms, and/or
 - Moving the *Transitions to Teaching* course earlier in the program, or incorporate it more thoroughly into other pieces of the program.
- When choosing clinical instructors, try to find good *model* teachers who will provide more insight into the structural classroom processes.
- Spend more time preparing teachers for specific programming they will face in CPS, such as the STEP literacy evaluation program.
- Tailor the Soul Strand curriculum to the different levels of experience represented in the classroom by providing supports for those with less experience with the topics presented and making it less redundant for those who come in with more experience.

4.4 COACHING EXPERIENCE AND ENGAGEMENT WITH UTEP

This section will cover:

- Positive constructive relationships between UTEP teachers and their coaches
- Characteristics that teachers cited as reasons their relationship with their coach was especially strong
- Barriers that were cited for why the coach-teacher relationship was not as fulfilling as it could be
- Limited involvement of teachers with the UTEP program after their residency year

Positive Teacher-Coach Relationships

All UTEP teachers spoke extremely highly of their current coach. Teachers felt supported by their coaches, and said that coaches provided “honest,” “helpful,” and “valuable” feedback. For example, one teacher stated that her coach:

Always checks in...to make sure I'm good, ask if I have any questions, do I need anything, see how the classroom is going. So we have a very good relationship...anything that I've experienced in the school, in the school building, outside the classroom, if it's coaching kids, or dealing with parents, she's always had an experience close to it where she can help me.

Many teachers emphasized that they appreciated the candid feedback that coaches provided. For example, one teacher stated that her coach “will provide copious notes on what she’s observing and she’s honest. I just met with her earlier today actually and she told me I really need to clean things up to prepare for administrators who will be checking in later this week.” Another teacher said, “she’s another set of eyes and ears who can give me that feedback...She was a big wake-up call for me, when evaluations came last October.” Teachers appreciated the fresh eyes and outside perspective that coaches brought to the classroom.

One teacher summed up how coaches provide both feedback and support: “I’m really glad she’s coming into my classroom and I feel like she gives me really good emotional support but also really concrete suggestions about what I can be doing in my instructional practice.” Teachers felt that it was crucial for coaches to provide both practical advice and emotional support.

Characteristics of Strong Teacher-Coach Relationships

Teachers who had a particularly strong relationship with their coach cited having a prior relationship with their coach as one of the reasons. One teachers said, “[my coach] was my advisor first year...I know I can screw up in front of her and she will help...That has been a very productive relationship because we have a [prior] relationship to draw on and that has helped our professional relationship.” Teachers felt that knowing their coach before entering the classroom was valuable to building a personal relationship. For example, another teacher, who knew her coach before she entered the classroom, said, “it is nice to have someone who is looking out for you, giving you a heads up. She has a great relationship with administrators and helps to prepare me for changes that may be taking place.” Teachers who knew their coaches before they began teaching felt that they could be open with their coach, and they were more comfortable building on an already established relationship.

Regardless of whether the teacher was in their first or second year of teaching, the availability of their coach was a critical factoring in determining the relationship. Teachers who cited positive relationships often emphasized the availability of their coach. For example, one teacher said, “I can call her and I have called her all of last year at random hours to help” and another, “she always checks in via email, or text, or phone call to make sure I'm good, ask if I have any questions, do I need anything, see how the classroom is going.”

Lack of Availability

While overall feelings toward coaches were positive, those teachers that cited room for improvement spoke to their coach’s lack of availability and limited time in the classroom. The

only teacher who cited a negative relationship with a coach had a past coach who “stopped coming, so I didn’t have coaching from November to the end of the year.” This teacher felt that her experience with her past coach was unusual and had only positive comments about her new coach. Even teachers that have a good relationship with their coach cited a lack of availability as a reason they would not reach out to their coach as often as they would like. One teacher stated, “[my coach] was supposed to come every week but at one point it was almost a month between visits and I think that was due to UTEP restructuring and they were just understaffed for a while.” Teachers were cognizant of the workloads of their coaches— one said:

I know she has a lot of people that she's working with so I'm not really harping on her right now. I think there are 18 teachers that my coach is handling. It is unfeasible, and she does as much as she can, but I'm also not going to reach out to her about little baby things that I can just deal with on my own...I know she's stretched so thin by UTEP.

One teacher summed up her and other teachers’ feelings about their coach stating:

I would just say that the limitation is that I think they have a really busy load of students, and they cut coaching staff this year so we were down someone, and so I think I’m just aware that she has a lot of responsibilities to other people. So, if I could have her more often that would be ideal, but...In terms of my relationship I feel like it’s really strong.

UTEP Teachers value the support and feedback provided by their coaches, but some teachers are cognizant of their coach’s large workload and feel that it hinders their coach’s ability to be available and in the classroom.

Engagement with UTEP and the UTEP Network

When asked, “to what extent are you still involved with UTEP?” most teachers responded that their engagement was limited to fellow cohort members and their coach. One teacher responded, “To like the bare minimum. They have First Year Induction where you open your classroom and go chat, and I’ll do that. I’m connected to other cohort-mates but in terms of like going back and participating in the cohort one year below me, no, not too much.” Teachers felt they were engaged with their fellow cohort members and coaches, but did not believe that engagement translated to engagement with UTEP as a whole. Only one teacher, who was in her first year, spoke of her continued engagement with UTEP in a positive way outside of her coach and fellow cohort members.

Teachers at the UChicago Charter Schools (UCS) felt that they were more engaged because of the close ties that exist between UCS and UTEP. For example, one teacher noted, “just working at [UCS] gives me the opportunity to be in touch.” UTEP teachers at UCS have the opportunity to meet the newer cohorts of teachers because they often tutor or complete summer school at

UCS. Furthermore, many UTEP students become employed at UCS after these experiences. UCS teachers also cited a strong UTEP network that they used as a resource and felt that their relationships with other cohort members provided additional support. One teacher from a UChicago Charter School in her second year of teaching stated, “My cohort, that I graduated with, was a great source of support in terms of resources...I had a support network...that will be the most valuable thing to me.” In contrast, a CPS teacher in her first year of teaching stated, “I feel like all the things UTEP was supposed to provide in terms of supportive networks; I don't feel like it did that.” The teachers at CPS identified that they did not have the same opportunities to be connected with the newer cohorts. For a few of the CPS teachers, this translated to feeling that they did not have a network of support from UTEP.

The mixed responses regarding engagement with UTEP and the UTEP support network can be understood, at least partially, through the different experiences that teachers have dependent upon whether they are in UCS or CPS. In general, however, it appears that most teachers do not feel particularly connected to the UTEP program outside of maintaining friendships with fellow cohort members and the relationship with their coach. Addressing this issue of engagement will allow for UTEP to cultivate stronger ties with their teachers and create a stronger support network that all teachers can rely on, especially in their particularly difficult first year of teaching.

Summary of Findings

Every UTEP teacher spoke highly of their current coach and felt that their coach was an invaluable resource and source of support. Across all interviews, it was quickly apparent that one of UTEP's strongest features is the teacher-coach relationship. Teachers who spoke the most highly of their coach, cited the prior relationship with their coach, the ability to reach their coach through multiple communication methods at any given time, and the availability of the coach to come into the classrooms as reasons the relationship was so strong. Teachers who still had a positive experience with their coach, but not as strong a personal relationship, cited that the coaches had too large of a workload and were not as available as UTEP suggested that they would be. Teacher engagement with UTEP is limited mostly to friendships with fellow cohort members and the teacher-coach relationship. Teachers at UCS engage more with UTEP because of the close ties between UCS and UTEP. Strengthening teacher engagement with UTEP post-residency years would allow UTEP to bolster its support network for teachers.

Recommendations

- When hiring and training new or current coaches, UTEP should continue to emphasize that they are there to provide *both* emotional support and instructional feedback.
- UTEP should begin to build and cultivate the relationships between teachers and coaches during the first year of the program. For example, UTEP could reframe coaches as mentors. Students would meet their mentor in their first year, and the mentor would be paired with the UTEP student through the full five years of the program.

- UTEP should prioritize ensuring that its current and future coaches are available to come into first *and second* year teachers' classrooms at least once a week every week of the school year.
- UTEP should ensure that coaches know they are responsible for being available to teachers through a variety of communications methods (email, text, phone) and that they should strive to respond the same day that a concern is brought to them by a teacher.
- UTEP should emphasize and facilitate cohort relationships through outings and events because members of the same cohort are more likely to turn to each other for support. It could do this by creating different interests groups. For example, one teacher noted that as an upper elementary math teacher she valued being able to speak with other teachers in the same position to hear what they were doing or how they managed their classrooms. UTEP could create interest groups such as, CPS Lower Elementary, UCS Math, or Upper Elementary Social Science. These would bring together teachers across cohorts to discuss relevant topics to them. These interest groups could be hosted by a coach and happen once a month.

4.5 UTEP TEACHERS AS CHANGE AGENTS

This section will cover:

- Confidence to act as agents of change in the context of the classroom
- Influence on the student-body at large
- Interactions with upper administration
- Engagement with institutional policies

Classroom Dynamics

UTEP alumni were asked questions to indicate their ability to effect meaningful change in their own classrooms. Many former UTEP Scholars expressed difficulty in assessing their ability to operate as "change agents" but nearly all articulated some level of confidence. By and large, teachers in their second year more readily felt at ease to discuss issues of race, class, and community tensions with their students. A few respondents highlighted ensuring that student backgrounds are reflected in the curriculum and carrying out effective parent outreach exemplify ways in which they touch the lives of their students. One educator revealed that "I've built pretty strong relationships with parents, which has been a nice confidence boost, too, and just already bridging that gap of having them feel like partners in their kids' success."

Another, speaking to the integration of complex social problems in classroom discussions, indicated:

I feel that I can make it in small ways. I feel that I can make a meaningful step in making sure they're exposed to ideas that are not in the status quo. ...it's something--we have those tough conversations and whatever change comes out of it will be up them.

Institutional Engagement

On the whole, many UTEP scholars had difficulty recalling experiences in which they acted as agents of change outside of the classroom. One teacher said working as a basketball coach was one way he impacted students in another context. Another participant revealed having had false expectations about effecting change going into the UTEP program:

I think the advertisement of the program is different. You need to be realistic. I think some people kind of had a mindset shift while they were in the program, of 'Oh, maybe I did come in here thinking I was going to save children from poverty.' And now like my ideas are more realistic: I want to be a really effective teacher, because I know that's good for children.

Regarding non-student interactions, many UTEP teachers stated that they felt comfortable reaching out to their colleagues and principals. However, a majority of UTEP participants revealed a sense of frustration with the CPS system which served as a significant deterrent in terms of their ability to bring about change regarding school-wide policies. There were mixed results in terms of how UTEP could address this problem. One teacher expressed:

I feel like a school in itself is, in CPS, has its hands tied in some ways. But, in terms of policy changes, we can't really do much. Funding gets cut, and they're like 'Oh, you lost a teacher.' We can appeal it, it's going to take three months. CPS is like the ground is constantly shifting and when you just jump to a safe spot and you try to regroup, then the ground shifts again.

In light of this disillusionment, another educator spoke to the ways UTEP did prepare them to face these challenges:

I think they [UTEP] did a pretty good job of teaching us all the politics and frameworks going into that [CPS]. I think that is a huge strength of the program and understanding the big picture of what's going on and, since teaching, it's getting the big picture applied to my specific space.

Summary of Findings

For the most part, teachers were confident in their ability to impact students in the classroom setting and on an individual level. A majority felt quite at ease reaching out to administrative personnel or fellow educators if needed. Most teachers did not cite instances where they play a role causing a significant impact on the school at large or have opportunities to engage in political matters with respect to school-wide initiatives. A majority of UTEP teachers did express great difficulty navigating the CPS system. Overall, UTEP appeared to have successfully provided support at fostering teacher confidence to effect considerable change on student's lives.

Recommendations

To further advance this confidence and ensure that these feelings are carried over to school-wide interactions, UTEP should:

- Provide leadership training workshops to improve the extent to which UTEP teachers feel they can better engage with institutional forces.
- Ensure that program advertisement aligns with the realistic experiences that beginning teachers will encounter working in CPS.
- Provide more explicit insight to the political elements of urban education and define ways in which teachers could become involved.

4.6 UTEP ENGAGEMENT WITH THE COMMUNITY

This section will cover:

- Classroom-Community Cohesion
- Neighborhood and Commute Length
- School “Fit”

Classroom-Community Cohesion

A number of new teachers do not recognize ways to integrate their teaching practice with community involvement beyond parent-teacher meetings and demographically oriented curricula. Those who have mastered the integration cited their efforts to walk down to the library once a month with their students, facilitate projects and assignments that study local streets, implement “community hours” as part of students’ required coursework, and work at local events: “UTEP really stressed building that community with your classroom during the first 6 weeks of school...I used to volunteer with Kenwood-Oakwood community organization just a few Saturdays every couple of months.”

However, the majority of teachers were not as proactive when it came to melding social and academic spheres. One said, “I am just not too familiar with the community. I go to the parent meetings and I can talk to the community and families through that, but because I live so far away I don’t have a lot of opportunities to really engage.”

Another UTEP teacher in CPS said that the UTEP population of majority white, privileged women contributes to the tension between classrooms and communities: “UTEP ... attracts young white women. What does it mean to have a bunch of white women go teach to not-young white women? The curriculum catered to whiteness and that was very privileged.”

Due to the frequency of these types of responses, the UTEP model should look into improving the way it prepares its students to approach community integration. The program should provide alumni with resources to make initial engagement easier, or to help them develop the tools necessary to bridge the gap between the classroom and the community. These ideas will be explored later in the following “Recommendations” section.

Neighborhood Proximity and Commute Length

Deceptively, the data shows that only a third of the teachers we interviewed self-reported as living in the same neighborhood in which they teach. Two-thirds, however, identified that they live within 10 minutes driving of their schools, a distance close enough to declare a degree of personal, non-job related affiliation with the neighborhood. Given the percentage of teachers who share geographic living space with their students, it is peculiar that so many UTEP teachers struggle with community-classroom integration. A possible explanation is the wealth barrier that keeps many UTEP teachers in a more privileged economic sphere than their students, thus keeping them from understanding the same version of the neighborhood that their students interact with. This can be overcome with conscious effort to learn the social atmosphere of students' lives beyond their socio-economic, demographic and familial circumstances.

School "Fit"

When asked how well they felt they "fit" into their current school, teachers unanimously had positive things to say about their relationships with their colleagues. Most teachers felt they fit in well overall, but a couple made note of obstacles that complicated their responses. For example, one teacher said that, despite her positive relationships with her supportive colleagues, she doesn't agree with the policies and instructional models her school subscribes to, and consequently intends to transfer schools at the end of the year. A white teacher expressed discomfort that she felt so well integrated into her school's faculty due to her race: "the demographic of the school has gotten whiter and I have noticed, when almost all our students are black. I wonder if that is a good thing that I fit in so well because of that," she said.

That said, the majority of responses fell somewhere along the spectrum of, "I love it. It's one of the most positive teacher environments I have been in or seen," to, "I think I came in with a lot of the same ideas about teaching and education in America as my colleagues." A third teacher commented that she has no reservations talking to her colleagues about anything: "that's the environment here. It's an open door policy."

Summary of Findings

Beyond their integrated lesson plans, many teachers struggle connecting with the communities in which they teach. Classroom-community cohesion can be improved by providing teachers with resources to make initial engagement in community life easier, or by implementing some kind of orientation program that helps teachers learn where and how to get involved, so as to become better acquainted with their teaching environments.

This challenge of community integration is especially notable because most teachers live within 10 minutes of their respective schools, and yet still do not spend time getting to know their students' communities. Finding ways to change this indifferent (or otherwise lackluster)

mentality toward community integration would help teachers combine relevant aspects of community life into academic programming.

Recommendations

- Create an online forum where UTEP students, alumni and faculty can share tips, resources and events that promote community engagement and make community involvement easier for UTEP teachers.
- Mandate community involvement during the foundations or residency year to familiarize teachers with methods for this kind of proactive engagement.
- Increase efforts to diversify UTEP's cohorts. The outreach coordinator should make an extra effort to reach people from various economic, racial, and educational backgrounds, as well as make it clear that financial aid is available to students who need it. This can be done by recruiting at black colleges and reorienting marketing efforts to reach a wider audience.

5. PRACTICAL WISDOM: EXPERIENCED UTEP TEACHERS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section, UTEP teachers from Cohorts 7-9 were interviewed. They were each asked to respond to a standardized questionnaire. Eleven teachers were interviewed, including nine that still teach in CPS and two that are currently teaching in other urban areas. Three interviewees were in their third year of teaching, one was in their fourth year, and seven were in their fifth year.

Our findings fall into three main categories:

- Classroom preparation
- Change Agency
- UTEP Experiences

5.2 MANAGEMENT

Each UTEP alum was questioned about how well UTEP prepared them for classroom management. For the most part, the alumni had good things to say about the preparation they received from UTEP regarding classroom management. The Residency Year was something that the interviewees pointed to as helping them to be as prepared as they were heading into their first year of teaching. The Fieldwork Strand was also mentioned as being a helpful tool in preparing teachers for their own classroom. The Soul Strand was another thing that the alumni brought up as helping them deal with classroom management with the students that they were teaching.

A potential problem that arose when speaking to the UTEP alumni was the fact that UTEP preparation was very theoretical in nature and focused on intellectually themed explanations rather than demonstrations. An alumnus spoke on the subject of UTEP's theoretical teaching methods and how it didn't prepare him as well as a demonstration might have been able to:

Management was my weakest area when I first started, especially in comparison to my knowledge in literacy or math instruction, interdisciplinary units, and a lot of other stuff we spent a lot of time on during UTEP like the Soul Strand. Intellectual aspect of teaching there were a lot more of those things that I didn't have a context or instruction in a lot of those things in the same way.

This theoretical, intellectually themed teaching method that UTEP utilizes is important to the program and should be maintained. It is one of the staples of the program and is integral to its identity. Something that UTEP should consider is mixing in practical demonstrations alongside their theoretical approach. This will only benefit the UTEP students and allow them to become better teachers as they will have seen examples of what they are being taught.

It seems like the alumni differed when it came to preparedness. Some of them had good

experiences in residency and others did not, this led to some not being as prepared as well as other when it came to classroom management. An alumna who worked with a good classroom manager spoke of the importance it had on her management skills:

I feel like especially my experiences in the second year - Residency Year - I worked with two very strong teachers who are both strong in their academic teaching and also strong in their management, and I feel like working under both of those teachers and those experiences as a resident prepared me really well for what I experienced as a new teacher here.

The Residency Year is a very important aspect of UTEP and the experiences that UTEP students have during this year are critical to their success during their teaching career. UTEP should consider standardizing the residency year so that its students have as close to the same experience as possible. All UTEP students should be placed with good classroom managers so that they have the best possible experience during the residency year.

Recommendations

- Retain theoretical, intellectual teaching methods but also try to find a balance with practical knowledge.
- Standardize the Residency Strand and Fieldwork Strand so that UTEP students have similar experiences when observing classroom management firsthand.

5.3 LESSON PLANNING

UTEP alumni were also asked how well the program prepared them for lesson planning. Again, alumni said that, for the most part, they felt prepared for lesson planning in their own classroom. All alumni stressed the fact that going into the first full year of teaching is very difficult and it is a period of adjustments.

A theme that was stressed by the interviewees was that as a first year teacher going into your own classroom, you don't really know what it's like. One teacher stated:

For at least half of the first year, it was very overwhelming. Maybe I spent too much time grading, and I needed to pick and choose what I wanted to focus on. Nothing really prepares you for your first year though.

With experience, the alumni matured and became better teachers. The point they stressed was that the first year is going to be rough no matter how well the program prepares you for it. The first year is a period of trial and error, where the teacher discovers what is useful in the classroom and what is not. A UTEP alumna spoke about the preparation she received at UTEP:

So I think that it well-prepared me, but I don't need that level of scaffolding that

I needed as a new teacher or in UTEP, but I think having that background that you're thinking about the end results, that you're doing backwards-design, you want to include assessments- all of those foundational things that they did definitely well-prepared me.

An interesting point that two of the alumni spoke about was the importance of the application of material to real life situations and stressing to their students that they were teaching them skills that they would use in the real world. They stressed that this is something that they were intent on doing but it was just impossible to do. In the course of an entire school day there are times when this real-world application strategy cannot be implemented. It is impossible to do this for the entire length of the day. As one teacher put it:

UTEF focused on teaching in an inquiry based, real-world application style and it just wasn't possible to fill the day with activities of this kind. I felt hesitant to utilize resources such as worksheets because of the UTEF application type teaching. I felt like I was cheating the kids if I were to do this.

Another teacher spoke about not being able to fully implement this UTEF method because of the "ultra-standardization of CPS schools" and that this standardization leads to a situation where "kids learn the standards that CPS mandates but don't come to enjoy learning." An emphasis should be placed on finding a balance between the CPS curriculum and the inquiry based teaching methods that UTEF endorses. By finding this balance and informing the UTEF students how to utilize this in the classroom, UTEF alumni will be able to impact their classrooms to an even higher extent.

Recommendations

- Teach the UTEF students how to find a balance between the standardized nature of teaching at CPS schools and the inquiry based teaching style that UTEF supports.

5.4 PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONS

Fostering a positive, proactive, and productive relationship between teachers and parents can be a crucial factor in a child's concurrent and future academic and behavior adjustment. In this section, we will discuss the preparedness of UTEF teachers to foster positive parent-teacher relations. According to research,

Generally, when parents participate in their children's education, both at home and at school, and experience relationships with teachers characterized by mutuality, warmth, and respect, students achieve more, demonstrate increased achievement motivation, and exhibit higher levels of emotional, social, and behavioral adjustment (Hughes, 2007).

In some cases, experienced teachers reported feeling less-prepared to foster these relationships with parents than they felt was necessary. Three key themes or levels of

preparation were reported during the interviews conducted with experienced teachers.

Experiences of Parent-Teacher Relations

One common narrative came from teachers feeling unprepared to give valuable feedback to parents. In one case a teacher compared the relationship between the parent and child to the relationship between the teacher and student—the alum said that the parent had exponentially more knowledge on the child than the teacher did on the student, and thus it became difficult for the teacher to inform the parent of their child’s behavior and performance. This teacher said it was “uncomfortable” telling a parent about their child, whom the parent inherently knows better, which created a major barrier in forging a constructive relationship.

Another experienced teacher reported feeling prepared to work with “a particular type of parents,” which was not necessarily the situation that the teacher was working within. Because of this, the UTEP training felt too narrowly tailored. In this case, the teacher felt unprepared to cultivate a relationship with the parents that matched the parents’ expectations of the children:

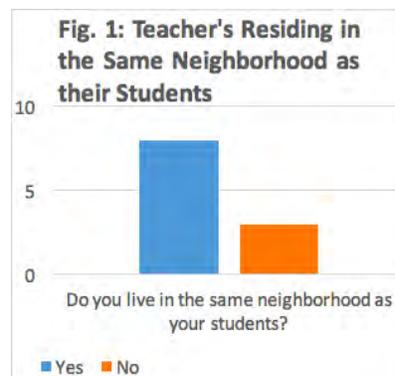
UTEP has historically been centered on the south and west sides, so [as] one of not very many teachers who work in this area, I think there’s a different – not bad or good – but I think different expectation from parents, so I did not feel adequately prepared for dealing with that in my first couple of years.

A different experience of parent-teacher relations came from an experienced teacher that believed it was their presence within their students’ community that enabled them to foster positive relationships with parents:

I grew up in the same neighborhood as these students . They see me in the same grocery stores they shop at and the same restaurants they eat at, so I’m still very much a part of this community.

For this teacher in particular, growing up in the neighborhood in which they taught was key to continuing to be a part of the community. This teacher felt like the parents of their students respected them more, and trusted their opinions because they were a more familiar presence within the community. On the job, the teacher learned that doing home visits would become a crucial tool to being seen within the community.

Figure 1 shows the number of experienced teachers interviewed that reported living in the same neighborhood as their students.



While the teacher cited differing experiences in terms of preparation for working with parents,

UTEP seemed to provide the experienced teachers with a foundation from which the teachers could discover and cultivate the unique set of skills needed to foster positive parent-teacher relations.

Recommendations

- Continue to train UTEP teachers on how to provide productive feedback to parents that respects both the parents' and teachers' relationship with the student.
- Clarify the context-specificity of the training that UTEP teachers are receiving so the expectations are clear.
- Continue to encourage UTEP teachers to become a larger part of the communities that they serve by living within the community.

Special Needs

One issue that many teachers believe UTEP could have better prepared them for was addressing behavioral problems and students with special needs. Although students with special needs typically do not make up the majority of a classroom for a teacher, many teachers found the need for extra guidance on the topic given the likelihood that they would encounter children with special needs in the classroom at some point in their teaching career, if not during the UTEP program and the three years of post-graduation supports.

One teacher mentioned her struggle to handle children with extreme behavioral problems and/or with special needs:

Neither of the schools I've taught at since [my first years teaching] have needed the same level of support. In that sense, I felt ill-prepared. That took up so much of my coaching time. Most of my coaching was about what to do with these kids, the few vs. my whole class.

Another mentioned her recent struggles with the issue:

"My biggest hurdle this year was working with special needs students, because half of my class is special needs. I'm working in an inclusion setting, so I have a big learning curve for working with students with learning disabilities and other struggles."

While some teachers had to address students with special needs in their classrooms during their years with coaching supports, some did not have to face these challenges until later in their teaching career, which made them unprepared to deal with the topic at hand. Overall, those who mentioned working with children with special needs also mentioned UTEP's lack of preparation for these situations during the first two years of the program.

One teacher said:

I also had, as I think everyone did who teaches in the schools that UTEP puts us in, a lot of extreme behavior problems & kids with special needs... In that sense, I felt ill-prepared. That took up so much of my coaching time. Most of my coaching was about what to do with these kids, the few vs. my whole class.

In order to remedy the lack of preparation in this area, UTEP should incorporate specific instruction on managing and working with children who have special needs directly into the first two years of the program, rather than addressing the problem as it comes up during coaching supports.

5.5 CHANGE AGENCY – WITHIN THE CLASSROOM

One of the most defining aspects of UTEP as a program is the context-specificity of the curriculum. UTEP believes that an understanding of the history, culture, and society of Chicago, the communities that students are growing up and going to school in, and an understanding of issues with race, class, and community tension are key to the success of teachers inside the classroom. This value is reflected in many facets of the program, and many teachers spoke explicitly about their preparation to address issues of race, class, and community tension.

It is no secret that teachers devote a great deal of time, energy, and resources to their classrooms and their students' success, but many teachers have different understandings of what their professional role is, how they can positively impact their students' lives, and what structural barriers stand in their way.

Reflections on Ability to Effect Meaningful Change

When teachers were asked what limits their ability to effect meaningful change in their students' lives, reasons that are commonly cited in education debates were invoked. From poverty to class size, teachers believe that barriers exist, hindering their ability to affect meaningful change in the classroom.

Overwhelmingly though, teachers reported some form of confidence in their ability to effect meaningful change on their students' lives, despite these barriers. Even the teachers who reported significant hurdles felt that they could help to change their students' lives for the better.

One teacher reported:

I believe that strong teaching is changing, so I knew that as I improved my impact would grow, so I trusted that a year would impact students. . . I think that by being an engaging and exciting learner and teacher, it convinces students that

learning is a worthwhile thing in general.

Another teacher that felt skeptical of their role as a change agent said:

I definitely think that I can change my students' lives, and I definitely think that I can change their educational outcome. I think that I can teach them to be better people, but I don't view myself as a change agent. Because I want to do this job forever, and I think that if I spend every year viewing myself as a change agent I would burn myself out, or I would be burned out.

I teach a lot of students to self-advocate. To use their words to solve conflicts. I think teaching students how to read changes their whole entire life when they go from living in a non-text world to "oh wait- I can read that sign on the wall, and I know what that means," so I think that's really powerful. So I definitely think that I change lives in that way as a teacher.

Regardless of how teachers view their role, and no matter how pessimistic they may be about the structural barriers in place that limit their ability to create a positive impact, UTEP teachers overwhelmingly viewed their classroom as a vehicle for positively impacting their students' educational outcomes and ultimately, their lives.

Recommendations

- Strike a balance between teachers that are informed of educational debates and structural barriers, but also have total confidence in themselves to create a meaningful impact on their students lives.
- Continue to train teachers that are confident in their ability to change their students' lives within the classroom.

5.6 CHANGE AGENCY OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Teachers' thoughts on change agency varied across the spectrum about their capacities to effect change in their students' lives, but many felt that their work should extend beyond the classroom boundaries. For some teachers, this involved working with other teachers and administration to review and create overarching curricula for the school and their grade levels. Many of the interviewed teachers, particularly those who had left the CPS system, mentioned how they were the youngest teacher on staff at their school by a vast difference, and suspected that they were hired for their ability to initiate fresh idea. One teacher said: "Two out of the four of us teaching first grade have been here for more than 20 years, so they'd been doing a lot of things the same way. I think one of the reasons they hired me was because I was doing a lot of things they wanted to be doing, and a lot of that came from UTEP."

Their perception as younger and new teachers initially hindered their ability to do much during their first year at the schools, but after situating themselves into the school environment,

UTEP teachers were able to take advantage of the reflective and collaborative skills UTEP had prepared them for by being seen as collaborative teachers who had insightful new ideas. Another teacher said: "Because I'm seen as more of a collaborative teacher now than some other teachers at the school are, I've been selected to be included in new professional developments events and bring what we learn and share it with other teachers as well."

She went on to talk about the necessity to speak up in order to create change outside of the classroom:

Now going into year 5 [of teaching] though, I've realized that there are things I do have to contribute and things I've learned that can make a difference and can make an impact. Our principal right now is very supportive as opposed to my previous one, which has allowed me to speak up, and in terms of speaking with my grade level teams, I can now say that to them, 'This is the best way, for example, because of XYZ.' That comes from UTEP, but also from years of experience.

In addition to initiating new types of instructional styles, several teachers are also part of leadership boards within their school systems, and use these leadership positions to fill in gaps that may occur in the classroom.

One teacher focused on parent-teacher relations:

Outside of the classroom, I am the teacher liaison for the parent advisory council. The parent advisory council receives federal funds to work on educating parents and getting parents together, and this is the start of my second year with that. It's very difficult to get parents to just simply take the leadership.

Another strongly advocated for strong teacher development in part due to his experiences in UTEP:

At the charter school I was on the leadership design teaching my second year of teaching, and I was a "mentor teacher" in my third year which is a little absurd since I'm only in my third year of teaching, but I do it. I'm on the instruction leadership team and was on it since I got there. There's a student teacher doing clinical hours in my room right now. I'll hopefully have a UTEP intern in my classroom in the Spring. The leadership roles I've tried to occupy are ones that are for my own professional growth... UTEP really showed me the value in teacher training, so I try to take on leadership roles that have to do with teacher development and training.

Regardless of their various stances on change agency, UTEP alumni felt that the program could benefit future teachers by affording more guidance and training in terms of developing relationships outside of the classroom with other teachers, faculty, and administration.

One teacher said about improvements:

With both the Residency and Tutoring Strands that we had, if there was a component where we either interviewed the principal or the assistant principal and established that relationship, if there was something that allowed you to network with other teachers and staff outside of your own clinical instructor, that might be a way of making [the process of speaking up] a little less scary. It was a little scary for me at the time.

Though teachers have different degrees of comfort in terms of speaking up and suggesting improvements their first few years of teaching, all saw it as a positive skill.

Addressing Issues of Race, Class, and Community Tensions

One of the most defining aspects of UTEP as a program is the context-specificity of the curriculum which is designed to help teachers work seamlessly with students in their communities. The program strongly believes that an understanding of the history, culture, and society of Chicago, the communities that students are growing up and going to school in, and an understanding of issues with race, class, and community tension are key to the success of teachers. This value is reflected in many facets of the UTEP program, and many teachers spoke explicitly about their preparation to address issues of race, class, and community tension.

Experiences with Issues

Overall, teachers felt well-equipped to engage in difficult conversations. No teachers reported feeling uncomfortable addressing issues of race, class, or community tensions. Oftentimes, when teachers were questioned about their comfort in addressing these issues they would respond plainly that they felt comfortable. In one interview, a teacher reported that they felt “very comfortable” and the Soul Strand significantly helped prepare them to address these issues.

In some cases, there was a disparity of experiences within the Soul Strand. Two teachers reported that their ability to address these issues was more a formation of their past experiences growing up in various neighborhoods in Chicago. In one case, a teacher reported that the value of the Soul Strand was teaching them about how others view the issues and providing them with a concrete set of vocabulary to address the issues in a manner that respects everyone.

Experiences with the Soul Strand were not perfect, however. In one case, a teacher who did not believe the Soul Strand helped to prepare them become an effective teacher spoke of the homogenous-base of the Strand, reporting that:

I feel like UTEP well-prepares you to work within one group of diverse students,

but less so in a classroom that has diversity as in lots of different racial and economic backgrounds. . . [There are] different meanings of diversity. Is it diverse because it's not all white, or is it diverse because there's lots of races? I feel like those are two different things. UTEP well-prepares you if you teach in a class of one racial groups, not necessarily in all a very diverse classroom.

While some teachers have varying experiences with the Soul Strand, and some felt strongly one way or the other, not a single experienced UTEP teacher reported feeling uncomfortable addressing issues of race, class, and community tensions. Overall, teachers generally felt like the Soul Strand helped to prepare them to be an effective teacher, even if there were different experiences within the program.

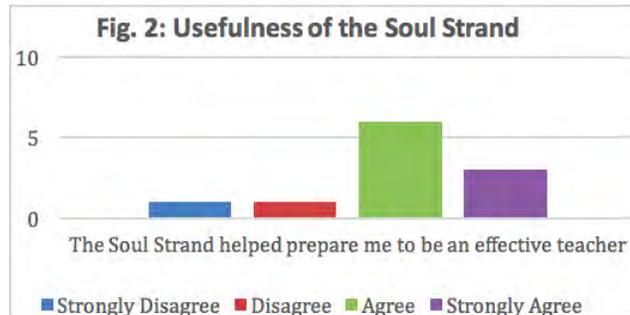


Figure 2 shows individual teacher responses within this group when read the statement “The Soul Strand helped prepare me to be an effective teacher.”

Recommendations

- Continue to train teachers to feel comfortable engaging their students on these crucial issues in a way that respects diversity of experiences.
- Transition the Soul Strand to a discussion-based strand that incorporates teachers’ own experiences with tough issues while helping them to see different vantage points and learn to empathize with others.

5.7 UTEP EXPERIENCES

UTEP Curriculum

As experienced teachers reflected on their time in the UTEP program and discussed how it helped prepare them to become a teacher, some offered insight as to how well the UTEP curriculum helped to prepare them to become a teacher.

Consistently, teachers reported that the coursework within the UTEP program was a very positive tool in helping to prepare them to become a teacher, but some teachers felt that the curriculum was heavy on theory and light on practicality for teaching. One teacher stated, “I wish I could take a lot of the courses again now that I have the experience to understand more of it, but I feel like the academic backing prepared me well for what I needed to do as a new teacher.”

Some teachers noted that the theoretical basis of UTEP instruction mirrors the curriculum taught to University of Chicago undergraduate students in its style. In some cases, teachers had a difficult time understanding how to apply the abstract concepts that were discussed within UTEP to their classrooms. One teacher said, “A lot of it felt so removed from the classroom and didn’t actually pertain to the classroom that I’m teaching in now.”

Comparing two UTEP teachers, one of which attended the University of Chicago as an undergraduate, and another that did not, the University of Chicago graduate reported an understanding of the basis of the curriculum. This teacher understood the degree of separation between their classroom and the curriculum taught within UTEP. The non-University of Chicago graduate reported that taking the classes now, after having spent some time in the classroom would allow them to better understand the significance of the lessons and discussions in UTEP.

Recommendations

- Ensure a balance is maintained between abstract or theoretical and practical discussion.
- Clarify the context-specificity of the training that UTEP teachers are receiving so the expectations of the educational component are clear.

Coaching Experiences

The UTEP coaching and support system received very positive remarks and statements from the interviewees with the exception of some minor details. The interviewees had very positive experiences with their coaches and stated that they were a great help to them. Their coaches provided advice, problem solving methods, resources for class, and even emotional support. Each interviewee stressed how difficult the first full year teaching really is and had nothing but good things to say about their coaches when it came to the support they gave them, both in resources and emotional support. The alumni all agreed that their coach had an influence on their teaching career. Some of the alumni had such good experiences with coaching the post-graduation support system within the UTEP program that they said they would be interested in becoming coaches themselves. When asked how their leadership style would differ from that of their coach most of the alumni said it would be very similar. Clearly, coaches at UTEP have a profound impact on the teaching and leadership styles of their alumni.

A problem that seemed to occur with at least two of the alumni was that their original coach, for different reasons, left and was replaced by another coach. This transition left a type of vacuum where the UTEP teacher had to establish an entirely new relationship with a new coach. The alumni said that this was difficult to do when they had already connected to the previous coach so well and built up such a strong emotional bond. One of the alumni who experienced this problem remarked: “I didn’t feel as connected to my second coach as I had my first coach. I think that’s one of the reasons I kind of struggled working with them.”

It seems that continuity is a key component in the coaching process and the relationships that built during its duration. UTEP should maintain the continuity of its coach and teacher working relationships throughout the entire coaching program so that the teachers can have the optimal coaching experience.

A situation that also arose with alumni was the fact that they do not always stay in Chicago. This leads to gaps in the coaching experience, as two alumni who were interviewed experienced this issue. They both stayed and taught in Chicago for their first year and left to teach elsewhere, so they only had one year to work with their respective coaches. One of the alumni talked about how this situation of moving away and how their coaching experience suffered as a result, saying: "I only had her for one year since I was only in Chicago for year. I missed her when I moved to [omitted], and had a few phone calls with her, but the relationship wasn't the same."

It seems like alumni still would like to utilize the coaching program at UTEP even though they have decided to move away from the city of Chicago to teach elsewhere. It would be beneficial to these alumni if UTEP had a coaching program designed specifically for alumni who wish to move out of the area of Chicago where UTEP operates. UTEP may be able to utilize communication methods, such as Skype, to continue to provide coaching supports to alumni who move away from the program.

Another interesting point that an alum made was that by the end of their meetings with their coach it was more of a soundboard and they were just going through the motions. An alum commented on how they wished the coaching meetings would operate by the end of the process. The alum claimed that, "by the end of the meetings with my coach ideally it would be an authentic collaboration, not continued education."

This was a continued focus that was brought up by alumni that by the end of the coaching experience the actual coaching that was taking place was minimal, as the coaches start to diverge from actual lessons to asking the alumni what exactly is it that they need help with right at this moment. Instead of this being a one-way exchange, with the coaches giving the alumni advice, both the alum and the coach would work collaboratively to find a solution to the problem.

Recommendations

- Maintain continuity of a graduate's coach. Avoid transition to a different coach once a relationship has already been built up.
- Have resources for UTEP alumni who move out of state or outside of Chicago so that they may complete their coaching and have access to post-graduation supports.
- The coaching process should be an authentic collaboration by the end, once the graduate has built up experience in the classroom.

5.8 INTERACTION WITH UTEP AFTER THE PROGRAM

Overall, teachers said that UTEP alumni could vastly benefit from a stronger alumni network; though UTEP has a strong network of connections within Chicago itself, these connections are lost when moving out of Chicago. Furthermore, outreach from UTEP with alumni is extremely limited, with alumni having to create their own events in order to sustain the relationships made within the program itself.

One alum said:

There definitely needs to be more structured events [for alumni], because there's getting to be so many of us. We need to learn how to work with each other. Our cohort met up every single month, and each month during class time stuff was always so stressful, no one related to me, etc., and every month I would come back to this happy hour of our cohort and we would vent out everything we needed to and you realize that there many other people in the same situation, and that always felt gratifying to be able to do. But if we hadn't done it, and when I don't do those now, we don't necessarily connect as an alumni group together.

Alumni who continued to remain in contact with their fellow cohort members found the sustained connections to be gratifying and beneficial to their teaching careers long after the program. In addition, the positive experiences most alumni had with UTEP increased their desire to continue engaging with the program after their five years, but the lack of contact from the program prevented them from interacting with the program at a level they desired.

One alumni said about his his desire to be further involved:

Communication with alumni has gotten really bad, and our year of alumni really wants to be involved with all the big UTEP events that we had experienced in our first years in the program. The controversies that went on in later cohorts and the staffing changes affected the way it communicated with previous cohorts. I'd love to be more involved with UTEP than just organizing the monthly happy hours for our cohort.

He went on to talk about ways in which UTEP alumni could connect with one another if there was a stronger network:

I'd like to know where every UTEP alum in the city works. If I had a student who was transferring to another school, I'd love to be in touch with someone I know there who shares the same educational background as me. There are many alumni now, and there could be a strong thriving professional network, but I don't even know what's happening with the program.

A stronger network of alumni within cohorts, across cohorts, and with the UTEP itself would be advantageous to the organization and its alumni, and can be implemented by updating a database of UTEP alumni, establishing more frequent contact with past cohorts, and implementing annual events for former UTEP participants. Direct contact with former participants would allow the program to benefit from direct feedback.

6. THE VETERANS: LEADERS AND MASTER TEACHERS FROM UTEP

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss four aspects of the UTEP program that the veteran teachers frequently addressed:

- Coaching Relationship
- Classroom Management
- Soul Strand
- Teachers as Change Agents

Since we were able to interview several graduates who have risen to become leaders, we will also include a short section on how UTEP prepared them for their roles. Each section will highlight strengths and weaknesses that interviewees identified. Some of these strengths include preparedness for lesson planning, the ability to affect change in students' lives, and the residency year. Most praised the Soul Strand, though we will discuss some criticisms. Some identified the inconsistency of coaches, the ability to affect change beyond the classroom, and relationships with parents as weaknesses.

6.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The veteran teachers belong to Cohorts 1-6 of the UTEP program. They have completed the foundations year, residency year, and the three year coaching relationship, and have spent two to seven years teaching completely outside of the five year UTEP program. There were 14 interviews conducted for this evaluation, and the breakdown by cohort is as follows:

- Cohort 1: 1 interview
- Cohort 2: 2 interviews
- Cohort 3: 3 interviews
- Cohort 4: 2 interviews
- Cohort 5: 3 interviews
- Cohort 6: 3 interviews

Profile of alumni interviewed:

- Half of the alumni are currently teaching in Chicago Charter Schools
- Three alumni are leaders
- Three alumni are no longer teaching in Chicago Public Schools (CPS)

6.3 COACHING RELATIONSHIP

The coaching aspect of UTEP is the continuation of the five-year program after the two year Masters of Arts in Teaching coursework. Coaches are meant to assist new teachers in their first three years in the classroom. The first years in teaching can be overwhelming for many new instructors as it is the first time they are completely in charge of their own students. The coaches are viewed as mentors that can help alumni navigate the challenges that come with

the first few years of teaching. These coaches are selected by UTEP and are compensated for the time spent helping incoming teachers. In many cases, coaching involves on-site school visits where the coaches observe UTEP students in their classrooms and provide feedback on how teachers can improve their methods of instruction.

While interviewing veteran UTEP alumni on their experiences with their coaches, a variety of opinions emerged. Some teachers felt strongly in favor of their coach while others felt that coaching had little impact on them. Variations largely depended on which coach was assigned to the UTEP students.

Utilization of Coaches

Different teachers utilized their coaches in different ways and it may be a result of the way they viewed the role of coaches. Coaches are meant to meet with their assigned UTEP graduate bi-weekly. However, some alumni viewed their coach only as an emotional support, so they only reached out to them when they were stressed and needed someone to calm them down. A current teacher said "I feel like the experiences in UTEP in the first two years of program were more influential. I would say the coaching was more moral support and also to just have the stamina to keep going, keep trying, and keep working on things." Of the teachers who had a positive experience with their coaches, many stated that the coaches were able to help them focus on the positives rather than just things to work on. The coach saw their strengths even if the teachers themselves did not, which was a morale booster for the teachers. In addition, the coaches were non-judgmental and first observed and listened before making comments on changes teachers could implement.

When it came to instructional utilization, coaches would visit classrooms and observe the teacher give student instruction. Later they would help create a plan outlining subsequent steps that could help teachers improve their classroom management. One alum noted that once the coach "learned my style, it was a lot of listening and probing questions, and I would come to my own steps, which I feel like in terms of a coaching cycle is exactly what you want. You want them to be leading the way. In that sense it was extremely effective." He was shocked that other programs did not have coaches as they are helpful in improving teaching techniques, especially when it comes to managing specific behavior problems. The teachers who had positive experiences sometimes still keep in contact with their coach and some have said they feel confident that they can approach UTEP for help.

The recurring opinion of teachers with bad coaching experiences was that the coaching was inconsistent. Some noted that there was no clear plan or goal in the coaching program. Others said their coach would not contact them, and that they had to contact the coach if they needed anything. One graduated stated that the first year is very hectic and that there is a need for coaches to assure teachers are okay, "you need someone who's going to constantly check in with you, and not necessarily rely on you to check in with them." Despite the fact that coaches are supposed to meet alumni bi-weekly, meetings were not spaced out evenly, so at times it felt like there was little assistance. Since coaches are trained and paid by UTEP, there

needs to be some accountability for the coaches to reach out to the graduates and meet their needs.

Different Coaching Programs

There were three teachers who were involved with different coaching programs outside of UTEP. Two were coached by another person not related to UTEP while the other became a coach for a program that focuses on early childhood education. By studying their experiences in these outside programs and comparing them to UTEP coaching, recommendations for improvements become clearer while also highlighting UTEP's strengths in coaching.

One of these teachers preferred her non-UTEP coach to her UTEP coach. This teacher said her UTEP coach was “not integral” to her teaching career and that the coach provided by her school was more efficient. When asked what she would do differently if she were a coach, she said she would plan out more observation visits. The teacher mentioned that she was aware that other members of her cohort had a range of experiences. “A lot of other people relied on their coaches much more than I did and others had much more negative experiences.” In this teacher's specific case, she found that her school coach was more consistent and available as her UTEP coach “did not help her at all” in her second year.

A UTEP graduate who had a coach through the Chicago New Teacher Network had a different feeling toward her UTEP coach. She said her UTEP coach was “very available” and that they met once or twice a month to reflect upon new ideas and improvements. Reflecting on the UTEP coaching program, she said “I do not think I could have survived my first year without it.” When comparing the two different coaches, the UTEP alumna noted that she benefited from a relationship with her UTEP coach that was already well established prior to her first year of teaching. Additionally, each shared the same philosophy towards education, and thus there was no time wasted going over material they already knew. For example, she said, “the coach from the New Teacher’s network would be talking to me about guided reading, when I already knew that, so you’d have to go through all these different unproductive tubes to get to any sort of productive sessions with them.” While she criticized the teaching style of her outside coach, she complimented her UTEP coach saying, “one of the most brilliant things UTEP does is you have this personal relationship with them before they even coach you,” which creates a stronger working bond. Her coach was available through email and after the second year the coach was utilized more for instruction and less for emergency emotional support. They still keep in contact today even though the coaching period ended.

The third teacher with exposure to outside coaching became a coach for an early childhood education program for an academic year. She expressed a preference for being a UTEP coach, but no one from UTEP has ever contacted her about it. She pointed out how the early childhood program had a strong working relationship with the school she teaches at, but she sees some flaws with the coaching program. Although coaches provide a lot of helpful professional development to teachers, the program itself never checks up on the clinical instructors. She also noted, “UTEP makes sure that their Clinical Instructors are taken care of

and give them good Professional Developments on how to be a good Clinical Instructor.” The fact that UTEP compensates their clinical instructors was another advantage over the early education program because “opening your classroom for someone takes up a lot of time.” This teacher had a really good experience with her UTEP coach which influenced her to become one.

6.4 CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

The veteran alumni interviewed had mixed perspectives on how effective the UTEP program was in preparing them for classroom management. Many teachers identified the context-specific nature of the program as well as the Soul Strand as having been helpful for classroom management. While the majority of teachers interviewed said they felt overwhelmed managing a classroom their first year, they also said that there was not much UTEP could have done to prepare them. One UTEP graduate said:

“It’s something we talked a lot about our first year, that management was a struggle for a lot of us. While I got a ton of support with my classroom management my first year – do I think they prepared me as best they can? Yes, because in order to be a good manager you have to do it, and there’s no way to put you in that position before you’re a first year teacher.”

Most of the alumni interviewed shared these opinions that being strong in classroom management is something that comes from experience – it cannot be fully taught. Several alumni stated that classroom management did not depend on what they were taught in the classroom, but on the personality of each individual teacher. One UTEP alumnus stated:

“I think classroom management isn’t something you can completely prepare for. A lot of it comes down to the personality . . . no matter how much exposure you have, you’re not really on your own until that first year and so really your first year is all about finding your own voice and being comfortable with your own management style.”

The general consensus among the veteran alumni interviewed is that classroom management comes with practice and cannot be fully taught before teaching begins.

Strengths of UTEP Classroom Management Preparation

Many alumni articulated areas in which they felt UTEP had prepared them to manage a classroom or parts of the program that they felt contributed positively to their teaching experience during the first year. Several alumni brought up a connection between the Soul Strand and the context-specificity of UTEP and classroom management, claiming that the strong structure of the Soul Strand helped them think about how to work with their students moving forward:

“[The Soul Strand is] very tied to classroom management, because it’s all about understanding other cultures and having some knowledge about the community . . . when you’re working with the kids and their parents, that’s what leads to effective classroom management.”

Another alumnus agreed saying, “I felt as though I really understood the population,” which led to “successful strategies for behavior management and the curriculum.” The alumnus concluded that he “had the best preparation [he] could have had.”

Student teaching was also helpful in preparing alumni to manage their classrooms. Many alumni said that learning by doing was the most effective way to prepare them for the difficulties of the first year, and talked about the residency year as having been instrumental in feeling relatively prepared when they had their own classrooms: “because you spend so much of your time student teaching, you have a better idea of how things go over a longer period of time. So you understand more of the idea that it’s a marathon rather than a sprint and you’re better able to be sustained for the entire year.”

Both the Soul Strand and a substantial amount of time spent in the classroom before the first year of teaching were mentioned by many alumni as strengths of the UTEP program with respect to classroom management preparation.

Weaknesses of UTEP Classroom Management Practices

Some alumni also mentioned specific things they felt unprepared to do during their first year in the classroom. One teacher brought up “practical” issues that arose during her first year. She said she felt unprepared for basic classroom preparation tasks such as making bulletin boards, which are “random things that a lot of teachers just kind of know.” Another alumni echoed this sentiment, saying that “[I] wish I had learned more effective ways to occupy other students when working with a small group.” The most common complaint voiced by teachers, however, was that they wished they had some more training on how to address behavioral issues that arose in the classroom. One alumna said that while UTEP talked a lot about building relationships, “I also felt that it’s not relationships alone that help with classroom management ... you also need to make sure that you really clearly identify incentives and consequences.” Other alumni similarly mentioned that they wished they had known more about how to make sure students are following directions and what to expect based on the age of the students, among other things.

When asked to speak about classroom management, UTEP alumni typically responded in one of two ways. They either felt very prepared to manage a classroom, citing context-specific preparation and the Soul Strand as having been instrumental to this, or they felt unprepared but blamed the chaotic nature of the first year rather than the UTEP program.

6.5 SOUL STRAND

The Soul Strand of the UTEP curriculum explores “issues of teacher identity, educational equity, and the ways that race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and culture affect both teachers and students.” UTEP states that the Soul Strand “gives candidates new perspectives on their chosen work, and helps them begin thinking about steps they must take to build effective relationships with students, families, and colleagues.” Part of the evaluation of UTEP aimed to discover how the alumni felt the Soul Strand prepared them or did not prepare them for their career in teaching.

The veterans and leaders had a lot to say about the Soul Strand of the UTEP curriculum. In the closed-response survey portion of our interviews, the alumni were asked to respond “Agree,” “Strongly Agree,” “Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree” to the following statement: The Year 1 Soul Strand is preparing/helped prepare me to be an effective teacher. The responses received from our 14 alumni were overwhelmingly positive. 10 out of our 14 interviewees said they strongly agreed and the other 4 said they agreed. This suggests that the Soul Strand is considered by the alumni we interviewed to be one of the most successful and necessary parts of the UTEP program.

We also asked the alumni about the Soul Strand during the open-response portion of the interview. The alumni all generally felt comfortable addressing issues of race, class and community tensions.

Praises

Many alumni said the Soul Strand facilitates strong relationships with students. One UTEP graduate answered: “I am very comfortable confronting issues of class and race; it is one of my hallmarks I would say...” The alumni attributed their ability to have good relationships with their students, which influences their ability to manage a classroom, to the Soul Strand. For example, one UTEP graduate said his teaching philosophy revolves around “relationship building,” so by exposing him to perspectives different from his own, Soul Strand proved “very instrumental” in his ability to connect with students and “in [his] success as a teacher.”

Another UTEP graduate, pointing to the necessity of the Soul Strand said:

“The Soul Strand...was extremely helpful ... to understand that education is not colorblind despite what policy makers might think or believe or might try to push through in terms of legislation. Education is in fact very personal and very racialized and so the Soul Strand was very important in developing my teacher identity.”

Specifically explaining how the Soul Strand aided his classroom management, one UTEP graduate said:

“I think they did all they could with the Soul Strand, and that it is very tied to classroom management, because it’s all about understanding other cultures and having some knowledge about the community... so when you’re working with the kids and their parents, that’s what leads to effective classroom management.”

This suggests that in order to strengthen classroom management preparation, focusing on Soul Strand may be effective. The overall trend was that alumni felt the Soul Strand positively informed the way they teach, as they had knowledge of the students and their community that they would not have had otherwise.

In addition to affecting the way they relate to their students and understand them, one UTEP graduate claimed that the Soul Strand changed her view of social justice stating, “I think Soul Strand was really, really helpful for me... in getting a much clearer sense of what real social justice means as opposed to a... naive social liberal sense of it.” Another UTEP graduate added that one of the useful aspects of the Soul Strand was “that you were constantly journaling and reflecting... UTEP really helped you find methods of doing that; either writing it down or how you’re expressing what you’re seeing.” Alumni felt that reflecting helped them not only become better teachers by learning from their own mistakes but also, as leaders, to give constructive feedback to employees and co-workers.

Limitations

The alumni did point out some limitations to the Soul Strand, and for some this was feeling qualified to talk and class and race effectively. As mentioned before, one UTEP graduate said her ability to talk about issues of race, class, and community tensions depends on the situation. She said she was aware of the role these issues play, but does not actively talk about them because they can make things worse. She says she has been accused of racism, though feels confident in her ability to defend herself. Another teacher said he never felt entirely comfortable in his first school because it was an all-black school and because of the issue of race he “never felt as though [he] fit in.” Another alumni said that the Soul Strand stood out but that a limitation of its usefulness was that their “cohort was really divided” by race. That UTEP graduate claimed they would have felt more comfortable if their cohort hadn’t been only white or Latino. Finally, one UTEP graduate said they wished they had learned more about “the perspective of teachers who are minorities,” because it would have helped to “understand what those teachers are facing that [she] would have not otherwise thought of.” She felt that her relationships with her co-workers could be improved with this extra instruction.

Some alumni we interviewed felt unprepared in their dealings with parents, whether because of racial divide or simply a lack of effective communication. According to a UTEP graduate, it was “more [of a] challenge than I expected dealing with parents as it was an all-black school.” He said black teachers who had been at the school for a while had much better relationships with these parents than UTEP colleagues who were also at this school and were not black.

Other alumni said they felt less prepared than other teachers to communicate with families, but acknowledged this is hard to teach. One teacher said, “I wish I had more experience with real human parents instead of just textbook parents.”

Our findings indicate Soul Strand is effective in making conversations about race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and cultural divides less taboo. However that discussion of these topics is a delicate process and the actual practice of removing the boundaries is not easily taught in a class.

6.6 CHANGE AGENTS

One of UTEP’s core values is to promote social justice and make its graduates agents of change in CPS. According to UTEP director Tanika Island, “We expect everyone to be a change agent in their building.” In this section we will first identify ways in which UTEP graduates feel confident in this area, and then we will identify areas for improvement.

Areas of Strength

Many of the UTEP alumni we interviewed feel confident in their ability to affect change in their students’ lives. One female elementary school teacher said, while change does not happen immediately, “I really enjoy ... getting kids excited about books and seeing different students who might not have grabbed a book interested in a read-aloud text you read ... just getting kids amped about learning and school.”

Several spoke of treating their students in such a way that their students feel valued, recognized, and appreciated. A female teacher said she felt very confident in her ability to affect change in her students’ lives, saying “a lot of it has to do with building relationships with students ... I think when kids really find that you care about them, despite their difficulties, they always remember you and try to do their best.”

Others spoke of teaching their students critical thinking skills and to question authority. One female teacher spoke of “asking questions so they’re not so binary ... trying to ask stronger, deeper questions.” The years UTEP alumni have spent in education have taught them to be realistic in their perception of social change – to realize that change is not a day-to-day occurrence but a long-term process.

Areas for Improvement

However, the UTEP alumni we interviewed pointed to several factors that limit their ability to affect social change. Alumni worry about what happens to their students once they get in classrooms with other teachers. A female elementary school teacher said, “I feel confident that when they’re with me... I can tell them that they’re worthy, that they’re special.” However, by the end of the year she’s worried about what will happen in subsequent school years. She spoke of her colleagues yelling at students over “dumb stuff,” having unrealistic

expectations of students, and too quickly assuming parents do not care about their child's education.

Another female teacher wondered how significant her impact was given the multitude of other factors that shape a child's development. While she says that she "went into teaching because of social justice issues ... now I guess my ability to affect change is ... marginal." She is now experimenting with a focus on teaching subjects in a way that exposes her students to possible careers.

Indeed, the state of the community is one of the factors that can limit a teacher's ability to affect change. One female teacher who has moved to a school in Vermont said, while she has always felt confident in her ability to affect meaningful change in students' lives, it was difficult when she was teaching in Chicago given what goes on outside school. She said, you want to see students be happy, but it is hard when they're living in a "war-zone." She feels more confident about her ability to affect change in Vermont.

Additionally, we have noticed that many UTEP teachers are limited in their ability to engage with the community surrounding their school, since approximately 80% of the UTEP alumni we interviewed do not live in the same neighborhood that they teach in. The UTEP curriculum might benefit from demonstrating the importance of living in the same community as the students.

Another impediment to change was the structure of CPS. One female teacher mentioned the "political red tape," and was very irritated about the amount of CPS testing. She thinks the time taken for testing could be used in "more meaningful ways." Especially when the CPS day was shorter, she said, the testing "was just a waste, and so that was very challenging." She is currently working at a charter, where she appreciates how there is more "flexibility with the CPS mandates." Another female teacher said there is a point "where the testing is taking over the learning."

The amount of CPS politics has caused one male teacher to avoid the frustration by reorienting his thinking away from CPS to simply focus on the students:

"I find that ... I get very frustrated when I think about all the politics. When I'm able to turn my eyes and ears on the kids and only the kids that's when I'm happiest, when you see some real things happening ... I've just learned that I need to do that more often."

Considering CPS was a frustration for many, UTEP may want to look into how it can prepare its graduates more effectively for navigating this environment. Indeed, one female interviewee says she does not "recall, you know, ever having conversations in UTEP about how to deal with administration ... In CPS, ... you have to be very careful with what you say and how you say it because you never know when it can come back."

UTEP can feel encouraged that its graduates are bringing meaningful change to their students' lives, but improvements can be made in terms of addressing these structural limitations.

6.7 LEADERS

We also had the opportunity to interview several UTEP alumni who have risen to become leaders within CPS. One graduate said UTEP made her a "master teacher" which helped her get into her leadership role. Various leaders have noted the advantage of having a teacher perspective in their role as it eases management and collaboration with other teachers. Many leaders have reported that they attempt to lead in a feedback based style similar to the methods their coaches practiced. They want to make sure their coworkers are "able to leave with something that can be applied right away" while also planning long-term solutions. Coaches also guide UTEP graduates into problem solving through critical thinking. One UTEP leader said "UTEP really pushed us to be reflective and think about our practice and ask questions, and I feel like that is exactly what I needed in this role too." With an emphasis on self-reflection and the desire to assist others, UTEP teachers became education leaders shaped in part from their own coaching experience.

6.8 CONCLUSION

The interviews with the elementary veterans and leaders provided informative trends regarding the following aspects of the UTEP programs.

- Coaching Relationship: There was some inconsistency in UTEP graduates' responses about their relationship with their coach. Some coaches were more proactive than others, but ultimately it was difficult to determine whether the downsides associated with the coaching relationship were due to the coaches themselves or how the UTEP students utilized the coach.
- Classroom Management: The veterans cited context-specific preparation and Soul Strand as having been helpful in preparing them for classroom management. However, many still found the first year of teaching chaotic, and wished they had more "practical" training before entering the classroom. Most of the alumni also said that they didn't think there was much more UTEP could have done to prepare them for classroom management.
- Soul Strand: The veterans felt the Soul Strand is effective in "popping the bubble" of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and cultural divides and felt the Soul Strand positively informed the way they teach and build relationships with their students. Some veterans did note difficulty during the actual practice of removing these racial and cultural boundaries especially when dealing with parents and co-workers.
- Teachers as Change Agents: Many veterans felt confident in their ability to make students feel valued and to help them love reading. However, many teachers felt limited in that they only had their students for one year, and also felt limited by CPS politics.

Suggestions from UTEP teachers

During the interviews some individual alumni made suggestions for the improvement of the UTEP program. Those suggestions are:

- Further Special Education and English as a Second Language (ESL) preparation: Several teachers mentioned having difficulty addressing a few students in the class who were having behavioral problems, having difficulty understanding the lessons, or who were very behind in reading or other academic preparation.
- Add the perspective of minority teachers to the Soul Strand: While many teachers said that the Soul Strand helped them understand the diverse background their students came from, some teachers who were minorities themselves felt that they had a unique perspective to the classroom that was not addressed in Soul Strand programming.

Policy Recommendations

The findings above suggest some ways in which UTEP could improve their program:

- Make the coaching check-ins more consistent in order to more effectively support graduates during their first several years: Most UTEP veterans described a positive relationship with their coach, but all of them talked about how necessary having a good coach is. When asked what would improve the coaching relationship, the UTEP graduates said that greater consistency and availability would make the relationship more useful.
- Fortified Support System: Since first year is so difficult, establish a formalized relationship between cohorts so that cohorts entering their first year of teaching can learn from older cohorts about what to expect and how to handle practical challenges

The evaluation uncovered some limitations of the UTEP program and some areas for improvement. However, it also uncovered a positive sentiment among veterans that although there were some areas in which they did not feel prepared for, the UTEP program did the best it could to prepare them for those things.

7. THE UTEP MODEL IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this concluding chapter, we are going to look at context-specific teacher preparation programs across the country to see how they compare to the Urban Teacher Education Program (UTEP) and to see if UTEP can apply any of the strategies that other programs use to their own programming. The information collected can serve as a resource for best practices in the field. We collected information on twenty-three context specific programs, and asked them for the opportunity to interview someone from their organization. Out of the twenty-three programs, eight representatives participated in interviews, with two of them being representatives from the Urban Education Institute (UEI) and the UTEP Program. The other programs that participated in the study were: The UCLA Teacher Education Program (TEP)/IMPACT, KIPP DC Capital Teaching Residency (CTR), Indiana University Northwest Urban Teacher Education Program (UTEP), Urban Teachers, Memphis Teacher Residency, and the New York University's Steinhart English Teacher Residency. Based on these interviews, most programs struggle with funding, scaling, classroom management, and recruitment. The following section will deal with these major aspects through a survey of each program, starting with UTEP's own programmatic concerns.

7.2 UCHICAGO'S UTEP AND UEI

The University of Chicago's Urban Teacher Education Program (UTEP) was created in the early 2000s with the vision of creating a teacher prep program that focused on Chicago and the urban context based on the findings that teachers in the district only worked in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) for a few years before moving out to schools in the suburbs. In addition to this, there was a collection of teachers from CPS that had started working together to create a support group for each other in an effort to help each other manage a difficult classroom environment. At the heart of this support group for new teachers was Kavita Matsko, who had just finished her master's degree in multicultural education at Northwestern. Kavita felt that her education preparation from Northwestern was very theoretical and that it lacked practical elements. Through her experience with this group of teachers and her multicultural education background, she knew that it was important to add an aspect of teacher preparation that was related to a teacher's only identity because as a teacher "You have to know yourself to teach someone else." With this focus, the University of Chicago and the preceding organization to the Urban Education Institute (UEI) started working with Kavita Matsko to take these practical aspects of teacher preparation and self-identity to turn it into a context specific program.

In addition to interviewing Kavita Matsko for an hour, we also talked with Bill Kennedy, the Assistant Director of Elementary Pathway, about what he perceived to be the strengths and struggles of UTEP. This section will highlight these joint perceived strengths and struggles.

The Relationship between UTEP and the Urban Education Institute (UEI)

The relationship with the UEI is one of UTEP's greatest assets, but it can also be one of its greatest frustrations according to members of the UTEP staff. Kennedy describes that the ideal relationship between UTEP and UEI is "dialogic." Kennedy thinks that critical dialogue "exists to some degree but it could be increased." However, one of greatest assets to UTEP is that all of these conversations can happen in the same building. For example, Matsko points out that if you want data analyzed you can walk down the stairs to the Consortium on Chicago Schools and talk to them about their findings, and then you can walk down to UChicago Charter Schools to place UTEP students in the various schools for their tutoring placements. Kennedy believes that the relationship between UTEP and Consortium could be enhanced because "the consortium doesn't consult with UTEP on their research on CPS, and we have at this point quite a lot of knowledge about CPS that could help inform their research questions." As a result, UTEP and UEI as a whole should create a better system for communication that allows for their different branches to communicate.

Additionally, there is a tension between the fact that UEI is apolitical, which means that UTEP is also apolitical by default. Matsko expressed that this has been frustrating at times because schools are not apolitical, and UTEP teachers have wanted, through the name of UTEP, to become involved with rallies or other activities to advocate for their students and their communities. However, they have been unable to do this under the apolitical ideology of UTEP. Matsko also mentioned that there have been "moments when UTEP has taken a stand on issues, but for UEI to be policy neutral, they have to check how they feel about a particular issue with what the larger organization wants or says." This may hinder UTEP programming because UTEP teaches students to think of themselves as change agents within the communities that they are teaching in through tutoring, summer school, student teaching, and the three years in the field where they still receive support. As a result, students during these parts of the program have to balance being policy neutral on school evaluation, standardized testing, teacher evaluations, etc. while also trying to meet the goals of being change agents within their schools and communities. Given this tension, it may be necessary to provide some differentiation between the two organizations so that UTEP can have more of a voice in advocacy of their teachers and their communities without trying to always be policy neutral.

Quality Over Quantity

Quality over quantity, in a time when federal funding is running out, is a universal problem for context-specific programs all over the country. At UTEP, Matsko mentioned that one of UTEP's goals was to "build the cadillac model [of teacher preparation programs] by dreaming," but the question is how does UTEP maintain the intensity and integrity of their program? This is a particularly important question for UTEP because in the next few years most of their grant funding is going to run out. According to Matsko, this leaves UTEP with trying to either cut costs, increase their cohort size, or both. All of these options present tradeoffs between compromising the tight unity of the cohort or giving up integral parts of the program. UTEP

rationalizes some of their costs by saying that students are “paying for two years but participating in the program for five.” Kennedy elaborates that UTEP is “a highly rigorous program and the work we're doing is right on the cutting edge of the academic or theory side of teaching and learning, and the best [program] on the clinical side.” This in combination with the “cohort model, which is where people have relationships with cohort mates which go on for years and professional collaboration opportunities” makes UTEP not only unique, but provides it with the high quality that it is known for in the education space. Given these important factors, it is important that UTEP remains on the “cutting edge” and maintains the cohort unity of the program. However, this means that UTEP will have to cut other aspects of their programming, given the financial restraints, to keep this quality and personalization over the quantity of having bigger cohort sizes. It will also mean that UTEP needs to put more focus on finding grants and other monetary channels for the next few years to try to keep their price down for students.

Classroom Management

At the inception of UTEP, classroom management was, and continues to be, one of their main goals. Classroom management has always been important to UTEP because it is something that most programs continue to struggle with and something that new teachers tend to mark as the most difficult part of their first few years. At first, UTEP used a holistic framework around classroom management, and then they moved to a strategy-based system. Matsko comments that they “used a framework, but it was not necessarily successful, so [they] moved to a strategy approach.” This gave students a multitude of strategies to use for classroom management, but not an overall framework. Matsko comments that this strategy-based approach deteriorated the relationship that UTEP teachers had with their students because it was not a holistic framework. In the last three years, UTEP has moved back to providing a holistic framework with strategies incorporated into a larger framework, which they feel is a better approach for their teachers. However, Matsko says that, “I still don’t think that that UTEP is doing well [with classroom management].” As a result, classroom management should continue to be a focus of UTEP to better understand what strategies have been most successful with their graduates and which ones have been least helpful based on the interviews. The other programs in the following sections may also speak to solutions that can better address classroom management strategies for UTEP.

7.3 KIPP DC CAPITOL TEACHER RESIDENCY (CTR)

KIPP DC Capital Teaching Residency (CTR) is a residency program that feeds teachers into its national network of charter schools. CTR is run out of the DC network of these charter schools and started informally in 2007 when one teacher decided she wanted to start a mini pipeline within her school where she would hire assistant classroom teachers and train them to eventually become school leaders.

Although CTR operates on a much larger scale than UTEP and with a focus on charter schools, it faces similar problems and shares multiple organizational goals with UTEP. In an interview with

a staff member from CTR, the subjects of funding, recruitment and classroom management were discussed— areas from which UTEP can gain important insights.

Funding

CTR won a “Race to the Top” grant from the U.S. Department of Education in 2011, allowing the program to expand significantly and increase its cohort size to almost one hundred residents per year. CTR also has an interesting structure for funding because the charter schools that their teachers are placed in actually pay CTR for the teacher’s preparation. The program places its graduates in their own charter schools. If the graduates are not able to get a job at one of the charter schools then they interview at a network of different DC charter schools who actually pay CTR to get their “well-trained teachers.” While CTR believes that it would be effective in preparing teachers for DC Public Schools (DCPS), DCPS cannot pay the program, and thus CTR alumni do not teach in the public schools. This funding structure is problematic for a program like UTEP that seeks to create change in the school system; however, it also provides a unique solution for funding woes. UTEP can consider looking at charter school networks for funding. Additionally, utilizing federal grants such as “Race to the Top” can give UTEP an opportunity to experiment with program expansion or enable UTEP to provide a highly needed stipend or salary to residents.

Recruitment

As of this year, half of the cohort members are people of color, there is no tuition for the program, and residents receive a salary for their work. However, the grant expires next year, leaving CTR with a major financial burden and a shift in program priorities and organizational goals. While the program has been successful overall, some CTR residents have not been certified primarily due to GPA requirements that CTR has in place and the difficulty of the Washington, D.C.’s certification exam for teachers. She noted that in the future, the program is looking to focus on the “quality” of recruited teachers over the quantity. CTR hopes to create a pipeline of teaching talent that can mentor future residents and support internal growth within KIPP DC.

While UTEP’s goal is not focused within one charter school group, it can use its unique relationship with CPS and the University of Chicago’s Charter Schools to build a similar high school student talent pipeline. Currently, UTEP reaches out to college students to recruit their students. However, by reaching out to high-achieving high school students, UTEP can create a recruiting base of potential residents from Chicago, with an emphasis on men of color. With the new recruiting wing of UTEP, these recruitment strategies can be incorporated.

Classroom Management

Speaking with CTR, it became immediately clear that the pedagogical and practical approaches to teacher training offered by UTEP and CTR shared many similarities. CTR’s phrasing and marketing technique for its classroom management strategy is effective and easy to

understand. By implementing what it calls a “gradual release model,” CTR communicates to potential candidates, donors, and program stakeholders that residents will be ready to manage a classroom after completing the program. In reality, the model described during the interview is very similar to what UTEP offers with its tutoring, mentoring, and residency format. However, from a marketing aspect one of the strengths of CTR is that teachers “earn” the ability to take over a classroom and gain responsibility incrementally over the course of the program. If it is possible for UTEP to adopt a phrase or slogan that communicates the success of its classroom management training, this would be highly beneficial. By categorizing itself as program antithetical to TFA and alternative-certification programs, UTEP can position itself in the diversifying teacher prep program marketplace.

7.4 INDIANA UNIVERSITY NORTHWEST URBAN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM (UTEP)

During an interview conducted with the Indiana Northwest University’s Urban Education Teacher Program (UTEP), they articulated many of the same challenges that Tanika Island articulated during our initial meeting with her. Indiana Northwest University’s UTEP program is currently struggling with recruitment and is in organizational limbo. A new individual has stepped in as the Interim Director during the reorganization process, and she is uncertain as to the future of her program. While she noted that Indiana Northwest University’s UTEP may be completely folded into the Education School at the University rather than remain a separate entity, her insight helps elucidate areas in which UTEP mentioned concern, such as with their new recruitment wing and their concern about funding.

Recruitment

Both Island and Indiana Northwest University’s UTEP expressed concerns over the waning desires of university graduates to become teachers. In her interview, Indiana Northwest University’s UTEP explained that today’s “high schoolers don’t want to think about becoming teachers, but when I was in school it was a good thing to be a teacher.” She spoke about how she wishes she had more time to travel around to the high schools that Indiana Northwest University’s UTEP teachers work in to speak with the high schoolers about the potential of coming back to their alma maters after college as teachers.

While it is neither the responsibility of Indiana Northwest University’s UTEP nor that of the University of Chicago’s UTEP to increase the allure of becoming a teacher today, it would benefit both of these programs, and all other teacher preparation programs, to begin taking strides towards making teaching a highly desirable profession again. By holding conversations about joining the teaching profession with the students in the communities that they serve, Indiana Northwest University’s UTEP will start to place a higher value on teaching, and it will hopefully influence some of the students to consider becoming teachers through their program as a long-term recruitment plan. Furthermore, if high school students begin to see the value in teaching, they will be more likely to take an active role in their own education and become more engaged with their schools.

Funding

Another shared challenge that Island and Indiana Northwest University's UTEP discussed in their interviews is about the financial cost of attending their respective programs. Teaching is not a particularly lucrative field, and it is difficult to recruit diverse candidates to a high tuition program.

While Indiana Northwest University's UTEP does charge tuition, they hold all of their classes in the evening to allow residents to take up part-time jobs as tutors and substitute teachers during the day. When asked about why she believes students choose her program, Indiana Northwest University's UTEP suggested that a main reason is that students can continue to make money while also attending classes in the evening to earn their teacher certification.

While it would not make sense for the University of Chicago's UTEP to switch to night classes like Indiana Northwest University's UTEP, as that would negatively impact the immersion experience the program provides for its cohorts, it may be helpful to provide opportunities for UTEP students to make money during their first two years of their programming. As a part of the curriculum, UTEP students are required to tutor children at charter schools, and it would be beneficial to provide students with opportunities to be paid for their tutoring work as compensation and to alleviate some of the costs while in UTEP.

7.5 URBAN TEACHERS

Urban Teachers (UT), much like UTEP, is a four year program geared towards the cultivation of effective teachers for high needs urban districts. UT has partnerships with the Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Dallas public school systems. The goal of the program is to develop highly effective career teachers who have a passion for urban education.

Urban Teachers consists of one year in residency, two years of clinical coursework, with a focus in general and special education, three years of one-on-one coaching/mentoring, and a four year commitment to working in urban schools after graduating with a master's degree from the program. Residents are only approved for certification after support and evaluation throughout the first three years of training by program mentors and staff. The criteria for evaluation and success is shown in *Figure 1.0* below. Students have to meet teaching expectations in order to begin teaching in a non-residency setting.

Figure 1.0: Requirements for Urban Teachers



Source: *Urban Teachers*

UT shares many organizational similarities and goals with UTEP. In an interview with a staff member of Urban Teachers, she highlights the constant struggle of acquiring sufficient funding for the program, STEM recruitment, and concepts of scale.

Funding

UT provides a \$20,000 stipend during the residency year of the program. They also provide health care in year one, pay for books and materials for your master's degree, and provide room and board for Summer Institute. There is a tuition charge of \$40,000 that is paid over the first two years of the program. All UT participants are responsible for their cost of living expenses and technology—all expenses can be covered in a federal student loan during year one of the program. UT applicants and residents are responsible for industry related fees including, but not limited to: state exam registration, testing and score reporting, state mandated public school fingerprinting and background checks, and licensing and certification applications (Urban Teachers).

The cost of tuition is an ever present problem for UT and many other programs. She admits to spending a disproportionate amount of time raising money for the program. That being said, she does not believe that the cost of the program impacts diversity and continues to justify its cost: “people who aspire to be teachers have a responsibility to make an investment in their own learnings.”

The UT program does as much as possible to mitigate the financial burden of the program; UT raises as much money as possible and implements a break-even financial model on behalf of its residents. UTEP should consider her statement about the burden of education in conjunction with the stipend provided. While UTEP is passionate about diversifying its pool of applicants, it still does not provide a stipend for participation, which can be viewed as a detriment to diversification in a market with other options, but UTEP does use other scholarships and loan forgiveness programs to lower the price of tuition.

STEM Recruitment

Many programs struggle with Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) major recruitment and UT is no exception. UT has dealt with this struggle through a number of mechanisms:

- UT is part of a “100k in STEM consortium” trying to get 100,000 STEM teachers in 10 years
- UT’s partnership with Teach For America provides a pipeline for STEM majors at different points throughout the year
- UT partners with organizations such as City Year which provides urban education experience and STEM majors
- UT looks at universities that are most likely to provide highly qualified STEM majors and makes corresponding partnerships.

Ultimately, UT’s approach to STEM recruitment is diversified, rather than focusing on any one strategy. This strategy of diversification may be significant to their success in regards to STEM recruitment, which can be seen in the number of teachers recruited.

Scaling

UT is unique in that it can provide insights on national expansion. UT works in three cities nationwide and seeks to become a sizeable percentage of teacher workforce in those districts. UT shared their scale theory with us, citing that they seek depth as opposed to breadth. They look at a handful of cities where they feel they can make the most impact. UT hopes to become about a third of the teacher workforce in any city in which they are operating. With the potential for UTEP to expand into other districts in the future, the theory in which UT has developed can be harnessed. UTEP has already noted it does not want to lose its quality of instruction and this system ensures that it has substantial influence, and quality of preparation, in any city or district before seeking expansion.

7.6 MEMPHIS TEACHER RESIDENCY

The Memphis Teacher Residency (MTR) program aims to provide students in Memphis “with the same, or better quality of education as is available to any student in Memphis by recruiting, training and supporting effective teachers within a Christian context” (Memphis Teacher Residency). The program offers both a summer camp and a residency program. The MTR Residency is a masters-level degree program with three different aspects of training. The aspects they outline on their website are theory, practice, and support. Theory refers to the partnership with Union University where they provide a Masters in Urban Education. Practice refers to an internship during the residency year. Support refers to the pairing between an experienced coach and the former resident. The program offers content in the following subject areas: Elementary Education and Secondary Education in Biology, Chemistry, English, ESL, History, Math, Physics and Spanish (Memphis Teacher Residency). A forty-five minute interview

was conducted with a recruiter from the Memphis Teacher Residency who had been with the organization for three years. She was formerly a journalism and mass communications major at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill where her interest was in public relations. She has experience teaching when she lived overseas; however she “had no formal training and no experience with urban schools.”

From the interview, there were aspects of the program the recruiter touched on which can be used to enlighten other urban teacher programs, such as UTEP, who are struggling with these same aspects. The aspects to be discussed include funding, classroom management, a sense of community, and recruitment.

Funding

MTR is 100% free for students. The program covers tuition for the degree, books, housing and provides a living stipend for residents during the training year. In exchange for this, it asks for graduates to teach for three years in high need schools in Memphis as a contractual obligation. If for some reason, students fail to complete three years then they will work with the students to pay back what they owe.

When prompted further on the funding structure, the recruiter said that the program is free because, “Memphis is the second most generous city.” It has a number of corporate partners, foundations, individuals, and churches who financially support the program. It also receives 5 million dollars a year in funding from AmeriCorps by being an AmeriCorps body.

While programs such as UTEP struggle to maintain a low financial commitment for students and still provide the same opportunities, the Memphis Teacher Residency recruiter did not express any concern about the future of its funding. It is optimistic to believe that programs without the AmeriCorps funding will ever be in the same place as MTR with few concerns about funding; however, it can look to some of these structures for alternative methods to the high ticket value.

Classroom Management

UTEP expressed concern about a new teacher’s ability to manage a classroom, using the term “classroom management.” When prompted to learn about the classroom management aspect of Memphis Teacher Residency, the recruiter was highly assertive in correcting the term “classroom management.” She mentioned a class they offer called “Teaching in the 21st Century.” It is “designed to help them learn how to create an environment where learning can take place....They don’t want teachers to just be classroom managers but also leaders who can control an environment in a positive way.” She referred to this as “classroom leadership.” This linguistic shift when talking about classroom management is something to consider as it adds a positive connotation to what is widely thought of as an aspect of teaching that cannot be taught in universities, but rather in practice. Thinking about classroom management as “leadership” adds the potential for debate about best practices and theories; however, it can

also diminish the importance of the managerial aspect of a classroom, which is highly important in urban schools. A linguistic shift as this one, however, can provide a way for managerial skills to be discussed in a classroom setting and should be considered.

Quality and Quantity

Another concern discussed by Island and Kennedy of UTEP was the expansion of the program. When asked about future goals of MTR, the recruiter mentioned the positive nature of program growth. The program grew from a cohort in the mid-30s when she started to a cohort of 70. While growth is concerning for the UTEP program which boasts its relationship-based model, the recruiter said that one of the main appealing parts of the program is a sense of community. She asserts that this sense of community is boosted through a communal living place. All of the cohort lives together in one residential apartment complex. The program is big, yet still maintains its sense of community through communal living. The financial situation of UTEP may be a hindrance to creating a communal living situation in their program; however, there are other ways to maintain community with a large group. For example, UTEP could consider the notion of sub-cohorts based on field, or it could provide a roommate match for prospective students.

Recruitment

During a meeting with Island, a new recruiting wing of UTEP was mentioned. A main focus of the interview with the Memphis Teacher Residency was surrounding methods of recruitment. The recruiter's job includes the following tasks:

- Going to local campuses around Memphis to speak to organizations and to classes where professors have invited her to speak
- Hosting information sessions at schools and participating in career fairs mostly in the Southeast and Chicago and Michigan
- Hosting preview days where they welcome interested candidates to come hear about the program, take a tour, and visit classrooms where graduates are teaching.

She also mentioned how she utilizes the summer camp they host to recruit. The program has undergraduate staff who are trained to recruit on their college campuses. UTEP can draw on these concepts to develop a robust recruitment arm.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Memphis Teacher Residency has an enormous recruiting mission, a strong funding set-up, a unique way of tackling classroom management, and an innovative way to foster a sense of community with a cohort that is 70 strong. While UTEP differs from MTR in that it is a secular program, it is structured in a similar fashion and both end with a higher degree in education. UTEP cannot continue to be a competitive program when other programs exist that provide the same services for free. The following recommendations to UTEP can be made following this

interview: re-evaluate the funding structure to determine if there are areas where cost can be reduced, seek alternative funding from private donors and foundations, change the narrative around classroom management that aligns with the theoretical scope of UTEP, and expand the recruiting arm of UTEP to include higher recruitment on college campuses.

7.7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of our interviews, we discovered that many of the context-specific programs throughout the country are having many of the same challenges as UTEP. Most of the programs addressed funding as a source of concern for their program in the next few years because of the number of grants that are expiring this year. Many of the organizations addressed classroom management in one way or the other as a struggle to make their students feel prepared for the classroom, and scaling is a continual problem because it is difficult to keep a high quality of a program as it grows. From interviewing KIPP DC, Northwest UTEP, Urban Teachers, and MTR, we have found some areas where these programs are succeeding that can be generalized to UTEP. However, we understand that the programs are not necessarily all comparable. Some things, for example, that characterize UTEP as opposed to the other programs are as follows:

- UTEP is a secular program with no ability to advocate
- UTEP operates only in the Chicago
- UTEP places students in both traditional public schools and charter schools
- UTEP is a separate entity from the University of Chicago
- UTEP, however, is not a separate entity from the Urban Education Institute (UEI)
- UTEP has a small number of staff, with a new recruiting staff member
- UTEP aims to maintain a relationship-based model and sees this happening through maintaining a small, tight-knit cohort

Based on these characteristics, our recommendations are suggestions for UTEP to evaluate to see if they could possibly fit into their current structure.

For funding, UTEP should find ways to pay students small stipends for the tutoring work that they do, or they should continue to minimize costs using other grant funding that is available. Another suggestion includes looking into partnerships with schools, in which schools could pay UTEP in order to receive a certain number of UTEP students as teachers in their schools.

For quality over quantity, if expansion is necessary in order to increase the funds, UTEP should provide housing to their students in order to maintain cohort unity, or UTEP should look more in depth to the KIPP DC model to better understand how they create cohort unity with such a large cohort. Some suggestions that were noted previously include creating sub-cohorts or providing housing-match for students entering the cohort.

For classroom management, UTEP should re-evaluate the aims of teaching classroom management. If UTEP wants to have a theoretical conversation around best practices, it should

consider changing the name to something more theoretical such as “leadership.” If UTEP wants to create an environment in which their students feel a sense of urgency around learning how to manage a classroom, it should draw on KIPP DC’s gradual release model. For both KIPP DC and MTR, they add value to classroom management by allowing students to receive a classroom only when they are ready, or by renaming it all together to something like “Classroom Leadership” to convey the importance of classroom management to teachers.

Our final recommendation is to maintain a dialogue with and awareness of other programs with the same mission or vision as UTEP. The programs involved in this study, as well as other programs in metropolitan areas around the United States, are facing the same complications with long-term planning as UTEP. A continued dialogue and awareness will ensure that UTEP has a holistic understanding of the increasingly large market that provides alternative teaching instruction to aspiring urban teachers.

Given all of our interviews, these are the aspects that UTEP should focus on to address their concerns about funding, cohort unity, and classroom management.

Appendix A: Interview Protocols

UTEP Alumni Interview

October 2015

This survey is designed to explore the effectiveness of the UTEP program, with a focus on teacher preparedness. It will last about 30 minutes with the option to go longer. The interview is completely voluntary. You may skip questions or stop the interview at any time. Your answers during this interview will remain confidential. We will report the results so that no identifying information can be linked to you. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Chad Broughton (ceb@uchicago.edu).

Later, we'll have a chance for conversation, but first I'll ask some closed-response questions. Are you ready to begin?

1. What grade do you currently teach? ____
2. Prior to UTEP, were you involved with any other teacher preparation programs?
 Yes (If "yes," note and say "OK, I'll ask you about that later") _____
 No
3. Prior to UTEP, did you have any classroom experience as a teacher, teacher's aide, or volunteer?
 Yes (If "yes," please note) _____
 No
4. Do you live in the same neighborhood as your students?
 Yes
 No
5. How long is your commute?
 under 10 mins.
 11-20 mins.
 21-30 mins.
 31-45 mins.
 over 45 mins.

6. Please rate the following statements based on how much you agree or disagree:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
A. The workload during UTEP was manageable.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
B. The “strand” structure of UTEP met my needs as a teacher in training.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
C. UTEP prepared me to manage my own classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
D. UTEP’s checkpoint schedule was well-structured.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
E. UTEP's context-specific curriculum is useful to me as a teacher.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
F. The Year 1 Tutoring Strand helped prepare me to be an effective teacher.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
G. The Year 1 Fieldwork Strand helped prepare me to be an effective teacher.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
H. The Year 1 Academic Strand helped prepare me to be an effective teacher.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I. The Year 1 Soul Strand helped prepare me to be an effective teacher.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
J. Residency Year and its supports helped prepare me to be an effective teacher.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Thank you. Now I’ll ask a series of open-response questions, starting on the topic of UTEP teacher preparation and lessons from the classroom. These questions ask you to reflect on your beginning experiences in the classroom. **[Note: If the interviewee wants to stick to 30 minutes, go to Demographics section at 28 minutes.]**

7. **[WG6/7: Thinking back to your first year as a teacher]/[WG5: In your first month or year of teaching]**, how well did UTEP prepare you for the classroom?
 - a. **Probes:** What do you feel you were unprepared for? What were your initial weaknesses as a teacher? Were you prepared for classroom management? For lesson planning? For evaluating each student as an individual? For working within your neighborhood? How did UTEP's context-specific program inform the way you teach in the classroom?
 - b. **Probes:** What have you learned in the classroom that you wish you had known starting out? What are you currently struggling with?
8. In what ways **[WG6/7: did you feel]** **[WG5: do you feel]** more prepared and in what ways **[WG6/7: did you]** **[WG5: do you]** feel less prepared than other beginning teachers at your school?
 - a. **Probes:** Did you feel more or less equipped to understand the context of the school, handle classroom management, lesson planning, etc.? What leadership positions have you held in the past? Have your past experiences in a leadership role shaped the way you manage your classroom?
9. [If "yes" to "Prior to UTEP, were you involved with any other teacher preparation programs", ask this question] Can you distinguish major differences between your previous teacher preparation program and what you learned during UTEP?
 - a. **Probes:** Are there any ways in which UTEP could have better prepared its cohorts, based on your previous teacher preparation background? What should UTEP incorporate or learn that program? Does UTEP do something especially well in comparison? How did that preparation differ from UTEP? What specific skills did you learn from [program]? What is the most important skill you learned in UTEP?

Now I'll ask some open-response questions about coaching and other UTEP supports.

10. Can you tell me about your working relationship with your coach?
Probes: In what ways did you utilize your coach? Did the ways in which you worked with your coach change over the years? In what ways? Are there areas where you felt the coaches couldn't support you? Has your coach helped to shape your teaching career?
11. Has your experience with your coach made you interested in being a coach yourself?
Probes: In what ways do you believe that your leadership style would be similar to and different from that of your coach? In what ways did this decision stem from your past experiences? Has your coach been effective in continuing to make you a better teacher?

Now I'll ask a few questions about the UTEP model of teachers as "change agents."

12. How confident do you feel in your ability to effect meaningful change in students' lives?
- a. Probes: Do you feel like you can change your students' lives or is your capacity as a teacher limited? Are there any new reforms that your school is implementing? What is your role when it comes to these new reforms? Can you tell me about any experiences you've had as a change agent beyond the classroom?
13. How well would you say you "fit into" your current school? How is it compared to other teachers at your stage in your career? And what do you think contributed positively or negatively to this transition?

To finish, I'll ask a few demographic questions.

14. Your age? _____

15. Your gender? _____

16. Your race?

- African American/Black
- Asian
- White
- Other _____

17. Was your primary education public or private?

- Public (CPS)
- Public (other than CPS)
- Private/parochial
- Both

18. Did you receive financial aid or scholarships for the UTEP program?

- No
- Yes, UChicago-based scholarship
- Yes, UChicago-based student loan
- Yes, outside scholarship
- Yes, outside student or other loan
- Prefer not to respond

19. Can we share your address with UTEP (your name and address will not be linked to your responses)?

- Yes
- No

20. Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zipcode _____

21. Preferred way to contact you?

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Thank you for time! Again, all personal information collected here will be kept completely confidential. Do you have any questions? If you think of any more, please contact Chad Broughton (ceb@uchicago.edu).

Optional open-response: Teachers

1. How comfortable do you feel addressing issues of race, class, community tensions, etc?
 - a. PROBES: (*if more comfortable*) Was the Soul Strand helpful in preparing you to address these issues in the classroom/in your school in general?
 - b. (*if less comfortable*) Do you think UTEP could have done a better job to prepare you to address these issues? How so?
2. How comfortable would you feel going to your principal to discuss starting a new program in your school?
 - a. PROBES: What about a fellow teacher? How about trying to change a school policy? How comfortable would you be approaching the subject with your principal and fellow teachers?
3. How do you engage with the community in which your school is located?
 - a. PROBE: Do you live nearby? Are you involved in afterschool programs?
4. To what extent are you still involved with UTEP?
 - a. PROBE: Has anyone from UTEP checked in with you after the coaching period ended? Have you ever been contacted about a leadership at UTEP?
5. How has your attitude towards the CPS system changed over the years?
 - a. PROBES: Did the UTEP program adequately prepare you for problems you encountered in the system? Has the UTEP program influenced your decision to stay in teaching this long?

Optional open-response: Leaders

1. Why did you decide to move from teaching to leadership?
2. How did your UTEP training affect your ability to transition from a teacher to a leader?
 - a. PROBES: Does the UTEP program still inform your philosophy on administration and management? How so? Did having context-specific teacher training give you an advantage in attaining a leadership position compared to your colleagues?
3. Do you try to hire teachers from UTEP, or promote the program in any way?
 - a. PROBES: Why or why not? Do UTEP graduates have any kind of advantage or disadvantage over other candidates?
4. Did the UTEP program adequately prepare you to address problems related to leadership and change you encountered in the system?
 - a. PROBE: How has your attitude towards the CPS system changed over the years?

Optional open-response: Non-CPS Teachers

1. Why did you decide to leave CPS?
 2. Describe the school system where you currently teach.
 3. What are the differences between CPS and your new teaching environment?
 4. Did UTEP's context-specific model prepare you to teach in a different school system?
 5. Would you say that it would have been better for you to do a less context specific teacher training program? Why or why not?
-

The UTEP Model Interview

October 2015

UTEP STAFF: Explain purpose of research to your UTEP key informant.

1. How long have you been with the UTEP and what is your current title?
2. Tell me about your role at UTEP.
 - a. Prompt to see if they teach any classes and/or serve as coaches.
 - b. Prompt to see if they would like to see that role changed
 - c. Prompt them to speak more about their responsibilities.
3. Tell me about your background in education prior to your involvement with the UTEP.
4. Have you had any experience with non context-specific teacher education programs? If so, can you please tell me about the ways in which that experience was different from and similar to your experience with UTEP?
5. What led you to work for UTEP?
 - a. What other jobs have you had before UTEP?
6. When you were hired to work for UTEP, what was your understanding of the goals?
7. How effective do you think that UTEP has been in accomplishing these goals?
8. If you could change something about UTEP to improve their efficacy, what would you change?
9. How have the goals of UTEP changed since you were hired?
 - a. If so, what are the new goals of UTEP?
 - b. Are these goals more effective in accomplishing the overall goals?
10. What do you think are the future goals or main initiatives of UTEP?
11. What do you think makes UTEP an appealing program for students looking to become teachers?
12. Based on the financial commitment for students in the program, what makes the high ticket value worth it for your students?
13. Tell me, ideally, what you believe to be the relationship between UTEP and the UEI.
 - a. Is the relationship that you actually have with UEI?
14. Describe a time (if any) when working for UTEP was frustrating.
15. Describe a time (if any) when working for UTEP was particularly rewarding.

Thank you.

OTHER KEY INFORMANTS: Explain purpose of research to your key informant.

1. How long have you been with this organization and what is your current title?
2. Tell me about your role at your organization.
 - a. Prompt to see if they teach any classes and/or serve as coaches.
 - b. Prompt to see if they would like to see that role changed
 - c. Prompt them to speak more about their responsibilities.
3. Tell me about your background in education prior to this experience.
4. Have you had any experience with non-context-specific teacher education programs?
 - a. If so, can you please tell me about the ways in which that experience was different from and similar to your experience with your current organization?
5. What led you to work for your current organization?
 - a. What other jobs have you had before your current organization?
6. When you were hired to work for your current organization, what was your understanding of the goals?
7. How effective do you think that your current organization has been in accomplishing these goals?
8. If you could change something about your current organization to improve their efficacy, what would you change?
9. How have the goals of your organization changed since you were hired?
 - a. If so, what are the new goals of your organization?
 - b. Are these goals more effective in accomplishing the overall goals?
10. What do you think are the future goals or main initiatives of your organization?
11. What do you think makes your organization an appealing program for students looking to become teachers?
12. Based on the financial commitment for students in the program, what makes the high ticket value worth it for your students?
13. Describe a time (if any) when working for your organization was frustrating.
14. Describe a time (if any) when working for your organization was particularly rewarding.

Appendix B: List of interviewees: UTEP Model

Indiana University Northwest Urban Teacher Education Program (UTEP)
KIPP DC Capital Teaching Residency (CTR)
Memphis Teacher Residency
UCLA Teacher Education Program (TEP)/IMPACT
Urban Education Institute
Urban Teachers
Urban Teacher Education Program (UTEP)

Appendix C: Data Tables

Figure 1: Racial Composition of Respondents						
	Experienced Teachers	Foundation Year	Landing Years	Residency Year	Veteran Teachers	TOTAL
White	73%	67%	50%	30%	57%	56%
African-American	9%	8%	13%	10%	0%	7%
Asian	0%	8%	12%	10%	7%	7%
Latino/a	18%	8%	25%	50%	14%	22%
Multiracial	0%	8%	0%	0%	21%	7%

Figure 2: Gender Composition of Respondents						
	Experienced Teachers	Foundation Year	Landing Years	Residency Year	Veteran Teachers	TOTAL
Female	73%	83%	67%	50%	86%	73%
Male	27%	17%	33%	50%	14%	27%

Figure 3: Primary Education of Respondents						
	Experienced Teachers	Foundation Year	Landing Years	Residency Year	Veteran Teachers	TOTAL
Private/ Parochial	8%	33%	44%	10%	7%	19%
Public (CPS)	42%	25%	22%	30%	29%	30%
Public (Non-CPS)	42%	25%	33%	50%	64%	44%
Both	8%	17%	0%	10%	0%	7%

Figure 4: The Strand Structure is Meeting/Met my Needs as Teacher in Training by Race

	African-American	Asian	Latino/a	Multi-Racial	White	TOTAL
Strongly Agree	75%	50%	17%	25%	26%	29%
Agree	25%	50%	75%	75%	74%	69%
Disagree	0%	0%	8%	0%	0%	2%
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Figure 5: The Strand Structure is Meeting/Met my Needs as Teacher in Training by Gender

	Female	Male	TOTAL
Strongly Agree	20%	53%	29%
Agree	78%	40%	68%
Disagree	2%	7%	4%
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	0%

Figure 6: Academic Strand is preparing/prepared me to be an effective teacher by Race

	African-American	Asian	Latino/a	Multi-Racial	White	TOTAL
Strongly Agree	25%	50%	17%	0%	37%	30%
Agree	75%	50%	75%	100%	57%	65%
Disagree	0%	0%	8%	0%	3%	4%
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Not Applicable	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	2%

Figure 7: Academic Strand is preparing/prepared me to be an effective teacher by Gender

	Female	Male	TOTAL
Strongly Agree	28%	33%	29%
Agree	65%	60%	64%
Disagree	8%	0%	5%
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	0%
Not Applicable	0%	7%	2%

Figure 8: Academic Strand is preparing/prepared me to be an effective teacher by Race

	African-American	Asian	Latino/a	Multi-Racial	White	TOTAL
Strongly Agree	25%	50%	17%	0%	37%	30%
Agree	75%	50%	75%	100%	57%	65%
Disagree	0%	0%	8%	0%	3%	4%
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Not Applicable	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	2%

Figure 9: Fieldwork Strand is preparing/prepared me to be an effective teacher by Gender

	Female	Male	TOTAL
Strongly Agree	46%	47%	47%
Agree	49%	33%	45%
Disagree	5%	20%	9%
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	0%

Figure 10: Fieldwork Strand is preparing/prepared me to be an effective teacher by Race						
	African-American	Asian	Latino/a	Multi-Racial	White	TOTAL
Strongly Agree	50%	75%	58%	50%	40%	47%
Agree	25%	0%	33%	50%	85%	44%
Disagree	25%	25%	8%	0%	7%	9%
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Figure 11: Tutoring Strand is preparing/prepared me to be an effective teacher by Race						
	African-American	Asian	Latino/a	Multi-Racial	White	TOTAL
Strongly Agree	50%	25%	25%	25%	27%	27%
Agree	25%	75%	50%	75%	60%	56%
Disagree	25%	0%	17%	0%	10%	11%
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	8%	0%	3%	4%

Figure 12: Tutoring Strand is preparing/prepared me to be an effective teacher by Gender			
	Female	Male	TOTAL
Strongly Agree	28%	33%	29%
Agree	60%	47%	56%
Disagree	10%	13%	11%
Strongly Disagree	3%	7%	4%

Figure 13: Soul Strand is preparing/prepared me to be an effective teacher by Race						
	African-American	Asian	Latino/a	Multi-Racial	White	TOTAL
Strongly Agree	50%	50%	42%	25%	50%	45%
Agree	25%	25%	17%	75%	40%	35%
Disagree	25%	25%	25%	0%	10%	15%
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	17%	0%	3%	5%

Figure 14: Soul Strand is preparing/prepared me to be an effective teacher by Gender			
	Female	Male	TOTAL
Strongly Agree	49%	34%	45%
Agree	32%	40%	34%
Disagree	17%	13%	16%
Strongly Disagree	2%	13%	5%

Figure 15: UTEP's Soul Strand is/was useful to me as a teacher						
	Experienced Teachers	Foundation Year	Landing Years	Residency Year	Veteran Teachers	TOTAL
Strongly Agree	27%	67%	33%	10%	71%	45%
Agree	55%	33%	22%	30%	29%	34%
Disagree	9%	0%	33%	50%	0%	4%
Strongly Disagree	9%	0%	11%	10%	0%	5%

Figure 16: The workload during UTEP was manageable						
	Experienced Teachers	Foundation Year	Landing Years	Residency Year	Veteran Teachers	TOTAL
Strongly Agree	25%	0%	44%	45%	22%	27%
Agree	67%	80%	66%	45%	71%	64%
Disagree	8%	10%	0%	10%	7%	7%
Strongly Disagree	0%	10%	0%	0%	0%	2%

Figure 17: UTEP is preparing me/prepared me to manage my own classroom						
	Experienced Teachers	Foundation Year	Landing Years	Residency Year	Veteran Teachers	TOTAL
Strongly Agree	9%	8%	22%	30%	29%	20%
Agree	82%	67%	22%	40%	57%	55%
Disagree	9%	8%	56%	30%	14%	21%
Strongly Disagree	0%	8%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Not Applicable	0%	8%	0%	0%	0%	2%

Figure 18: The checkpoint schedule is/was well-structured						
	Experienced Teachers	Foundation Year	Landing Years	Residency Year	Veteran Teachers	TOTAL
Strongly Agree	17%	30%	11%	9%	22%	18%
Agree	33%	40%	56%	55%	36%	45%
Disagree	17%	30%	11%	0%	14%	14%
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	11%	0%	7%	3%
Not Applicable	33%	0%	0%	36%	21%	20%

Figure 19: UTEP's context-specific curriculum was/is useful to me as a teacher						
	Experienced Teachers	Foundation Year	Landing Years	Residency Year	Veteran Teachers	TOTAL
Strongly Agree	36%	67%	66%	30%	64%	50%
Agree	55%	33%	56%	50%	36%	45%
Disagree	9%	0%	0%	10%	0%	4%
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	0%	10%	0%	2%

Appendix D: Maps

Figure 1: CPS Collaborative Teachers Ratings, Schools Employing UTEP Alumni (5 essentials)

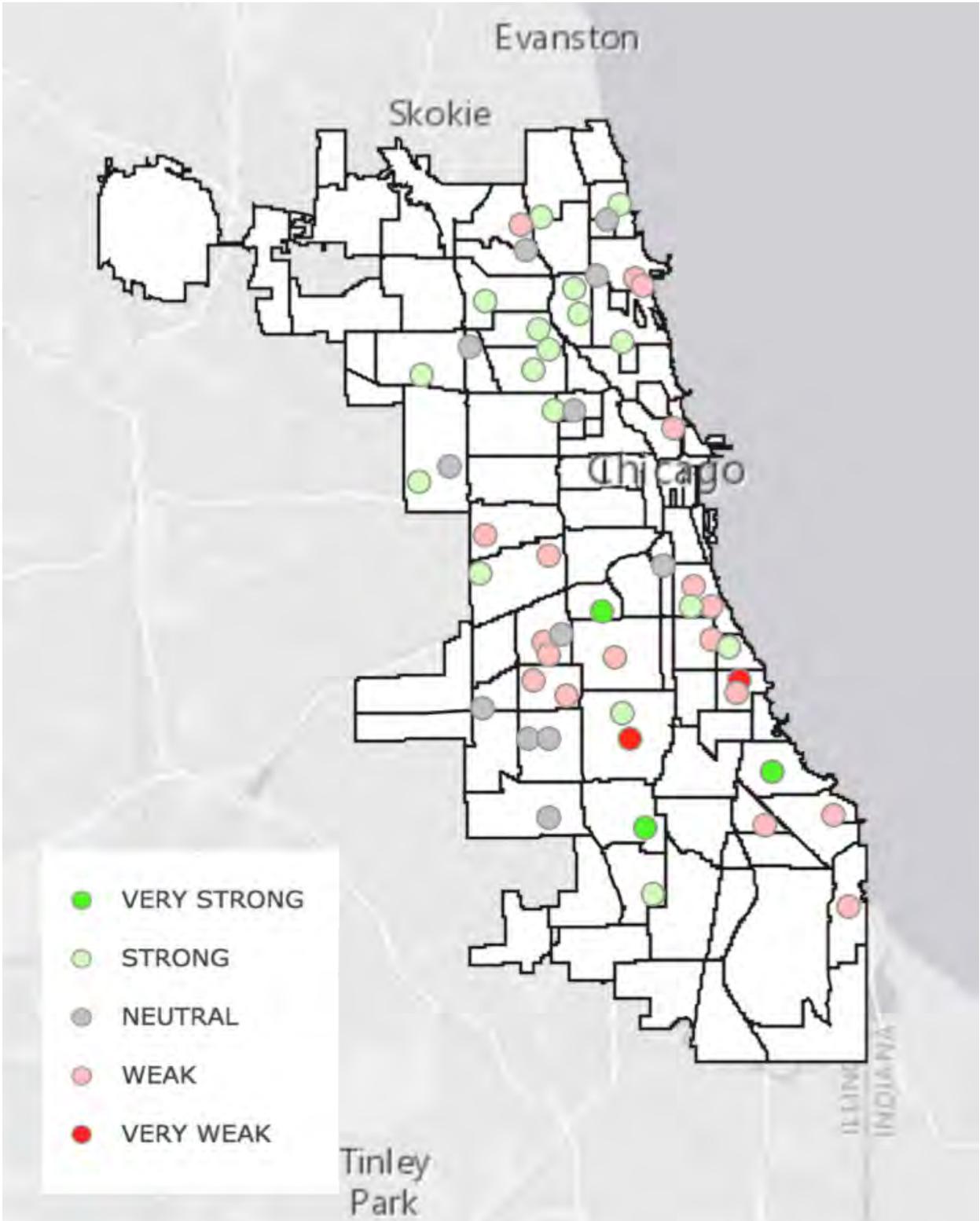


Figure 2: CPS Effective Leaders Ratings for Schools Employing UTEP Alumni (5 essentials)

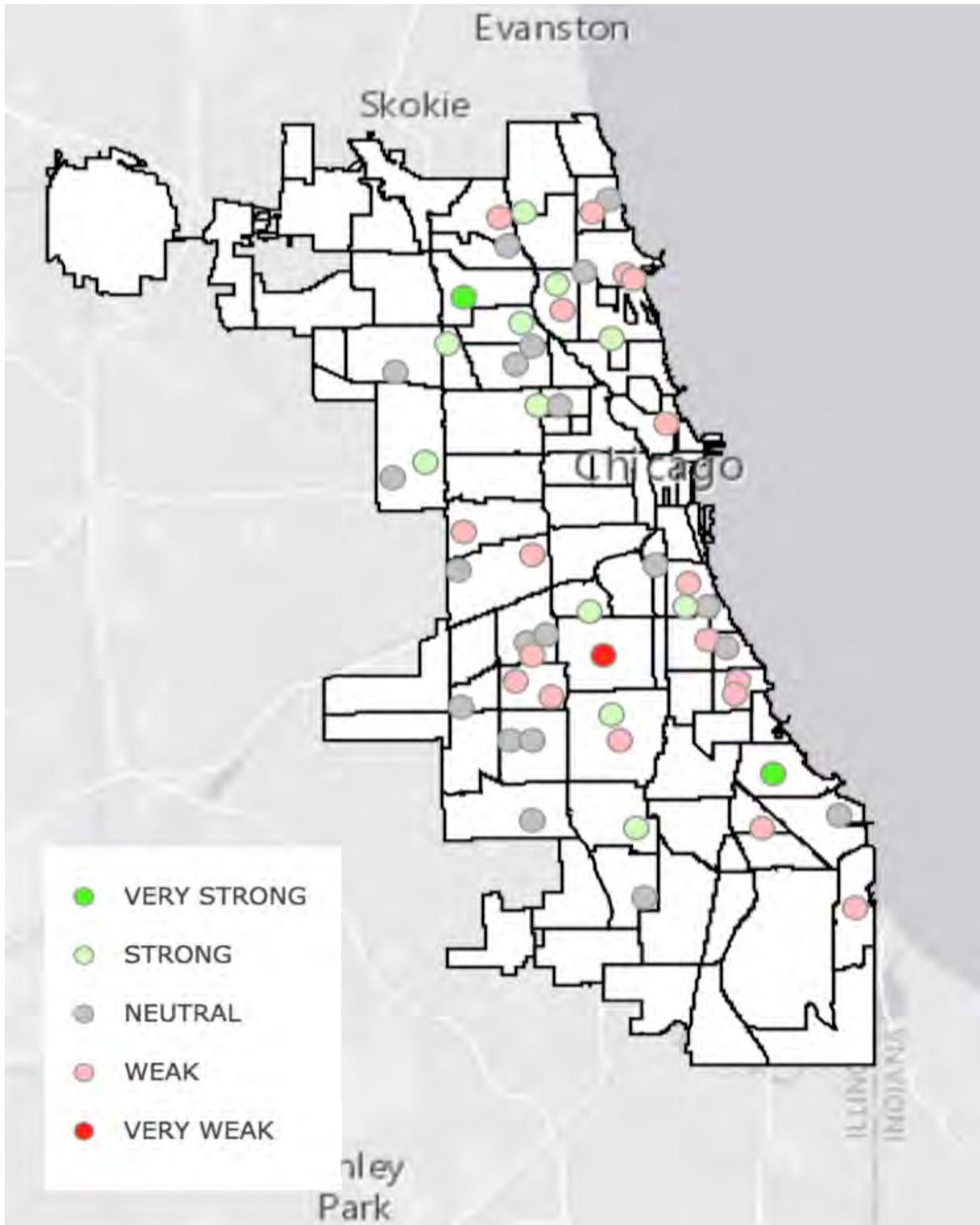


Figure 3: CPS Supportive Environment Ratings, Schools Employing UTEP Alumni (5 essentials)

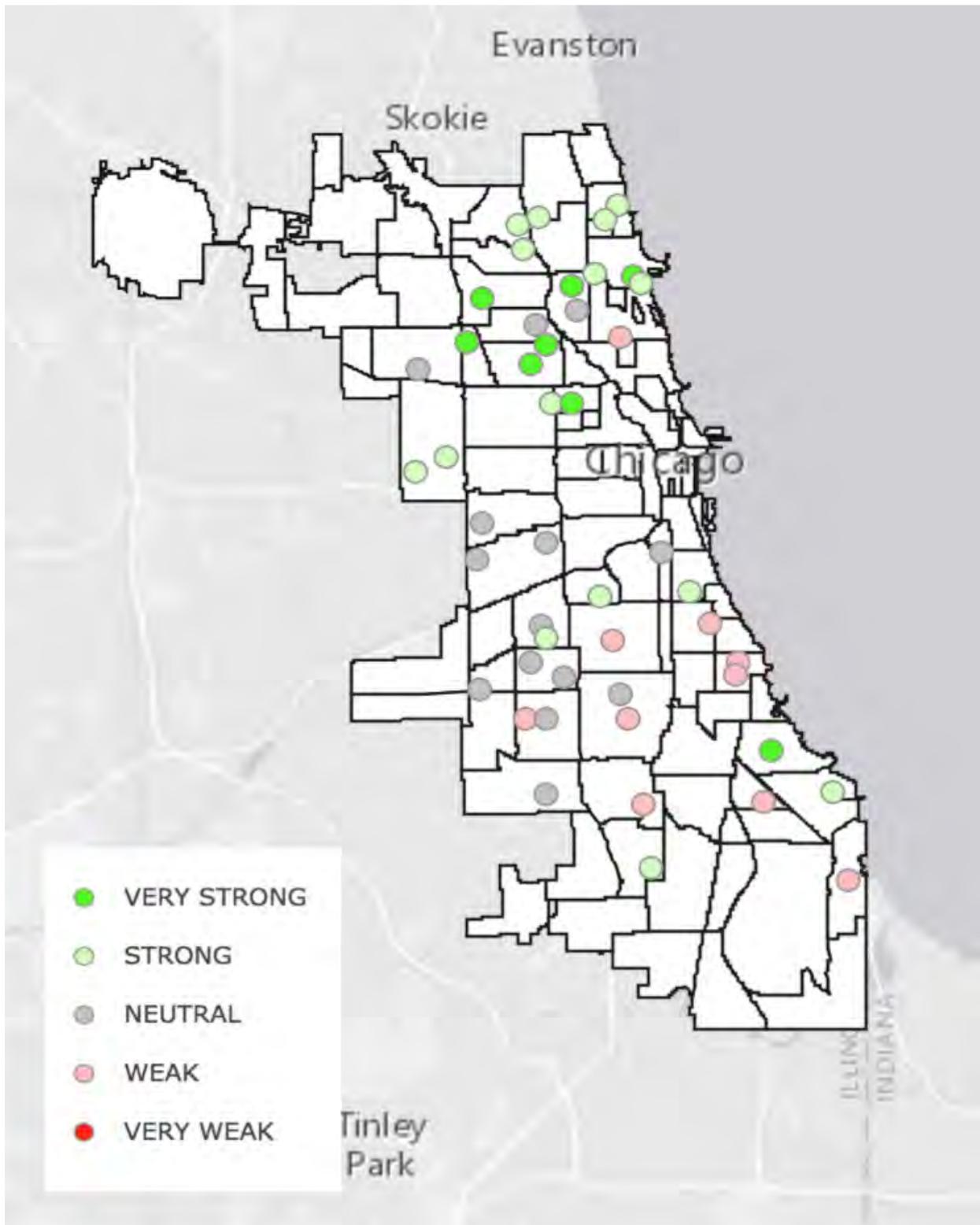


Figure 4: CPS Ambitious Instruction Ratings for Schools Employing UTEP Alumni (5 essentials)

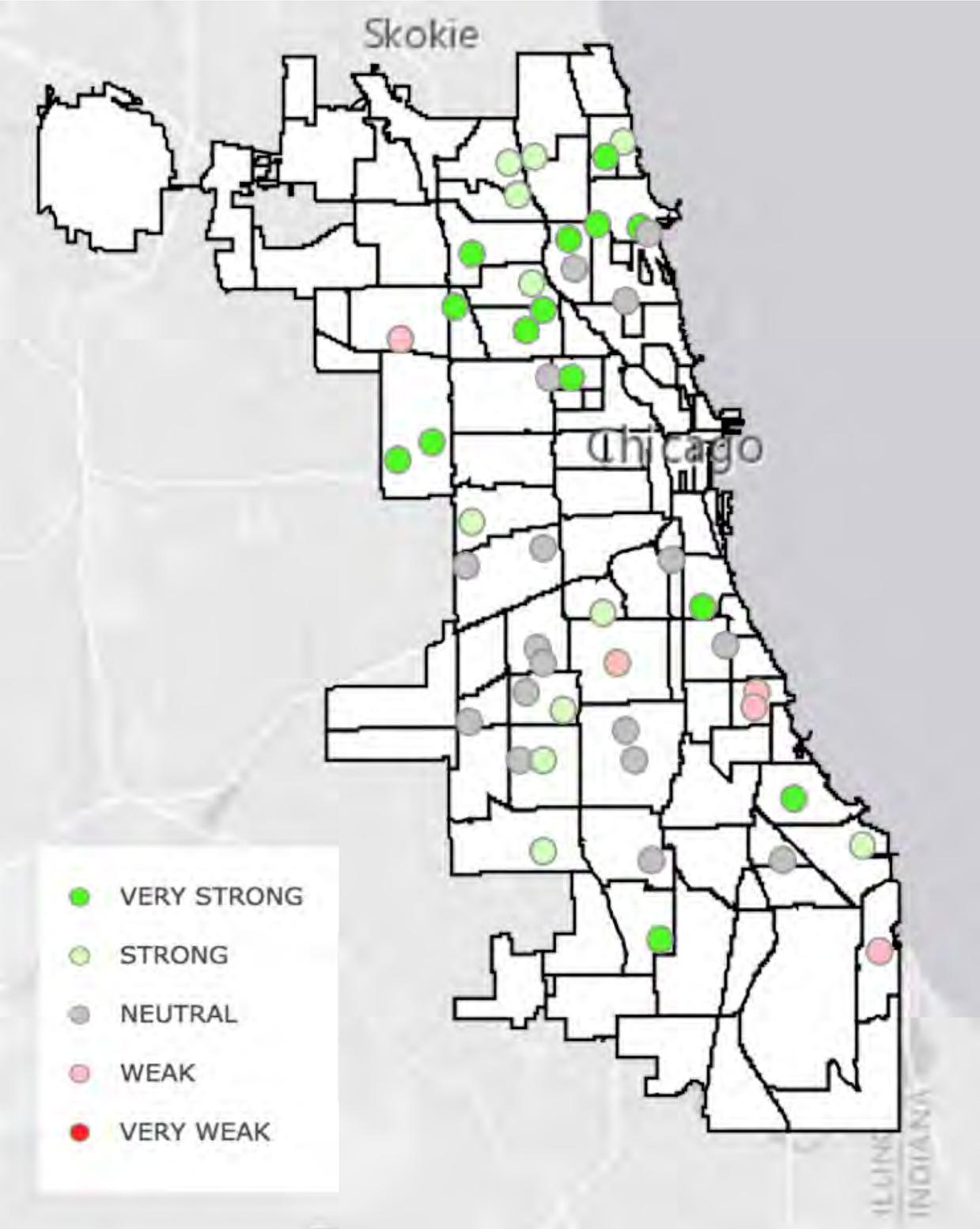


Figure 5: CPS Involved Families Ratings for Schools Employing UTEP Alumni (5 essentials)

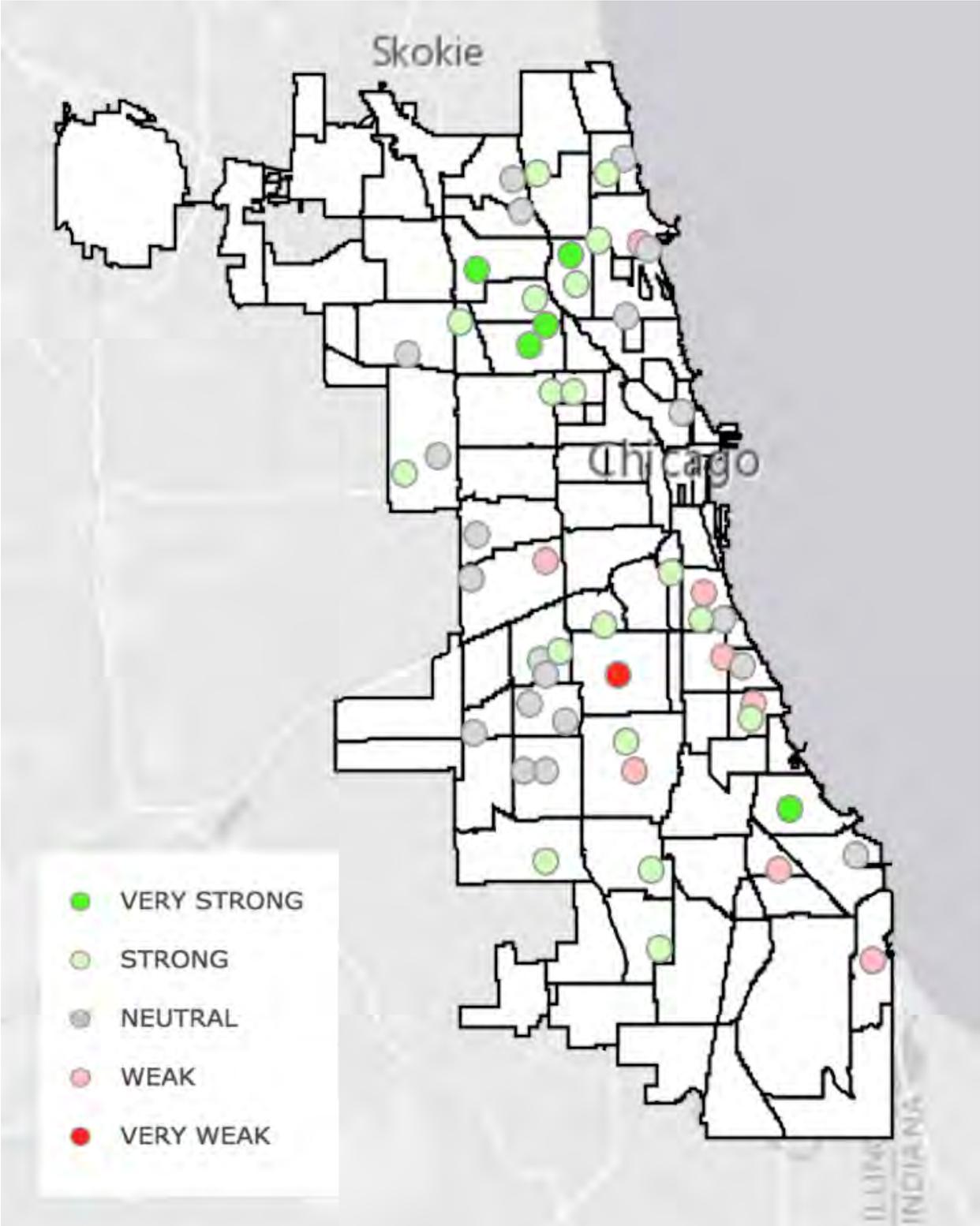


Figure 6: CPS Performance Policy Level in Schools Employing UTEP Alumni

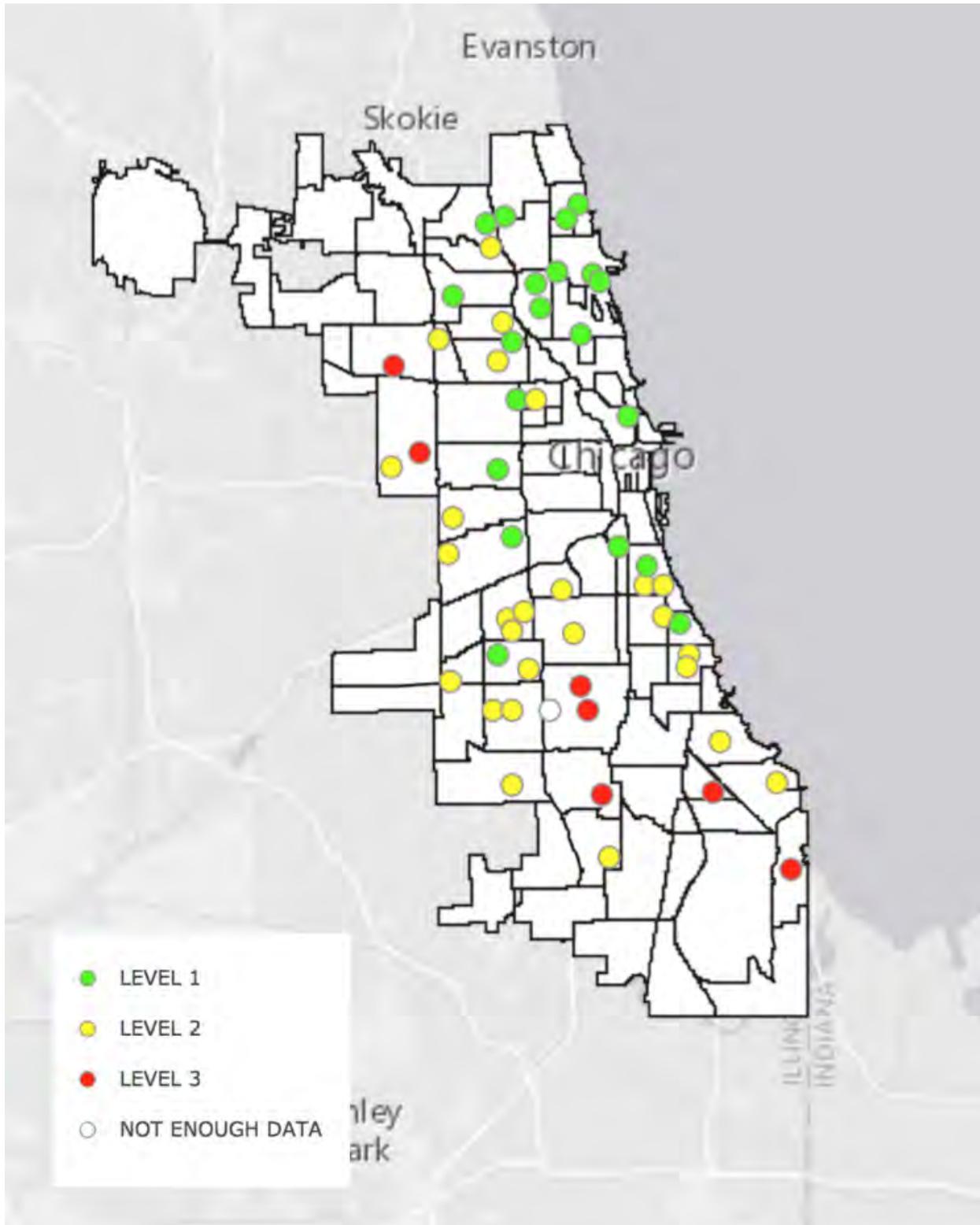


Figure 7: Home locations of UTEP Students and Alumni – Divided by Sample Group

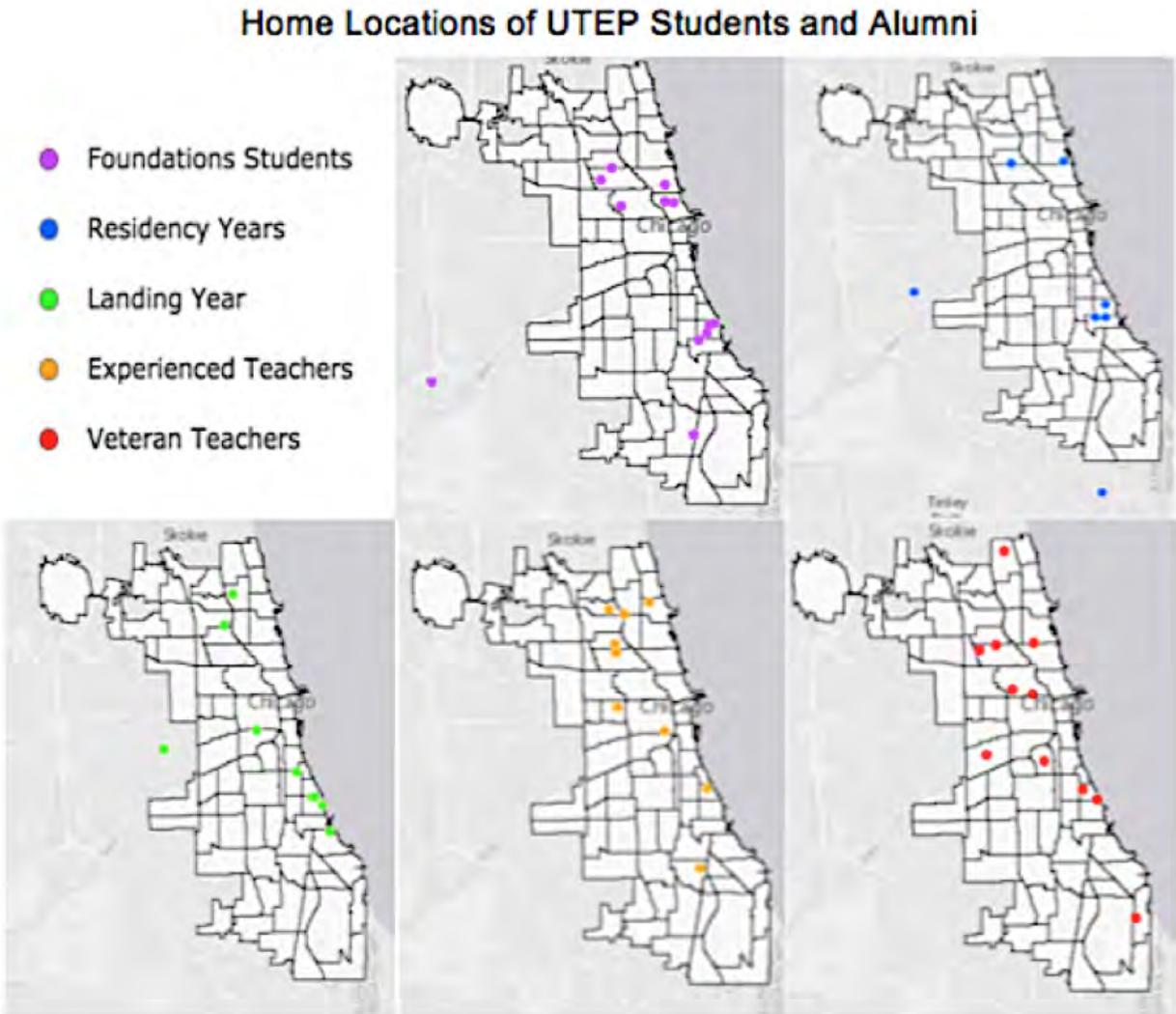
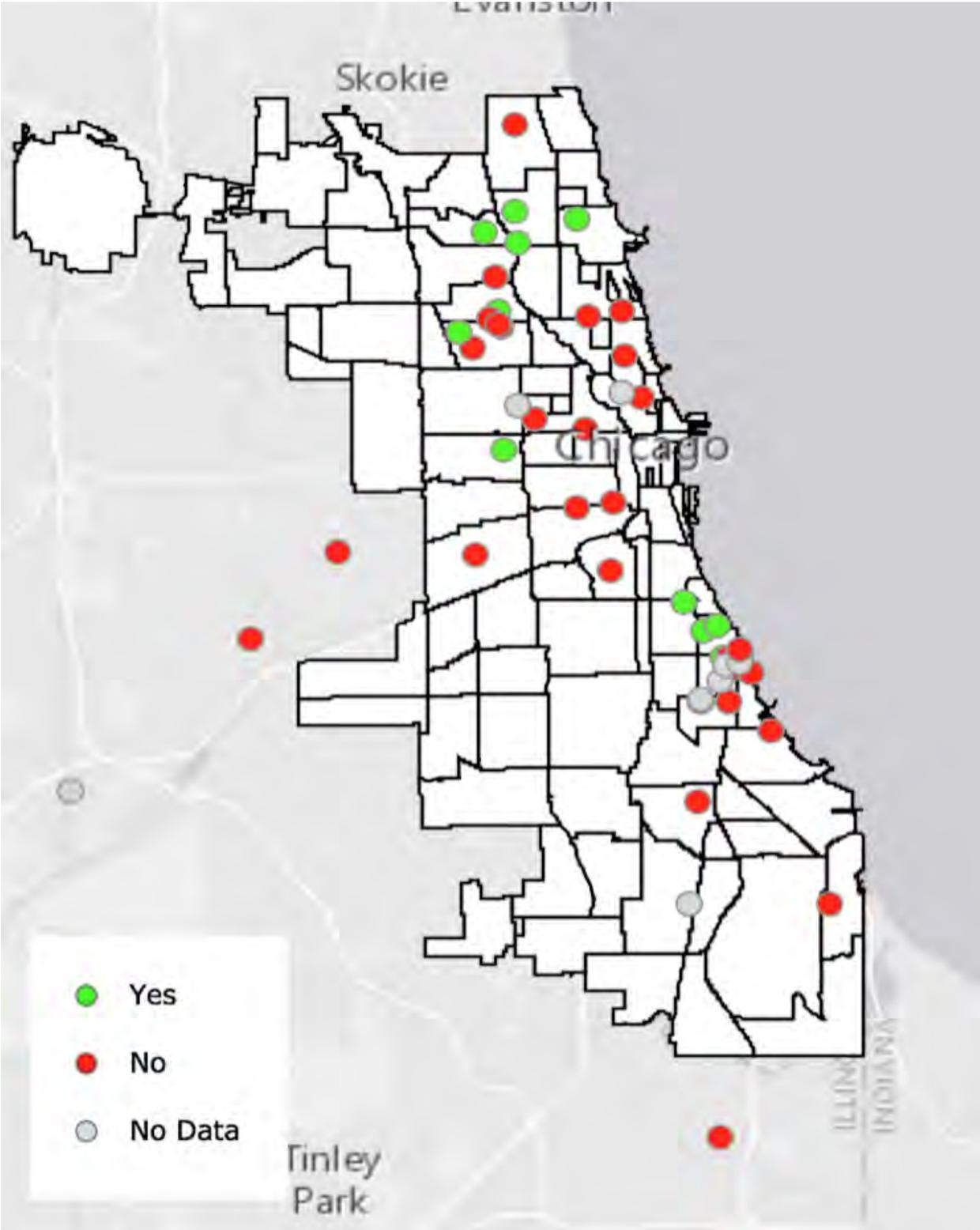


Figure 9: "Do You Live in the Same Neighborhood as Your Students?" (alumni and students)



References

- Chou, Hui-Min. 2007. "Multicultural Teacher Education: Toward a Culturally Responsible Pedagogy." *Essays in Education* 21: 139-62.
- Davis, Stephen, Darling-Hammond, Linda, LaPointe, Michelle, and Meyerson, Debra. 2005. *School Leadership Study Developing Successful Principals*. Stanford Education Leadership Institute (SELI).
- Hughes, Jan and Oi-man Kwok. "Influence of Student-Teacher and Parent-Teacher Relationships on Lower Achieving Readers' Engagement and Achievement in the Primary Grades." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 99(1) (2007): 39-51. Accessed November 9, 2015. doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.99.1.39
- Katsarou, Eleni, Bree Picower, and David Stovall. 2010. "Acts of Solidarity: Developing Urban Social Justice Educators in the Struggle for Quality Public Education". *Teacher Education Quarterly* 37 (3). Caddo Gap Press: 137-53. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23479502>.
- Matsko, Kavita Kapadia, and Karen Hammerness. 2014. "Unpacking the "Urban" in Urban Teacher Education Making a Case for Context-Specific Preparation." *Journal of teacher Education* 65.2: 128-144.
- Memphis Teacher Residency. "Resident." <http://memphistr.org/program/resident/>.
- Mentors in the Urban Teacher Residency Model Selectivity and Performance Data from UTRU Network Impact Reports*. 2013. Urban Teacher Residency United.
- Noel, Jana. 2010. "Weaving Teacher Education into the Fabric of Urban Schools and Communities". *Teacher Education Quarterly* 37 (3). Caddo Gap Press: 9-25. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23479495>.
- Onore, Cynthia, and Bonny Gildin. 2010. "Preparing Urban Teachers as Public Professionals Through a University-community Partnership". *Teacher Education Quarterly* 37 (3). Caddo Gap Press: 27-44. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23479496>.
- Urban Teachers. "Nuts and Bolts." <http://www.urbanteachers.org/nuts-and-bolts/>
- Weiner, Lois. 2000. "Research in the 90s: Implications for Urban Teacher Preparation". *Review of Educational Research* 70 (3). American Educational Research Association: 369-406. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1170787>