

Working together in Urban Schools: How a University Teacher Education Program and Teach for America Partner to Support Alternatively Certified Teachers

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It is no secret: Teach For America (TFA) and traditional colleges of education have had strained relations over the past 20 years, as their approaches to teacher preparation are starkly distinct. TFA, as its mission, recruits recent college graduates, provides a five-week summer training, and assigns primary teaching responsibilities in kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) classrooms for a two-year commitment, whereas traditional colleges of education aim to prepare lifelong teachers over the course of two-to-four-year teacher preparation programs. Since the beginning of TFA in 1989, academia has challenged the effectiveness of TFA teachers in the classroom and criticized the organization for the short-lived teacher preparation and limited time teachers are expected to stay in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002; Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Veilig, 2005; Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002). Due to the inherent differences between the traditional path

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to teaching certification provided by colleges of education and the alternative path to teaching certification provided by TFA, many universities find their ideologies of teacher education too disparate to reconcile.

No matter one's perspective on whether these teachers should be in the classroom, over 3,700 new teachers entered urban and rural classrooms via TFA in 2008 across America. In 2008, there were nearly 390 TFA teachers teaching in Phoenix-area schools alone. The College of Teacher Education and Leadership (CTEL) at Arizona State University (ASU) embraced the opportunity to partner with TFA to tailor existing teacher preparation programs to meet the unique needs of alternatively certified teachers in urban schools. Rather than harp on the distinctions between ideologies and approaches to teacher preparation, CTEL and TFA Phoenix found common ground with the shared mission to better support urban teachers in classrooms with thousands of Arizona children.

This commentary is part of a developing line of research focused on opportunities to explore partnerships between TFA and colleges of education. This line of research aims to better prepare and support alternatively certified teachers (i.e., teachers who become licensed to teach without a degree in education) in urban schools, rather than discredit TFA teachers and argue whether they should or should not be in the classroom in the first place. Our goal is to share lessons learned from our partnership, so that other institutions and non-profit organizations can form scalable models for teacher education in urban schools. To describe and reflect upon the teacher education program for TFA teachers teaching in urban schools in the Phoenix metropolitan area, we focus on one conceptually based question: *How have two organizations partnered to adapt and modify an existing teacher preparation program to best support inservice urban teachers in the classroom?*

In order to reflect upon our support and preparation of TFA teachers in urban schools, we (a) describe the setting in which our partnership exists, (b) provide a literature review as basis for program development, (c) highlight four key program elements which form the framework for working in urban schools to prepare alternatively certified teachers, and (d) reflect upon our programmatic transformations to embed inservice teacher education in urban schools.

Setting:

The University and Teach For America Partnership

CTEL and TFA share the responsibility of preparing effective teachers for the urban classrooms of Phoenix, Arizona. Similar to other alternatively certified teachers who enter the classroom without formal teacher preparation, TFA teachers enter the classroom with the minimum of an undergraduate degree in an unrelated field (e.g., sociology, economics, Spanish) and a five-week, intensive summer training on classroom management, instruction, and assessment. The crux of the teachers' professional preparation and development occurs while the teachers are already teaching in the classroom. In

order to place better prepared and supported teachers in classrooms around Phoenix, TFA partnered with CTEL in 2007 to provide teachers with a well-rounded program of study to equip them with the necessary tools for the urban classroom. Over the past three years of our partnership, the CTEL faculty has reflected and improved upon the teacher education program to support alternatively certified teachers and their plight to significant academic achievement with students.

The Induction, Masters, and Certification (InMAC) program at CTEL allows alternatively certified teachers to be the *teacher of record* (i.e., full-time classroom teacher responsible for instruction) in a Phoenix classroom while pursuing certification. Per state requirements, TFA teachers enter the classroom on a state-issued *intern certificate*, which is Arizona's single path to alternative certification. After passing a content-specific proficiency test and receiving fingerprint clearance, the intern teachers enroll in a state-approved teacher preparation program. In Phoenix, the majority of TFA teachers enroll in CTEL's InMAC program, while simultaneously employed as full-time teachers with one of 13 urban school districts in Phoenix. Upon successful completion of course work and two years of employment, teachers exit the program with a Master's degree and are eligible to apply for a provisional Arizona Teaching Certificate, which is the same certificate that university education students apply for upon completion of a traditional teacher preparation program.

The heart of the teacher education for urban alternatively certified teachers, both inside and outside of the classroom, is provided by both CTEL clinical instructors (CIs) and TFA program directors (PDs). Teachers participating in the CTEL InMAC program (i.e., 95% of all TFA teachers) receive individualized and collaborative support from both a CI and a PD. A CI is a full-time, non-tenure-track faculty member who supports teachers in the InMAC program in two ways—visiting and supporting teachers in their urban classrooms in the Phoenix metropolitan area and teaching the university coursework in the teacher education program. A PD is a full-time staff member of TFA who supports teachers with targeted support and professional development to equip them to achieve significant academic gains with their students. Both CIs and PDs have backgrounds teaching in urban schools and were selected for these roles after demonstrating a high level of success in urban settings. In most cases, teachers are matched to a CI and PD who have experience teaching their grade or subject area. An integral part of our partnership, CIs and PDs collaborate frequently to provide a comprehensive approach to support teachers' professional growth and development.

ASU and TFA have continuously worked to refine our partnership to better meet the needs of new teachers by differentiating and improving the support new teachers receive throughout their two-year commitment. The changes to the teacher preparation provided through the InMAC program occurred with experiences over the course of the three-year partnership, but were always grounded in research gathered from national, peer-reviewed journals on alternatively certified teacher preparation and urban teacher education.

Literature Review:

Meeting the Needs of Alternatively Certified, Urban Teachers

Across the nation, the majority of alternatively certified teachers work in urban classrooms (Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001). When aiming to meet the unique needs of alternatively certified, urban teachers, education programs need to consider both variables—alternatively certified teachers and urban education environments—when planning, implementing, and improving teacher preparation.

In terms of alternatively certified teacher education programs, each state defines the *alternative path* to certification. The National Center for Alternative Certification (NCAC), which collects this information, declares that no two states share the same requirements; an alternative path is one in which there is no traditional student teaching requirement (NCAC, 2008). In a report put together by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute in 2007, Walsh and Jacobs (2007) shone a negative light on alternative paths to certification teacher education programs because, typically, they are nothing more than restructured traditional paths. Few institutes have taken the giant leap forward and fundamentally changed the teacher education programs designed originally for traditional certification paths. The coursework, scheduling, and formats are the same for alternatively certified teachers as traditional certification programs. Institutions miss the opportunity to capitalize on the fact that most alternatively certified teachers are *learning on the job* as opposed to doing a traditional student teaching experience. TFA teachers, for example, are the *teacher of record*, learning to teach while working in classrooms following a five-week intensive summer institute for preparation (Mikuta & Wise, 2008).

Because TFA places teachers in classrooms on alternative certifications, the unique comingling of variables presents a ripe opportunity for exploring new ways to train and support teachers. At a few institutions, major curriculum adaptations have been put in place to meet the unique needs of urban, alternatively certified teachers (Koerner, Lynch, & Shane, 2008). In these institutions, newly formed teacher education programs include increased mentoring and supervision of teachers in their urban K-12 classrooms, hiring teacher practitioners who have experience in urban classrooms to teach classes, and sequencing courses and experiences to best meet the already demanding schedules of first-year teachers. It should be noted, in response to criticisms of teacher education programs for alternatively certified teachers (Rochkind, Ott, Immerwahr, Doble, & Johnson, 2007), the InMAC program did not reduce the certification requirements; instead, CTEL adjusted the experiences to more adequately meet these teachers' immediate needs, such as shifting the order of courses to prioritize specific areas of learning.

Many university teacher preparation programs, often situated on college campuses removed from the community its teachers will serve, fall short of providing their graduates with the knowledge, skills, and mindsets necessary to address the realities of urban schools. Research has documented the challenges faced by urban teacher education programs, such as recruitment of high achieving and diverse

teachers, lack of access to exemplary educators, failure to meet teacher shortage area needs, and limited resources and structures to support teachers once they begin teaching (Berry, Montgomery, & Snyder, 2008). In addition to the obstacles faced by traditional teacher education programs, common challenges to alternative teacher preparation programs include: (a) a condensed, prescriptive curriculum, (b) lack of clinical support before becoming the teacher of record, (c) limited opportunities to learn both content and pedagogy, and (d) inadequate preparation for teaching diverse learners (Berry, Montgomery, & Snyder, 2008). By embedding teacher preparation in classroom practice, these common challenges to urban teacher education programs are solved through the support teachers receive in the classroom and the enrichment of the university curriculum with real-life classroom experiences.

In order to overcome the inherent challenges of preparing alternatively certified, urban teachers, we grounded the design of our teacher education program in McLaughlin and Talbert's (2006) framework of school-based teacher learning. Teachers learn best when engaged in activities that: (a) focus specifically on the context in which they teach, (b) provide continuous support over time, (c) allow for collaboration with colleagues inside and outside the school, (d) include teachers in process of learning, and (e) fuse theory with practice. By using this framework to give context to teacher learning, paired with the cognizance of challenges typically posed to alternatively certified and urban teacher education programs, we designed, improved, and changed the InMAC program to meet the needs of our teachers in urban schools, which will be described below.

There are various facets of the CTET and TFA partnership that lend themselves to teaching success with alternatively certified teachers in the urban classroom. In this article, we focus specifically on four key modifications of the InMAC program, designed specifically to meet the needs of urban alternatively certified teachers.

The InMAC Program:

Four Facets of Embedded Urban Teacher Education

Although urban schools are often faced with a plethora of challenges ranging from poverty and transient populations to inadequate funding and high teacher attrition, we aim to highlight common challenges urban teachers face and describe how one innovative partnership is responding to such needs. We describe four facets of our university teacher preparation program, in partnership with TFA, that are embedded in urban schools: (a) school-site support, (b) initial coursework, (c) applied coursework, and (d) action research. Using vignettes of current TFA teachers in the InMAC program and programmatic descriptions, we describe the embedded aspects of our program and partnership designed to foster effective and well-prepared urban teachers.

**School-Site Support:
Urban Teacher Educators Collaborate
with Urban Teachers in the Classroom**

Patrick is a first-year seventh-and-eighth-grade Math teacher in a large urban K-8 school. One of the biggest challenges that Patrick and many new middle school teachers face is classroom management. He struggled to invest his students in the purpose of their work together, to communicate high expectations for students' behavior, and to implement systems that would allow his classroom to operate smoothly. In the fifth week of school, the principal contacted Patrick's CI, John, and PD, Bill, to share her concerns regarding his performance and plan to place Patrick on an improvement plan. With the support and input from the principal, TFA, and ASU, Patrick successfully revamped his rewards-and-consequences systems and put structures in place to consistently monitor student behavior and give appropriate feedback. Only weeks after the collaborative effort, Patrick improved considerably in managing his classroom and creating an environment in which meaningful learning could occur. All three parties continued support in his middle school classroom to give targeted feedback regarding his implementation of these new systems. Additionally, John helped to create his long-term plans from the district's pacing guide, and Bill provided examples and feedback on his daily lesson plans. These concrete resources for planning allowed Patrick to prioritize his classroom management.

As demonstrated by Patrick, John, Bill, and the school principal in this vignette, collaboration is central to supporting urban teachers in the InMAC program. With the many challenges that urban teachers face, teacher education programs must maximize access to experts who are invested in teachers' professional development and students' academic achievement. In the vignette above, Patrick's growth and development as an educator can be largely attributed to the streamlined support and coaching he received from John, Bill, and school leaders. This section describes the core of our teacher preparation program—the school-site support and collaboration of ASU and TFA that provides well-rounded and individualized professional development for inservice urban teachers.

To support the new teachers in the context of their own classrooms, CIs engage one-on-one with teachers through a series of classroom observations and debriefs, in which the teacher is provided with feedback on her or his performance in relation to the Arizona Professional Teaching Standards. In addition to providing teachers with specific feedback on their practice, classroom visits inform the university coursework. First, the professional support embedded in the urban classroom allow CIs to gauge the degree to which teachers are implementing strategies and best practices learned during their university coursework. By collecting this type of

qualitative data, CIs are able to reflect and refine their university courses to better meet the immediate needs of the teachers, which will be described in the subsequent sections. To provide differentiated support to teachers outside of university coursework, CIs also hold workshops that cover topics and issues pertinent to urban teachers, such as the implementation of culturally responsive classroom practices, the use of learning modalities to reach struggling readers, and the incorporation of social justice topics into instruction.

In addition to the classroom support of CIs, TFA PDs provide teachers with individualized support and development. In their work with their PD, teachers learn to analyze data to make strategic decisions to improve their classroom practice. During a typical cycle of support and development, a teacher and PD conduct a co-investigation into the teachers' classroom practice. Using student achievement data, targeted classroom observation data, and other artifacts such as lesson and unit plans, the teacher and PD work together to reflect and critically question instructional efficacy, prioritize a gap in student learning, understand how the teacher's actions are contributing to the gap, and determine a plan to close the gap. The entire cycle of support and development is grounded in the Teaching as Leadership framework, which was developed by TFA after two decades of research on what distinguishes the most effective teachers and instructional leaders. The PD then serves as (a) a coach to provide necessary resources and opportunities to improve instruction, and (b) a manager to follow up to ensure the implementation of the identified changes and modifications to classroom practice.

It is important to note that neither the ASU or TFA support and development structures outlined above occur in isolation. Not only are CIs and PDs in close communication, both also aim to build relationships with school leaders (e.g., administrators, school mentors, department chairs, instructional coaches) to situate teachers' development in the context of their school and community. By committing to open communication, CIs and PDs, in conjunction with input and feedback from school administrators, streamline professional development and ensure that beginning urban teachers have the knowledge, skills, and mindsets to be successful in their school context. Similar to the vignette about Patrick and his cohort of supporters, the ASU and TFA partnership for urban teacher preparation centers around a high level of communication and collaboration situated in the context of the school community.

The collaboration between CIs and PDs to support new teachers in the context of their urban classrooms is the core of the ASU and TFA partnership that aims for effective preparation for the students of the metropolitan Phoenix area. The on-site, focused professional development allows new teachers to have individualized access to experts in their grade and content area to be able to improve practice to better reach the needs of students. Further, the data collected from both CIs and PDs during classroom visits inform the coursework taught in the InMAC program. The next three sections describe the two-year program of study, which is embedded

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in the teachers' daily practice in the urban classroom. First, the initial coursework is designed to meet the immediate needs of first-year teachers based on data collectively compiled by TFA and ASU classroom visits from years past. Second, the sequence of coursework throughout the two years uses a hybrid format to use teachers' classroom practice as course time to form and apply their knowledge. Third, the program ends with a culminating cycle of action research projects where teachers use innovative technology and learning communities to solve challenges in their urban classrooms.

Initial Coursework:

Meeting the Immediate Needs of First-Year Urban Teachers

“What if the principal asks me to write an IEP?” “What if that teacher around the corner asks me a legal question?” “What if the kids figure out I really don’t have a plan to deal with a serious outburst?” “What if my lesson plan doesn’t work?” All of these questions circled around in Jeannette’s head. Jeannette, a middle-school special education teacher in West Phoenix, learned how to balance her sense of urgency with a realization of what was in her locus of control as a result of her participation in the First Year Teacher and TFA Round Zero courses. By working closely with both her ASU CI and TFA PD, and being transparent about her struggles and sources of anxiety, Jeannette learned how to prioritize her time and energy to focus on improving her practice while not becoming overwhelmed. She learned to look for accessible mentors in her school and how to develop modifications that work for her school. Now, instead of waking up worrying about the “what ifs,” she is waking up thinking of exciting ways to engage her teenage students in innovative activities such as tutoring kindergarten students.

The initial coursework for TFA teachers, entitled First Year Teacher (facilitated by CIs) and TFA Orientation: Round Zero (facilitated by PDs), were designed specifically to meet the immediate needs of new teachers in urban schools. A collaboration of TFA and ASU, the premise of these courses is built on the idea that there are many concepts and legal issues that an inservice teacher must know immediately but is lacking the background to understand on a deep level. The courses utilized the experiences of CIs and PDs to create course content that would help urban teachers immediately. The course content was designed to build on the TFA Summer Institute—the five-week training first-year teachers receive prior to entering the classroom. Special care was given not to duplicate information the teachers already knew, but to add to that bed of knowledge and respect the teachers as new practicing professionals. The initial coursework focused on: (a) goal setting and long-term planning, (b) modifications for diverse learners, (c) effective and appropriate classroom management, and (d) legal expectations and ramifications.

First, the coursework supported teachers to set ambitious academic goals for their students and design long-term plans to achieve those intentions. Teachers develop a vision for the school year by drafting a big goal, identifying assessment resources, and drafting their long-term plan for classroom instruction. This understanding provided the context for teachers to draft their first instructional unit plan as the first purposeful step toward the end goal. Teachers created their first unit goal, assessment, plan, and tracking system so that they had solid plans in place for their first weeks of school. Teachers were also supported in returning to, reflecting upon, and revising the big goal and long-term plan to ensure its efficacy with students.

Second, based on the experiences of the CIs and PDs from prior years, the instructors were aware that the teachers in the Phoenix area would experience some degree of language difference when interacting with their students. The instructors responded with teaching the teachers how to implement elements of differentiated learning styles. Specifically, all teachers were asked to develop a lesson that demonstrated kinesthetic learning to engage urban students in the academic material. Teachers of non-native speakers or children who were still learning literacy skills also created posters with pictures of behavioral expectations.

Third, a major concern for many urban teachers is the need to create behavior management plans that keep the consequences and locus of control in their own classroom. To address this need, classroom management plans were developed by the teachers with an eye for in-room consequences and rules that were easy to enforce but furthered the classroom mission. PDs and CIs modeled the expectations of implementing daily procedures that would further learning, engagement, and pro-social behaviors in the teachers' classrooms.

Finally, many teachers were unaware of their legal obligations to their students. Being a state-mandated reporter of neglect and abuse was definitely not on the forefront of the average first-year inservice teacher. However, through the Child Protective Services (CPS) presentation given by a county CPS representative, the students learned what questions to ask and how to report suspected abuse. In addition, teachers learned to whom they could discuss student educational records, and the importance of maintaining student confidentiality when discussing school in public settings.

Grounded in the context of their urban school, the aim of the courses was to meet the immediate needs of new teachers by providing them with the pertinent knowledge, skills, and mindsets to effectively teach in the urban classroom. By embedding these courses in the ASU program of study, there created a greater alignment between the work of the teacher, PD, and CI, as everyone had a clear picture of the knowledge teachers have upon entering the classroom and where and how they intended to lead their students throughout the school year. Subsequent courses in the InMAC program built upon the foundational knowledge provided in these two initial courses.

Applied Coursework:

Teaching and Learning in the Urban Classroom

Maggie is a first-grade teacher in an urban K-3 elementary school with a large culturally and linguistically diverse population. In her first semester of teaching, Maggie struggled to meet the diverse needs of her students while also implementing the scripted literacy curriculum adopted by her district. In her second semester of teaching, Maggie's university program included integrated coursework on teaching literacy and ELLs. The course content focused on assessment and instruction to meet the individualized needs of students. To ground the course content in the urban classroom, each teacher conducted a case study with a student who struggled to make significant academic gains. Each week, teachers collected qualitative data from the student, analyzed the data in learning communities, and used the findings and course content to design individualized literacy lessons to implement in the classroom. In her second semester of teaching, Maggie successfully supported all students to read and write on grade level. Now in her second year of teaching, Maggie inquires into the diverse and unique needs of each student in her classroom and uses her rich arsenal of meaningful assessment and instruction to foster the academic achievement of all students.

Like Maggie, TFA teachers are in an interesting professional position in that they are learning to teach when already in the classroom. For teacher education programs, this provides a unique opportunity to use teachers' daily classroom practice as a locale to apply knowledge learned in university coursework. Distinct from traditional preservice preparation programs where knowledge is applied years later upon securing a teaching position, inservice teacher education programs allow teachers to immediately apply the knowledge from coursework in the classroom. By purposefully designing and planning university courses, teacher educators can inherently ground teacher preparation in urban classroom practice.

When our partnership began in 2007, we developed a course schedule to accommodate the schedules of inservice, first-year teachers. To allow teachers to complete their Master's degree and certification within the two years, we designed the InMAC program of study around a hybrid course model, within which half of the course hours were completed in face-to-face class time and half were completed online. The hybrid model allowed teachers to take four 3-credit courses each semester. With half of the course time held outside of formal class hours, teachers attended class at the university one night a week—taking two courses at a time in eight-week quarters.

As our partnership has progressed, we have continuously learned about the needs of our inservice teachers and consequently improved our program to better equip them for success with urban students. We have specifically focused on

improving the hybrid portion of the coursework to make the experiences outside of the university classroom meaningful to classroom practice. Whereas the hybrid model was originally conceptualized as half in-person and half online, instructors perceived half of the course time to be a teacher sitting in front of a computer screen. Nevertheless, the hybrid program format can take advantage of teachers in urban classrooms with countless opportunities to learn and extend learning. Our renewed focus has led clinical instructors to revamp the original online portions of courses to capitalize on the first-hand experiences teachers have every day to apply knowledge from coursework in their practice. Therefore, a portion of the university course hours in the InMAC program are situated directly inside urban classrooms and schools.

As demonstrated in the vignette of Maggie, clinical instructors design coursework that allows inservice teachers to: (a) draw on teaching experiences (e.g., bringing data from students), (b) engage in collaborative dialogue about classroom practice (e.g., professional learning communities to analyze data), (c) make the explicit connection between theory and practice, and (d) apply learning in the classroom. After a sequence of teacher preparation courses that emphasize the application and connection to classroom practice, teachers end their program of study by learning, planning, and implementing action research to solve challenges specific to their urban classrooms.

Action Research:

Teachers Solving Challenges in Urban Classrooms

Dulce, a second-year fourth-grade teacher in South Phoenix, was pleased with the progress she was making with her class. After all, her students knew their basic math algorithms and could “plug and chug” on any simple math equation; however, her students were not demonstrating the reasoning skills she knew they would need in future math coursework. To problem solve this issue, she met within a professional learning community of other second-year teachers. Together, they viewed a video of Dulce working with these students with an eye for problem-solving-and-affirming. Armed with this information, data tracking charts, and research from literature, Dulce developed an action research plan that includes metacognitive math journals—writing to justify the reasoning behind the answers, using manipulatives to experiment with problem solving strategies, and discussing verbally how they arrived at the solutions they did and the reasons behind the steps they used to get to the answers. Dulce believes that this will help her students in their reasoning skills in other areas and is passionate about giving children the platform to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills.

After one year of teaching, many second-year urban teachers return the classroom with a renewed sense of enthusiasm and an increased level confidence

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based on the successes of the first year. As demonstrated by Dulce, the second-year teacher began to focus less on survival and more on how to improve the quality of education of her students. To meet this new focus, we developed two courses that complement one another and address an urban teacher's need to improve the quality and delivery of education—Action Research and Applied Project.

We designed the coursework in Action Research and Applied Projects to be applied coursework—communal, reflective, and applied to fieldwork. Assignments were designed for the teacher to reflect on the unique classroom issues faced daily in the classroom. Teachers used video-taped segments of their own class that demonstrated an area in which the curriculum or strategy was not as effective or yielding the results the students need to demonstrate for long-term success. Teachers share these videos with their professional learning communities (PLCs)—small groups of teachers, mostly with common contents and teaching assignments, who meet outside of class to discuss their action research and other areas in which they can support one another in the field. In these PLCs, the teachers work together with the guidance of a CI to identify the problem and possible solutions. As the teachers collect student achievement data for the co-investigation with their PDs, the teachers also use the action research to inform areas of refinement in their own teaching and areas of concern for content improvement in their students. The videos, the PLCs, and the student data all provide invaluable information for their next steps in the action research cycle.

To keep the students focused on their own unique situations, teachers ground their research and interventions in the schools and communities in which they serve. We know that some of the teachers do become frustrated with the lack of *right or wrong* answers from the CIs and PDs, but we know that teachers need to see the needs of their urban students through the unique lens of that situation. The coaching model of feedback results in sincere action research.

Once teachers develop a plan for action research, they enter into the final phase of their program—the Applied Project. Teachers conduct two or three cycles of applying their action research to make refinements and new discoveries about their own teaching abilities. To recognize teachers as researchers and scholars, teachers write up and present their research with others and are encouraged to both present and publish their action research project for a wider audience. As demonstrated through their innovative, collaborative, and embedded action research projects at the closing stages of their two-year program, teachers demonstrate a more active role in making teaching decisions and improving instruction in the urban school.

Conclusions:

Improving Inservice Urban Teacher Education

We sought with this article to explain how CTEL changed and improved to meet the needs of teachers in urban schools. After the beginning of the CTEL-

TFA partnership in 2007, the InMAC program was formed to prepare alternatively certified, inservice teachers. Unlike the traditional path to certifications that were once the sole focus of the college, the TFA partnership and teachers made CTET a presence in urban schools across the Phoenix metropolitan area. Over the past three years, our program has shifted to embed our preparation and education of teachers in the urban classroom through school-site support and coursework grounded in and applied to classroom practice. Paired with the strength of the partnership with TFA, the flexibility and innovation of CTET has made the InMAC program the model for university-based, inservice teacher education for alternatively certified teachers.

This article provided a reflection on the changes to the InMAC program to become more embedded and grounded in urban teacher practice; however, to truly understand the impact of our partnership in helping prepare and support teachers in urban settings, further data collection is required. Although our programmatic changes have conceptually improved our preparation of urban teachers, CTET and TFA must collect empirical data to ensure teacher learning, student learning, and overall school improvement. First, comprehensive student achievement data would allow a better understand the effectiveness of beginning urban teachers. Next, the evaluations and field notes compiled by both CIs and PDs in the classroom can illustrate teachers' proficiency on the Arizona Professional Teaching Standards and Teaching as Leadership framework throughout their participation in the program. Finally, survey or interview data from urban school principals would determine how school administrators perceive the effectiveness of our program in preparing teachers to be successful in their schools.

The modifications and implementations of the four facets of the InMAC program described in this article are only the beginning of the changes to better prepare and educate urban teachers. Although we pride our program and partnership, we recognize the next steps that need to occur to strengthen the preparation of urban inservice teachers. Outside of the four facets described above, we aim our sights in incorporating more research-based practices for urban teacher preparation, including the infusing of topics such as culturally and linguistically diverse students and social justice into all coursework. As we continuously embed our practices in the changing realities of urban classrooms, reflect and improve upon the support and preparation given to teachers, and review and apply the latest educational research, the InMAC program and CTET-TFA partnership will continue to change to meet the needs of urban teachers.

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