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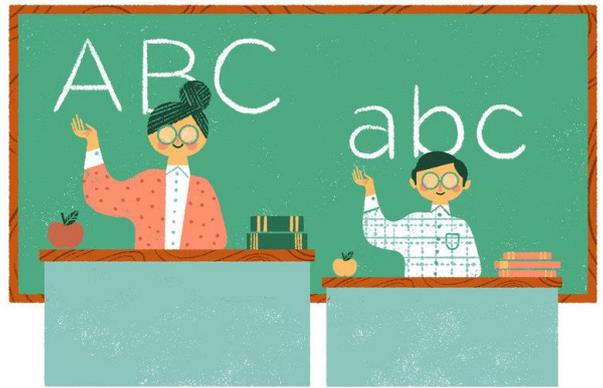
The Opinion Pages | OP-ED CONTRIBUTORS

Train Teachers Like Doctors

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AMERICA is facing a wave of teacher shortages that threatens our ability to deliver on the promise of quality education. Baby boomer retirements and high rates of teacher turnover, coupled with steep drops in enrollment in teacher-preparation programs, have contributed to this growing crisis. Some states, like California, now have shortages in nearly every subject area, affecting students across the state.



State legislatures and school districts have responded with shortsighted policies that lower the bar for new teachers, making it easier to enter the profession, which has paved the way for more people with little or no training to become teachers. As has been the case for decades, these policies will hit children in poverty hardest because they are disproportionately assigned teachers with the weakest preparation.

While a number of these teachers will find their way and go on to transform the lives of the children they teach, we know that teachers with little preparation have the hardest time helping students learn. They also leave the profession faster, which creates a revolving door in precisely the schools that need stability. We subsidize these systemic failures with public dollars, spending \$2.2 billion annually to replace teachers who leave their jobs.

Higher expectations and standards have made teaching more demanding than ever. Just as we recognize that aspiring doctors need training before they can diagnose and prescribe, we must acknowledge that teaching candidates require an upfront investment. Aspiring teachers need well-designed and well-supported preparation.

Yearlong co-teaching residencies, where candidates work alongside an accomplished teacher while studying child development and teaching methods, offer a promising path. Contrary to fast-track certification programs or traditional student-teaching, which is often a brief experience with limited opportunities to practice, strong residencies pay aspiring teachers as assistant teachers so they become fully integrated into their schools.

Teaching residents participate in the full range of teaching responsibilities and develop deep relationships with students and colleagues. The model also draws on the talent of good practicing teachers who, along with teacher-training faculty, focus on the individual needs of each aspiring teacher, coach them intensively in the areas where they need to grow and help them to integrate theory and practice in the classroom.

Unlike other new teachers, residency graduates overwhelmingly stay in the profession. Upward of 90 percent — including graduates from large programs like Arizona State University in Tempe — remain in the profession after their early years, while nearly half of

other new teachers leave. This means that even if residency-trained teachers merely performed as well as their counterparts, the reduced turnover would save millions.

But in fact, residency graduates are likely to improve student achievement. Though evidence is limited, rigorous evaluations of smaller programs, like the New Visions partnership with Hunter College in New York City, show that residency graduates are more successful promoting student learning compared with other new teachers.

While top-tier independent schools, some of the most celebrated [charter school](#) networks like Aspire and a handful of innovative school districts like Boston and Washington, D.C., have established teacher-residency programs, these are the exceptions. In most public schools, residency programs are not an option because we have not dedicated the necessary financial resources.

Public funding in other countries — including Germany, Finland, Japan and Singapore — ensures that their teachers get such training. In the United States, though, only a few lucky candidates find programs with philanthropic or grant subsidies that offer a stipend so that they can afford to live while learning their craft. These financial supports allow them to focus fully on developing the skills they need to become successful teachers.

Our nation has faced — and solved — a similar problem before. In medicine, we long ago recognized that significant study and practice under the guidance of a skilled practitioner are necessary to ensure that doctors are qualified to serve the public. After World War II, we increasingly invested public money in a range of efforts to strengthen doctors' preparation, including stipends for training. We now spend \$11.5 billion a year on medical education, roughly \$500,000 for every new doctor. For a fraction of that cost we can build a strong system of teacher preparation — good residency programs cost about \$65,000 per candidate, including tuition and stipends, according to our calculations.

Much of the money could come from reallocating current resources. States and school districts need to do the tough, detailed work to redirect and focus funds that are not being used well. For example, nationally we spend 7 percent of our instructional budget on substitute teachers, 12 percent on teaching assistants and between \$6,000 and \$18,000 annually per teacher on professional development that many teachers describe as ineffective. Redirecting a portion of these budgets could help us transform teacher preparation.

Minimal training for teachers is simply not good enough. [Legislatures and school districts have proven, affordable options at their disposal](#). If we are serious about improving public education, we need to invest in our aspiring teachers and ensure they get sustained practice with real coaching and support. The nation will need more than a million new teachers in the next decade. They will be teaching our future doctors, engineers and pilots — all of whom will have high-quality professional training at the side of experts in their field. Our teachers deserve the same.

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