

**HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT IN TEACH FOR AMERICA-
FLORIDA: CORPS MEMBERS ON THEIR
PREPARATION AND CAREER PLANS**

Tandra Turner
Jaclyn MacFarlane
Colleen McCann
Richard White

June 2015

Submitted by:
Policy Studies Associates, Inc.
1718 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20009

Executive Summary

Teach For America (TFA) recruits and prepares teachers for high-needs Florida communities. The organization has partnered with Miami-Dade County Public Schools since 2003 and with Duval County Public Schools since 2008. The Florida Department of Education has supported the continuation of TFA’s partnerships in Miami-Dade and Duval Counties as well as its expansion into Orange County Public Schools for the 2015-16 school year. It has also supported TFA in commissioning three evaluations of TFA as a developer of human capital for Florida schools.

The study summarized in this report, conducted by Policy Studies Associates (PSA), is one of these three evaluations. This report analyzes (1) the quality and utility of TFA’s training and support for corps members before and during their two-year classroom commitment; and (2) the likelihood that corps members will stay in the classroom or another part of the education field and, specifically, in Florida education. Based on PSA’s systematic collection and analysis of data from current corps members and alumni in the Duval¹ and Miami-Dade regions, the study has assessed TFA’s activities in training, supporting, and retaining corps members. Primary data sources were an online survey of all first- and second-year corps members in both regions, with a 55 percent response rate; and individual interviews or focus groups with a total of 39 corps members, 28 recent alumni, and 8 TFA regional staff members.

Key findings are as follows:

- Corps members generally reported positive views of TFA’s pre-service Summer Institute and, particularly, of the opportunities to teach and to have their teaching observed during Institute. Almost three-fourths (73 percent) of corps members responding to the survey reported that being observed and provided with feedback had been “effective” or “very effective.” In focus groups, however, several commented that they wished that Institute had provided even more “nuts and bolts” information about the practicalities of teaching.
- Looking back at their own level of preparedness for teaching after pre-service training, corps members recognized that they had more to learn, and their self-reports were more critical than the reports of their principals. Corps members’ self-reports averaged closer to “somewhat prepared” than “well prepared” across 15 aspects of teaching (mean response of 2.35, standard deviation of 0.56, on a four-point scale where 1=not at all prepared, 2=somewhat prepared, 3=well prepared, 4=very well prepared). In an independent survey conducted for TFA by RAND, however, most responding principals in Duval and Miami-Dade counties rated corps members as equally or more proficient compared to other novice teachers in each area of teaching included in that survey.

¹ TFA’s name for the Duval region is Jacksonville.

- TFA provided school-year training and ongoing support that most recipients rated as effective or very effective. Almost three-quarters of responding corps members reported receiving training or support in using data to inform instruction (74 percent) and in implementing effective academic instruction (73 percent). Corps members observed in focus groups that they appreciated professional development sessions that allowed them to bond with and learn from other corps members.
- Most corps members reported that they were likely or very likely to teach beyond their two-year TFA commitment (70 percent of respondents). Among those who said they had decided on plans for future employment or graduate studies, those who reported planning to remain in the education sector in some capacity outnumbered others by more than two to one (72 percent vs. 28 percent). Reported plans to stay in the education sector had a statistically significant association with survey responses indicating (1) greater preparedness for teaching at the end of pre-service training and (2) ongoing training and support from TFA in more aspects of teaching.
- More than half of the corps members who said they planned to stay in the education field also said they expected to stay in Florida (55 percent). Three characteristics of corps members had a statistically significant relationship with this reported expectation: having a prior personal connection to Florida; having experience beyond a bachelor's degree; and being placed in a region that they had designated as preferred when applying to TFA. Focus group discussions also brought to light the importance of school environment and peer influences in corps members' decisions to continue to teach in Florida.

Contents

	Page
Executive Summary	i
Research Questions and Methods	1
Preparing Corps Members for Classroom Impact	3
Corps Members' Backgrounds and Reasons for Joining	4
TFA Pre-Service Training.....	4
Corps Members' Self-Reported Preparedness	7
Training and Support While Teaching.....	9
How Training and Support Addressed Corps Members' Needs.....	9
Types and Frequency of Interactions with the TLD Team	15
Regional Approaches to Support	16
Plans for Future and Career	19
Corps Members' Career Plans	21
Influences on Reported Plans to Remain in Florida as an Educator	23
Conclusions.....	25
References.....	26
Corps Member Survey	
Corps Member Interview Guide	
Alumni Interview Guide	

Exhibits

	Page
Exhibit 1: Profile of responding corps members compared with all corps members surveyed....	2
Exhibit 2: Data sources	3
Exhibit 3: Reported effectiveness of elements of Teach For America’s Summer Institute.....	5
Exhibit 4: Corps members’ reports on preparedness to teach.....	8
Exhibit 5: Areas of additional training and support from TFA	10
Exhibit 6: Perceived effectiveness of Teach For America’s ongoing training and support for recipients, among those who received training or support in each area	11
Exhibit 7: Relationship between areas in which corps members reported having felt less prepared at the start of teaching and areas in which TFA provided training/support	12
Exhibit 8: Reported effectiveness of Teach For America resources.....	13
Exhibit 9: Differentiation of Teach For America’s training and support	14
Exhibit 10: Frequency of corps member interaction with TLD staff.....	15
Exhibit 11: Regional differences in reported frequency of corps member interactions with TLD staff	17
Exhibit 12: Regional Differences in Areas of Additional Training and Support from TFA	18
Exhibit 13: TFA alumni’s reasons for remaining in or returning to a classroom setting	20

For more than a decade, Teach for America (TFA) has recruited and prepared graduates from the nation’s top colleges and universities, and more recently veterans and mid-career professionals, to become teachers in high-needs Florida communities. TFA has partnered with Miami-Dade County Public Schools since 2003 and with Duval County Public Schools since 2008. The Florida Department of Education has supported the continuation of TFA’s partnerships in Miami-Dade and Duval Counties as well as its expansion into Orange County Public Schools for the 2015-16 school year.

The study summarized in this report, conducted by Policy Studies Associates (PSA), is one of three evaluations of TFA as a developer of human capital for Florida schools. TFA commissioned these evaluations with support from the Florida Department of Education. This report assesses TFA’s activities in training, supporting, and retaining corps members. Based on data gathered systematically from current corps members and alumni, it analyzes the quality and utility of TFA’s training and support for corps members before and during their two-year classroom commitment. It also assesses the likelihood that corps members will stay in the classroom or another part of the education field and, specifically, in Florida education. It identifies perceived strengths and weaknesses of TFA’s approaches to human capital development and factors that influence corps members’ decisions to teach beyond their two-year commitment. Two companion studies by other researchers have analyzed corps members’ impact on student achievement in the Miami-Dade and Duval school systems, respectively (Hansen & Backes, 2015; Ready, 2015).

Research Questions and Methods

This study analyzes corps members’ perspectives on their preparation and support and on their future career paths. The following research questions guided the study:

- What are the experiences and perspectives of TFA corps members and alumni who teach or have taught in Florida schools with respect to the preparation, training, and support they received from TFA national and regional staff?
- What factors encourage TFA corps members to continue (or discourage them from continuing) as educators in Florida beyond their two-year commitment to TFA?

The research team collected data through a survey, focus groups, and interviews in winter 2015. The survey, administered online to all first- and second-year corps members in the Duval¹ and Miami-Dade regions, asked corps members about their background, experience with TFA training and support, and career intentions beyond their two-year TFA commitment. A total of 237 corps members responded to the survey, for a 55 percent response rate. The profile of respondents (Exhibit 1) closely reflected the population of TFA’s current roster of corps members provided to researchers in January 2015.

¹ TFA’s name for the Duval region is Jacksonville.

Exhibit 1

Profile of responding corps members compared with all corps members surveyed

	Percent of responding corps members (N=237)	Percent of all corps members surveyed (N=431)
By region		
Duval	42%	39%
Miami-Dade	58	61
By cohort		
First-year corps members	50	50
Second-year corps members	50	50
By grade level taught		
Elementary school	23	24
Middle school	29	26
High school	43	44
K-8 Schools	6	6

Exhibit reads: Forty-two percent of responding corps members were in the Duval region and 58 percent were in the Miami-Dade region. Thirty-nine percent of all corps members surveyed were in the Duval region and 61 percent were in the Miami-Dade region.

Note: The corps members surveyed were those listed on the roster of all Florida corps members as of January 2015, which TFA provided.

Individual interviews and focus groups were also conducted with a total of 39 current corps members, 28 recent alumni (including both those continuing teaching and those pursuing other careers), and 8 TFA regional staff members. Corps members and alumni were identified and recruited with help from TFA regional staff. Interviews with corps members spoke to experiences with TFA preparation, support, and teaching in Florida; interviews with alumni also explored the decision-making process about a career path beyond the two-year commitment. Interviews with TFA regional staff helped to clarify the strategies used in each region to prepare corps members for teaching, to support them, and to promote retention.

This report also incorporates analyses of selected regional responses from TFA's 2014-15 internal surveys of corps members and alumni. The surveys, administered yearly, are used for program improvement and include questions about overall satisfaction, usefulness of TFA resources, and retention factors. In addition, the report includes selected responses from TFA's 2014-15 National Principal Survey, administered by RAND. Exhibit 2 presents the complete list of data sources for this study.

Exhibit 2 Data sources

Data source	Description
Corps member survey	Administered by PSA to all known current corps members teaching in the Duval and Miami-Dade regions.
Corps member interviews	Conducted by PSA with current first- and second-year corps members teaching in the Duval and Miami-Dade regions.
Alumni interviews	Conducted by PSA with recent TFA alumni who taught as corps member in Florida and currently live in the state.
Regional staff interviews	Conducted by PSA with TFA staff working in Florida.
2014-15 National Principal Survey	Administered nationally by RAND to all principals of schools employing TFA corps members. TFA provided the survey responses from responding principals in Duval and Miami-Dade regions.
2014-15 TFA mid-year corps member survey	Administered nationally by TFA to all corps members. TFA provided the survey responses from responding corps members currently teaching in Florida.
2014-15 TFA alumni survey	Administered nationally by TFA to all alumni. TFA provided the survey responses from responding alumni who taught as corps members in Florida.

Preparing Corps Members for Classroom Impact

Impact studies suggest that TFA corps members have had positive effects on student gains in achievement in Florida as well as in other regions. Two impact evaluations, conducted for TFA at the same time as this study, suggest that TFA corps members teaching in Florida schools have a positive impact on student achievement. Estimating the impact of Miami-Dade corps members on student achievement compared to that of other teachers in the same schools, Hansen and Backes (2015) found positive effects on standardized test scores of having a TFA corps member as a teacher. The effects were largest in mathematics at the elementary level and in reading at the secondary level. An analysis of student test scores in Duval found that students taught by TFA corps members had larger gains in mathematics than students with non-TFA teachers, although no difference in performance was found in literacy (Ready, 2015).

The findings of these studies are similar to comparative statewide analyses of the impact of TFA corps members compared with graduates of other educator preparation programs: in Louisiana, North Carolina, and Tennessee, the students of TFA corps members have shown larger gains than students taught by teachers from other preparation programs (Noell & Gansle, 2009; Patterson & Bastian, 2014; Henry et al., 2014; Tennessee Higher Education Commission and the State Board of Education, 2014). There is a growing body of evidence that teachers who come from the TFA ranks (both corps members and alumni) have a marked impact in

mathematics, compared with other teachers (Clark et al., 2013; Glazerman, Mayer, & Decker, 2006; Boyd et al., 2012; Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004; Hansen, Backes, Brady, & Zu, 2014). However, research findings are mixed regarding corps members' impact on students' literacy achievement (Henry et al., 2010; Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2008; Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Heilig, 2005).

According to responses from the TFA's National Principal Survey, principals in Duval and Miami-Dade reported that TFA corps members had a positive impact on student learning during the 2014-15 school year. Eighty-one percent agreed that corps members made a positive difference on academic achievement. Additionally, 56 percent of principals also described corps members as very good or excellent in having an impact on student performance.

The capacity that new TFA corps members bring to their classrooms reflects TFA's recruitment and selection practices and the pre-service preparation that it provides. In this study, to assess these parts of the TFA approach to human capital, the evaluation team gathered data on the backgrounds and motivations that corps members brought to their work in Florida, their perceptions of the effectiveness of specific pre-service experiences, and the extent to which they reported feeling prepared to begin to carry out teaching tasks.

Corps Members' Backgrounds and Reasons for Joining

TFA attracts recent college graduates and mid-career professionals who connect with their mission of working in underserved communities as educators. Almost two-thirds of survey respondents (65 percent) reported that they were recent college graduates, while the remaining 35 percent had been working, completing a graduate degree, or serving in the military before joining TFA. Prior connections to Florida were reported by 39 percent, with 27 percent saying they had been raised in the state. The reasons that respondents cited for joining TFA reflect the mix of idealism and career interest in teaching that TFA seeks in its recruits. Having an impact on an underserved community was the primary reason for joining TFA reported by 43 percent of survey respondents, and 14 percent reported that they wanted a job where they could work to end educational inequity as their primary reason. Another 30 percent said their primary reason was an interest in teaching as a potential career.

TFA Pre-Service Training

Once corps members are selected and assigned to a region, their preparation for teaching includes TFA's five-week Summer Institute. Every year, Institutes across the country gather regional clusters of newly selected corps members to jump-start their TFA experience. Duval's 2014 first-year cohort traveled to Philadelphia for Institute, while Miami-Dade's 2014 first-year cohort traveled to Chicago. During Institute, corps members participated in professional development sessions and conversations on topics such as curriculum and lesson planning, classroom management, and culture and diversity. They also applied the tools and frameworks learned during their training by teaching summer school in the school district hosting their Institute, and they received observation and feedback on their teaching. Additional Institute

components included corps member advisors (CMAs), who served as a primary point of contact, and small-group reflection and planning.

Almost all components of Institute were rated as effective or very effective as preparation for teaching by at least half of the corps members who responded to the survey (Exhibit 3). Teaching and receiving observational feedback on their teaching were the components that the largest proportion of respondents rated highly: 67 percent reported that the opportunities to teach were effective or very effective; 73 percent reported that observation and feedback were effective or very effective. More than half rated each type of curriculum session and the lesson planning clinics as effective or very effective. Just under half (43 percent) gave similarly high effectiveness ratings to the use of the Teaching as Leadership framework and rubric.²

Exhibit 3
Reported effectiveness of elements of Teach For America’s Summer Institute

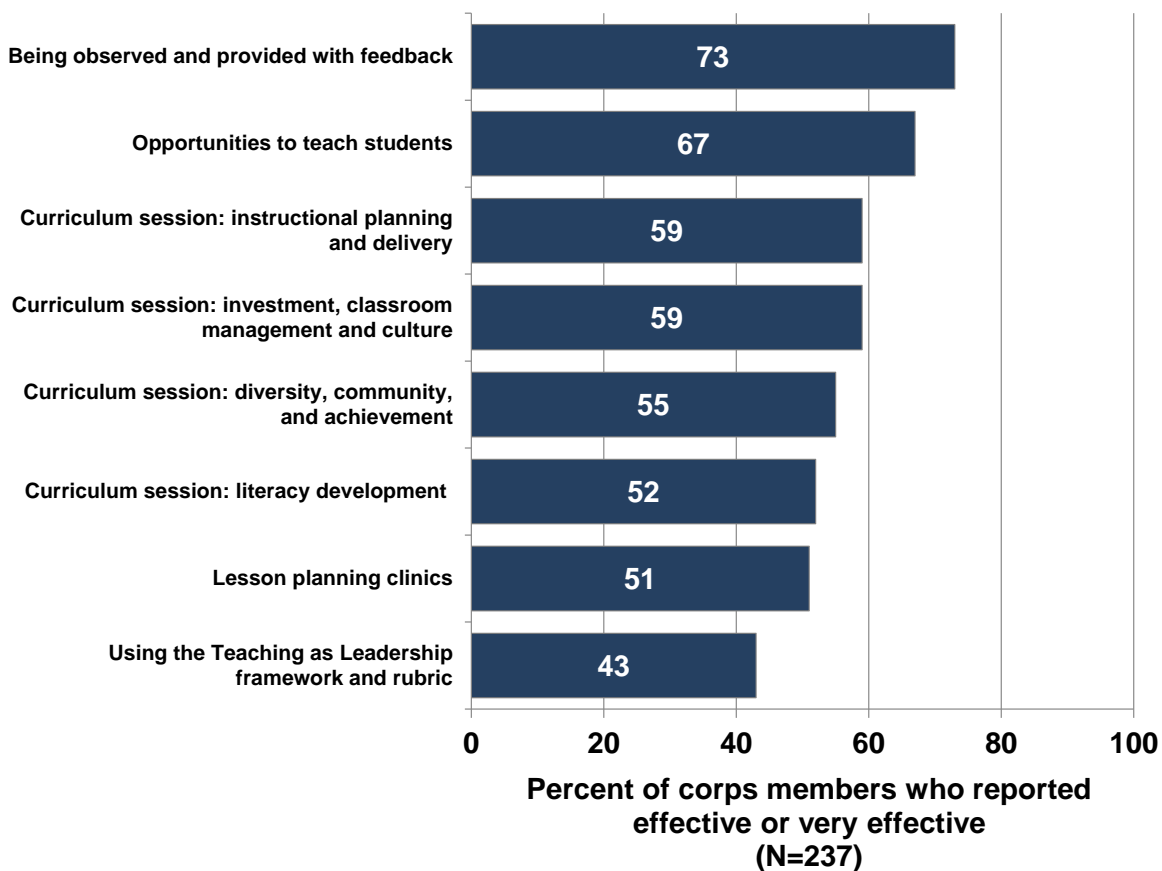


Exhibit reads: Seventy-three percent of responding corps members reported that being observed and provided with feedback at Summer Institute was effective or very effective in preparing them to teach.

² TFA published *Teaching as Leadership* and developed an accompanying website based on six principles it believes can transform novice teachers into highly effective leaders who increase student achievement (<http://www.teachingasleadership.org/>).

Focus group participants generally reported that Institute was effective in instilling mindsets and basic elements of pedagogy in a short amount of time. An alumna shared this view about Institute in general:

In terms of preparation, I feel like what Teach For America promises they'll do is they will give you the preparation you need to go into a classroom. They're not going to hold your hand the whole way, but they will prepare you, and I feel like that's exactly what I got.

Other focus group participants mentioned particular elements of Institute that were effective. One second-year corps member, for example, commented that the lesson planning clinics were useful “in the long run as far as how to look and break down certain standards, and actually know what you had to teach...what you're supposed to do and how you're supposed to teach it, and what's expected of you as a teacher.”

Focus group participants spoke of a need to move from discussions of theory to practice during Institute. Many said they would have liked more concrete examples of teaching practices, such as instructional strategies and how to put policies and procedures for the classroom into place. A second-year corps member shared that the training she received focused on vision and goal setting and the ideal image of classroom, but it did not equip her with the “nuts and bolts” of how to create that ideal classroom. Another second-year corps member commented:

I think I was expecting more explicit instruction on how to lead a classroom and help planning for things like policies/procedures for running class effectively and efficiently. There are some things I never thought of until I encountered them in school, like how will I accept homework, what's my procedure for students coming into class late, what's my procedure for passing back work, etc. These are things that I wish I had time to consider prior to going into class, as I admit that organization is an area I am still working on to this day.

Individual TFA regions also offered pre-service experiences in the summer. Supplemental questions added to the survey at the request of TFA in Miami-Dade asked corps members in that region to rate the other pre-service training opportunities in which they participated, including Regional Induction prior to Institute and Regional Orientation after Institute. These events were designed to allow corps members to meet the regional TFA staff and their fellow corps members and to become familiar with their school placement. Forty-five percent of responding corps members in Miami-Dade rated their Regional Induction as effective or very effective, and 32 percent rated their Regional Orientation as effective or very effective. A significantly greater percentage of first-year corps members (43 percent) rated their Regional Orientation as effective or very effective compared to second-year corps members (25 percent), suggesting that this component of Miami-Dade pre-service training improved in effectiveness in 2014.

Corps members in Duval County also participated in a Regional Induction prior to attending Institute, and they discussed in interviews the importance of Regional Induction in helping them to bond as a cohort. Said one first-year corps member from Duval County, “Induction was very vital because it built those relationships and that support team that we really needed before we moved to Philly for the summer.... It prepared us to build a support system

within ourselves.” The importance and influence of this bond among corps members emerged as a recurring theme throughout the study.

Corps Members’ Self-Reported Preparedness

Beginning teachers from a range of preparation pathways often find it difficult to make the transition from student to teacher, and they often feel that classroom instruction and a controlled teaching environment have limitations as preparation for teaching (Melnick & Meister, 2008). Thus it is not surprising that retrospective self-reports from this study’s survey respondents showed reservations about their preparation to carry out specific responsibilities as a teacher after Institute and other pre-service training.

The survey responses of TFA corps members, looking back to report on their preparedness at the time they had completed Summer Institute and other pre-service training, identified several areas of self-reported weakness, particularly in classroom instruction and management (Exhibit 4). Only in relationship development—both with students and with colleagues—did the majority of respondents say they had felt well prepared or very well prepared. Fewer than half of corps members reported that they were well prepared or very well prepared in aspects of teaching related to academic instruction and classroom management, and only one in five (19 percent) reported feeling well prepared or very well prepared to differentiate instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of students. Of the 15 aspects of teaching listed in the corps member survey, there were 13 for which more than 50 percent of respondents reported that they had felt “somewhat” or “not at all” prepared after completing Institute and other pre-service training.

Across all 15 aspects of teaching included in the survey, the average level of preparedness reported by responding corps members was 2.35 (SD=.56) on a scale of 1=not at all prepared to 4=very well prepared).³ This corresponds to a response of being “somewhat” prepared to carry out all aspects of teaching.

The comments of focus group participants help account for these self-reports and also suggest a way of bolstering corps’ members sense of preparedness. While most agreed that Institute equipped them with a basic understanding of teaching, many still said they felt that it did not prepare them to execute the strategies they learned once they were left alone in the classroom. They pointed to the value of an Institute teaching experience that was a good match for the context in which they would be teaching. Focus group participants whose Institute teaching experience was similar to their school-year assignment with respect to subject, grade level, or classroom structure said that they felt prepared for their job, while those who taught a different subject or grade level or had a co-teacher during Institute said that the contrasting experience presented a challenge in making the transition to teaching. For example, one corps member who taught a smaller class during Institute than in her placement position reflected:

³ The average of the responses to the survey questions about how well prepared corps members felt after pre-service training is used later in this study as a preparedness index.

Exhibit 4
Corps members' reports on preparedness to teach

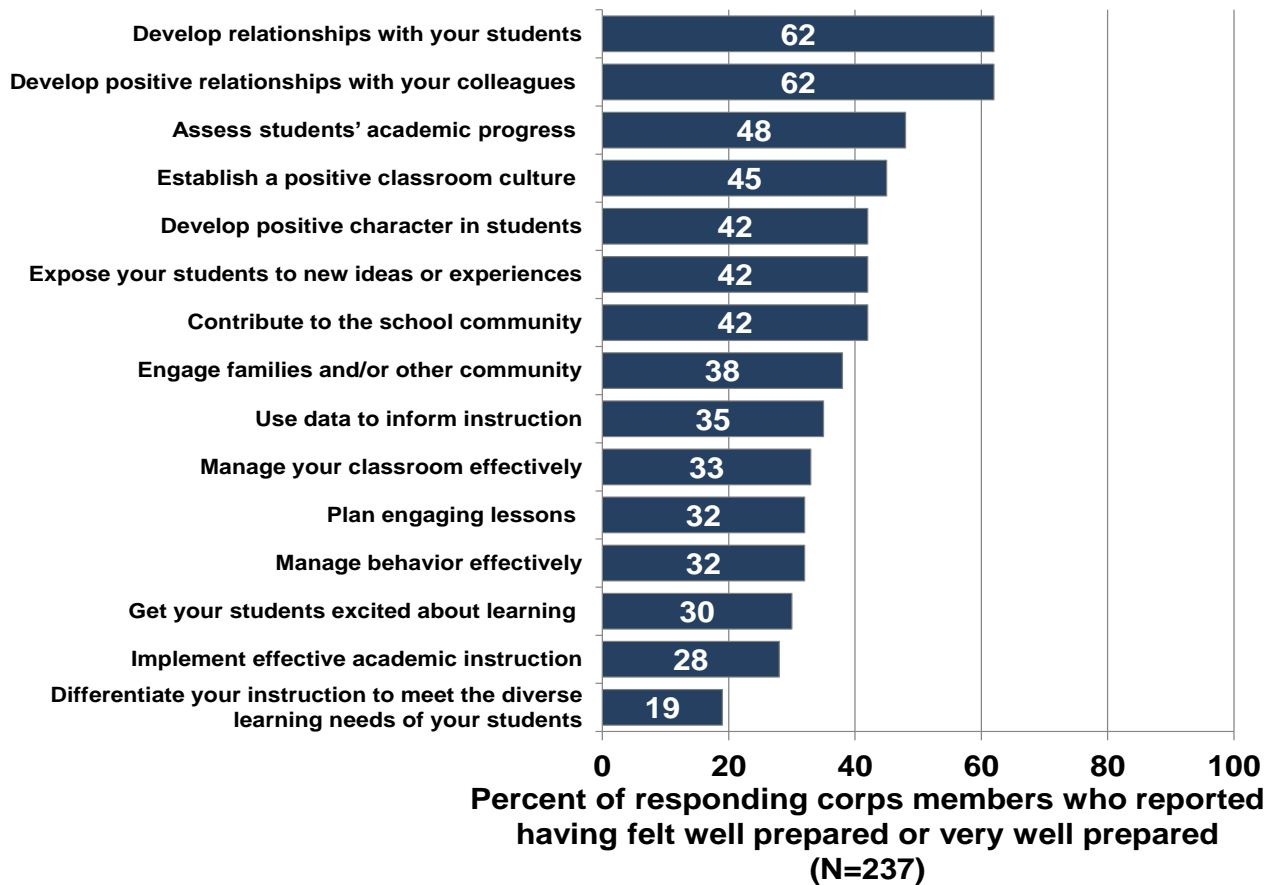


Exhibit reads: Sixty-two percent of responding corps members in both regions reported that after pre-service training they had felt well prepared or very well prepared to develop positive relationships with their students.

When I came into my fifth-grade classroom when the school year started, I didn't have eight or nine students. I had 26, we were overloaded, and so managing eight or nine students, who had already had a veteran teacher teach them rituals and routines, was nothing compared to coming in Day 1, having to teach your own rituals, your routines, manage the paperwork and all the administrative aspects behind teaching.

Although half or more of responding corps members reported that they had felt less than well prepared in most aspects of teaching when they started in the classroom, the reports of principals in the region suggest a different judgment—that corps members' skills have been at least as strong as those of other teachers in their first two years. This finding, drawn from the responses of Duval and Miami-Dade principals on the TFA-supported National Principal Survey, holds true even in the area of classroom management, where principals' comparative ratings of corps members were lowest: in that area only 16 percent of responding principals said corps members were less proficient than their other novice teachers, while 84 percent said they were as proficient or more so. With respect to impact on student performance, 94 percent of the principals reported that TFA members were at least equivalent in proficiency to other novice teachers, and 59 percent rated them more proficient.

Training and Support While Teaching

TFA aims to ease corps members' transition into the classroom and help them to continue to grow as teachers through the supports it provides during the two-year commitment. This ongoing support is a key feature of TFA's approach to human capital development. This study gathered data on corps members' experiences with support and their perceptions of its effectiveness.

The majority of ongoing TFA training and support comes from regional staff using a Teacher Leadership Development (TLD) model. A Manager of Teacher Leadership Development (MTLD) oversees a group of 15 to 35 corps members. During the school year, MTLTs visit corps members at their school and conduct classroom observations and debrief sessions, help corps members to problem-solve, and direct corps members to other resources as needed. The extent of corps members' interaction with their MTLT varies, and is typically based on MTLTs' individual approaches to providing support to their assigned corps members as well as on the individual needs of corps members. In addition to the direct support, each region's TLD team facilitates mandatory professional development sessions, encourages corps members to engage in community service, and hosts happy hours and other social events.

How Training and Support Addressed Corps Members' Needs

Because time and resources are not infinite, TFA must make choices about the aspects of teaching in which it will focus its support to corps members. More corps members reported having received support in some areas, such as data use, than in other areas, such as contributing to the school community (Exhibit 5). Planning and delivering instruction and managing the classroom were areas in which more than half of corps members reported training and support. On the other hand, engagement with other adults in the community or school were areas in which fewer than one-quarter reported training and support.

Exhibit 5
Areas of additional training and support from TFA

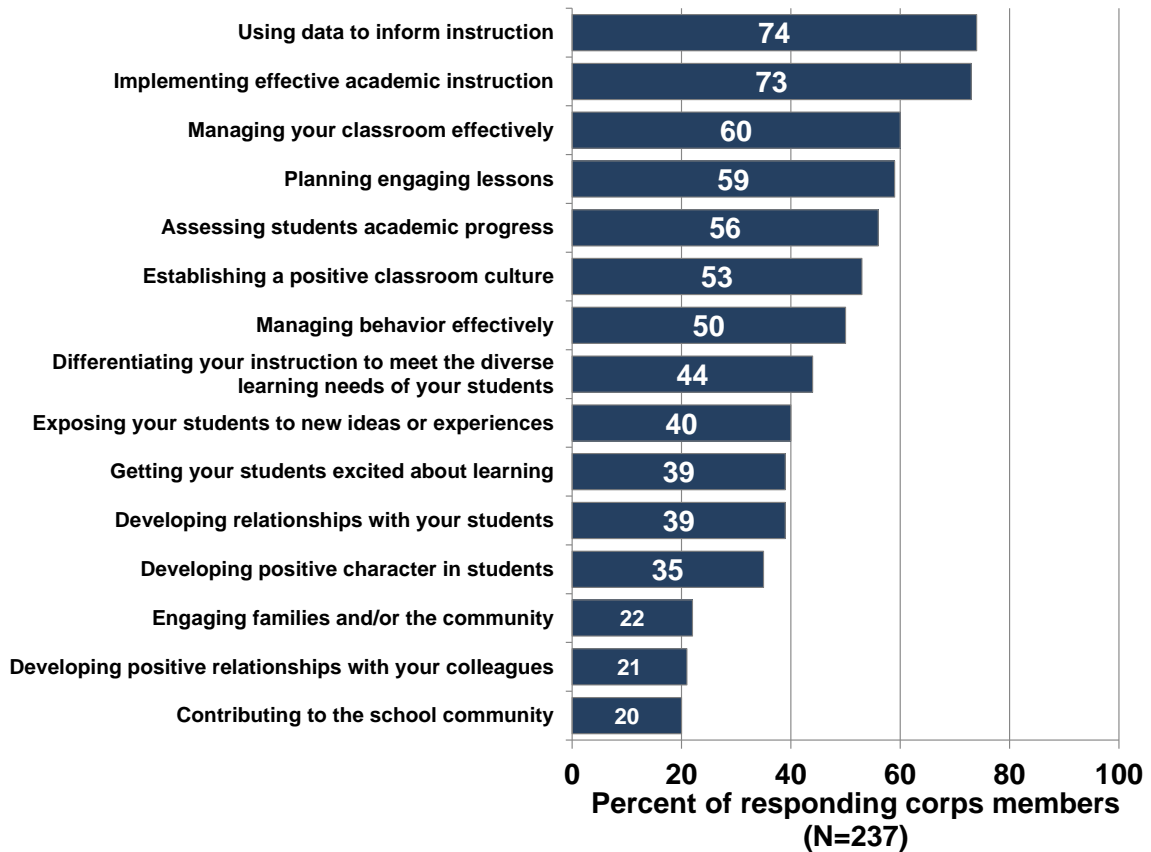


Exhibit reads: Seventy-four percent of responding corps members in both regions reported that they received additional training and support from TFA during their time in the classroom on using data to inform instruction.

Most survey respondents indicated that the training or support in which they had participated was effective or very effective with respect to almost every specific aspect of teaching addressed (Exhibit 6). The ratings varied by area. Three-quarters of the corps members who had received training or support in building relationships rated it effective or very effective. At the low end, just under half of respondents gave a rating of effective or very effective to their training on differentiating instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of students (49 percent) or getting students excited about learning (48 percent).

Across the different aspects of teaching, TFA training and support varied in the combination of reach and perceived effectiveness according to participants' reports. Looking at the percentage of responding corps members who said both that TFA had given them training or support in a particular area *and* that it had been effective or very effective, training and support appears to have excelled in the area of academic instruction informed by data. TFA was said to have provided the highest proportion of corps members with effective training or support with respect to using data to inform instruction: 45 percent of all respondents reported receiving such support and also rated it effective or very effective. A similar proportion, 41 percent, said the same for training or support in implementing effective academic instruction, and 39 percent for assessing student academic progress.

Exhibit 6
Perceived effectiveness of Teach For America’s ongoing training and support for recipients, among those who received training or support in each area

Please rate the effectiveness of the training and/or support you received from TFA:	Percent of corps members receiving training or support who reported it was effective or very effective
a. Developing relationships with your students (N=89)	75%
b. Developing positive relationships with your colleagues (N=48)	75
c. Assessing students’ academic progress (N=131)	70
d. Establishing a positive classroom culture (N=121)	65
e. Using data to inform instruction (N=173)	60
f. Planning engaging lessons (N=139)	59
g. Exposing your students to new ideas or experiences (N=93)	59
h. Implementing effective academic instruction (N=171)	57
i. Developing positive character in students (N=81)	57
j. Managing behavior effectively (N=116)	56
k. Managing your classroom effectively (N=138)	54
l. Engaging families and/or the community (N=51)	51
m. Contributing to the school community (N=46)	50
n. Differentiating your instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of your students (N=100)	49
o. Getting your students excited about learning (N=88)	48

Exhibit reads: Seventy-five percent of responding corps members who received training and support from TFA in developing relationships with students rated the training and support they received from TFA in this area as effective or very effective.

Note: Only corps members who received training and support in each area were asked to rate its effectiveness.

One of the quandaries inherent in the operation of a TFA regional office is the selection of the optimal mix of content to be covered over the course of its training and support offerings. The areas in which TFA provided school-year training and support were a fit with the relative need for each area, as indicated by corps member reports of their initial preparedness. Overall, the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient (rho) was + 0.2, indicating that the relationship was small but

substantive, and was statistically significant ($p < .05$). For example, of the 10 aspects of teaching for which the largest proportion of corps members reported feeling unprepared or only somewhat prepared at the end of pre-service training, seven were among the 10 for which the largest proportions of corps members reported receiving subsequent training and support from TFA (Exhibit 7).

Exhibit 7

Relationship between areas in which corps members reported having felt less prepared at the start of teaching and areas in which TFA provided training/support

Rank 1	Aspects of teaching for which corps members reported having felt less than well prepared	Rank 2	Aspects of teaching for which corps members reported receiving subsequent training and support
1	Differentiating your instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of your students	1	Using data to inform instruction
2	Implementing effective academic instruction	2	Implementing effective academic instruction
3	Getting your students excited about learning	3	Managing your classroom effectively
4 (tie)	Planning engaging lessons	4	Planning engaging lessons
4 (tie)	Managing behavior effectively	5	Assessing students' academic progress
6	Managing your classroom effectively	5	Establishing a positive classroom culture
7	Using data to inform instruction	7	Managing behavior effectively
8	Engaging families and/or the community	8	Differentiating your instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of your students
9 (tie)	Exposing your students to new ideas or experiences	9	Exposing your students to new ideas or experiences
9 (tie)	Developing positive character in students	10 (tie)	Getting your students excited about learning
9 (tie)	Contributing to the school community	10 (tie)	Developing relationships with your students
12	Establishing a positive classroom culture	12	Developing positive character in students
13	Assessing student's academic progress	13	Engaging families and/or the community
14	Developing relationships with your students	14	Developing positive relationships with your colleagues
15	Developing positive relationships with your colleagues	15	Contributing to the school community

Exhibit reads: Among 15 aspects of teaching, “differentiating your instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of your students” was the one for which the largest proportion of responding corps members reported having felt less than “well prepared” after Institute and other pre-service. “Using data to inform instruction” was the aspect of teaching for which the largest proportion reported receiving subsequent training or support from TFA.

Corps members continue to receive support from the national TFA office during the school year through access to TFA resources. Help from people—as opposed to online or other materials—was the type of support most often described as effective or very effective by survey respondents (Exhibit 8). In particular, an overwhelming majority of respondents rated current TFA corps members as effective or very effective (82 percent) in supporting them as a teacher.

The value of connecting with corps members to share, learn, and support one another was a recurring theme in focus groups and is mentioned in other sections of this report. Said one first-year corps member, “There is a sense of a TFA family. That keeps people who are on the edge of saying, ‘No, I can’t do this’ [from leaving]. A lot of people work in the same school together, so your struggles may be the same struggles as somebody else. You can talk about it, and figure out what’s the next move.” Smaller percentages of corps members rated resources such as TeacherPop⁴ and TFANet⁵ as effective or very effective sources of support.

Exhibit 8
Reported effectiveness of Teach For America resources

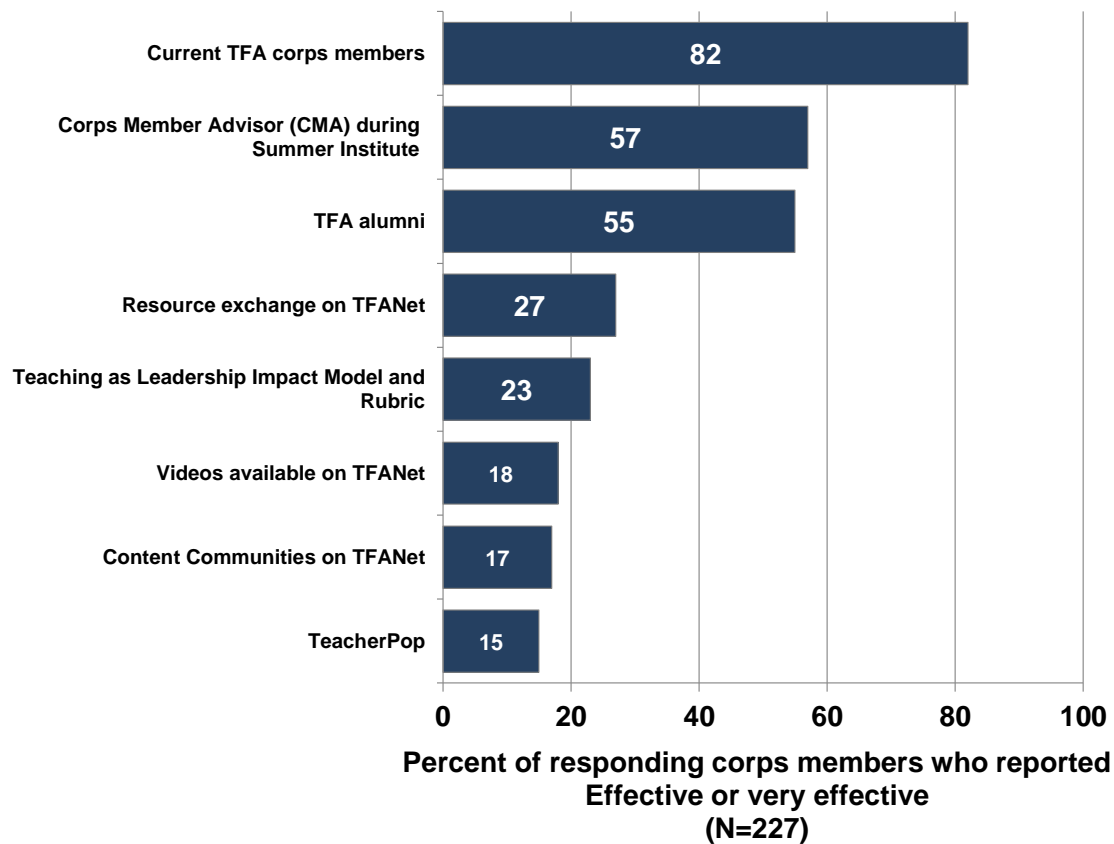


Exhibit reads: Eighty-two percent of responding corps members reported that current corps members were effective or very effective in providing support.

Thinking about the combination of regional and national resources received from TFA, the majority of responding corps members reported that they had received training and support differentiated to their needs. Fifty-nine percent of corps members reported that their training and support were differentiated somewhat or a lot (Exhibit 9).

⁴ TeacherPop is website that provides discussion, tips, and tools for new teachers.

⁵ TFANet is an online community for TFA corps members and alumni that offers classroom and teaching resources, national content communities and collaborations, and video resources and models.

Exhibit 9
Differentiation of Teach For America’s training and support

In general, has the training and/or support you received from TFA (both nationally and regionally) been differentiated for your particular needs as a teacher?	Percent of all corps members (N=227)
a. Yes, a lot	12%
b. Yes, somewhat	47
c. Yes, a little	29
d. No, not at all	13

Exhibit reads: Twelve percent of responding corps members reported that the training and support they received from TFA had been differentiated a lot for their particular needs as a teacher.

With respect to the effectiveness of ongoing training, corps members made the most positive comments in focus groups about training and support that gave them concrete instructional tools for their classroom. Corps members also were very positive about any time allotted during professional development sessions to planning with other corps members from the same content area and/or grade level, saying that this time allowed them to bond and share ideas across schools. They said they were less enthusiastic about corps-wide presentations or lectures because these often were too generic to be useful, or were not applicable to their classroom context.

Focus group participants identified an additional benefit of their training that was not captured in the survey: they commented that the professional development sessions created opportunities to foster a sense of community, keeping them grounded in TFA’s mission and encouraging them to forge ahead when they felt challenged and overwhelmed in the classroom. They said that the professional development sessions provided an opportunity to connect with other corps members experiencing similar challenges, and allowed them to share ideas about how to surmount their obstacles. They also commented that being surrounded by their colleagues reinvigorated them and reminded them of why they became TFA teachers.

Many corps members discussed the difficulties and emotional challenges of moving to a new city and teaching in a high-pressure environment while learning on the job. Corps members talked about relying on other members of their TFA cohort for emotional support, but some expressed a wish for more emotional support and mentoring from the TLD team. A second-year corps member shared, “I think they need to have more of that support for the mental health of corps members. . . .you don’t realize how stressful teaching can be, if you’ve never done it before. Ways to manage the stress of teaching aren’t addressed, and it’s kind of like, ‘Do I reach out, or is it just... What is wrong with me?’”

Types and Frequency of Interactions with the TLD Team

The TLD teams used multiple modes of communication and a variety of arrangements for providing training and support to corps members. Three-quarters of corps members (77 percent) reported having email interaction with TLD staff at least a few times per month, and almost half of all corps members surveyed said the frequency of emails was at least weekly (Exhibit 10). Phone interaction appeared to vary by individual: 36 percent of respondents reported that phone interaction occurred a few times a month or more, while 32 percent reported a couple of times per year or less. For three types of in-person interaction with the TLD team, about a quarter of respondents reported that the frequency was more than monthly; these included one-on-one meetings or coaching sessions, professional development, and MTLT cohort time. The frequency of classroom observations was described as more than monthly by a slightly smaller group, 18 percent of respondents, but most respondents said they had TLD classroom observations least a few times per semester (60 percent), and almost all said the TLD observed them at least once per semester (92 percent).

Exhibit 10
Frequency of corps member interaction with TLD staff

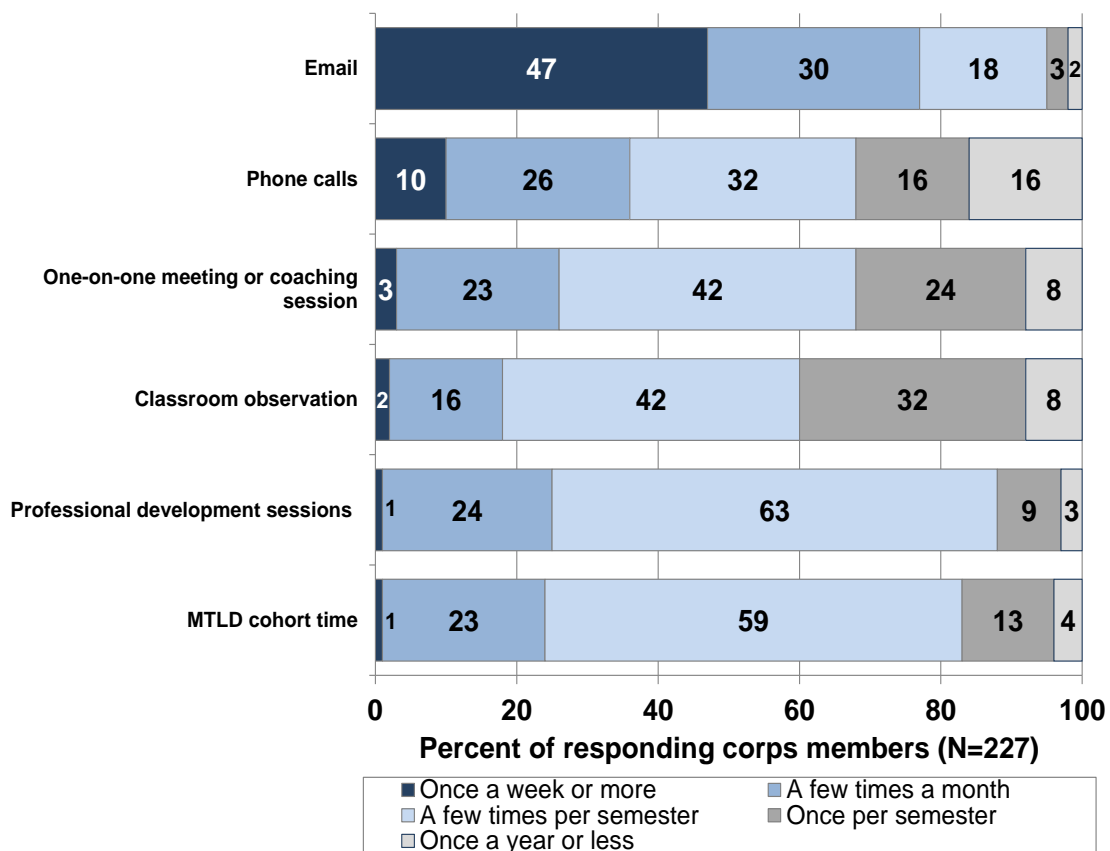


Exhibit reads: Forty-seven percent of responding corps members reported interacting with TLD staff through email once a week or more, 30 percent a few times a month, 18 percent a few times per semester, 3 percent once per semester, and 2 percent once a year or less.

A significantly greater percentage of first-year corps members reported interacting with staff from the TLD team through one-on-one meetings or coaching sessions, classroom observations, and professional development sessions more than monthly, compared to second-year corps members. Both corps members and MTLDs commented in interviews that some MTLDs tier their support to corps members: they interact more with those corps members who they know are struggling. A few focus group participants commented that this approach left them wanting additional support from their MTLD. Said a second-year corps member:

Just like in the classroom, I think our students thrive with more one-on-one attention. I begged to be observed in my first year and was basically told because I was doing fine, I didn't really need it—there were [corps members] that needed attention much more than me. That is a frustrating thing to be told when you are genuinely wanting corrective feedback so you can get better. It was true that I wasn't doing poorly, but it is a frustrating thought to feel like you could be doing even better with a little attention and direction.

Some focus group participants acknowledged that they had not asked MTLDs for additional support because they did not feel comfortable or know how to ask. Reflecting on his memories of being a first-year teacher, an alumnus said:

Just looking back, I can only speak for myself; I really didn't know what I needed, so it was hard to ask. You don't... you're just... it's your first year. You're struggling. You're just trying to grasp anything, like you really don't know what you specifically need, until you've progressed in this career path a bit longer, so you have some experience. Then you can start saying, "This is what I need help in, or this."

Some alumni and corps members, however, said that corps members needed to understand the limits of TFA's capacity and obligation to provide support. An alumnus said:

I think corps members rely too much on Teach For America. I think people really need to learn how to be independent, and be out for themselves. Granted, you know you've got to support TFA, but you can't expect TFA to hold your hand. Some things, you have to take the initiative for yourself and not rely on TFA so much.... People just expect TFA to do everything for them and it's like, "Hold up, that's not their job."

A few mid-career professional corps members cited their experience in other industries where intensive professional development and mentorship are less common. For example, one alumna believed her work and life experiences prepared her for the challenges of teaching. Her philosophy was that you "get out what you put in," and when she coached corps members at Institute she urged them to take initiative to be successful.

Regional Approaches to Support

The structure of the TLD model differed between the Duval and Miami-Dade regions. In Duval, the TLD model was organized largely by geographic regions of the county: Northside schools, Duval Transformation Office (DTO) schools, and Southside schools. A Director of

TLD was assigned to each region and oversaw approximately three MTLs. The MTL to corps member ratio was 1:21. Corps members in Duval participated in monthly content-focused professional development sessions and other monthly sessions that covered topics such as diversity and interpersonal relationships with students. In contrast, Miami-Dade’s TLD model had a lower ratio of MTLs to corps members (1:29) and was primarily organized by academic content taught. Corps members were grouped by subject and grade level, including: all elementary subjects (self-contained); science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and literacy for lower elementary grades; math and literacy for upper elementary grades; and math, science, literacy, and social studies for high school grades. During the school year, Miami-Dade’s TFA staff hosted six content-focused professional development sessions.

The different models and MTL to corps member ratios are likely associated with differences in both the frequency and the focus of support reported by corps members who responded to the survey. Corps members in Duval reported significantly more frequent in-person interactions with TLD staff than corps members in Miami-Dade (Exhibit 11).

Exhibit 11
Regional statistically significant differences in reported frequency of corps member interactions with TLD staff

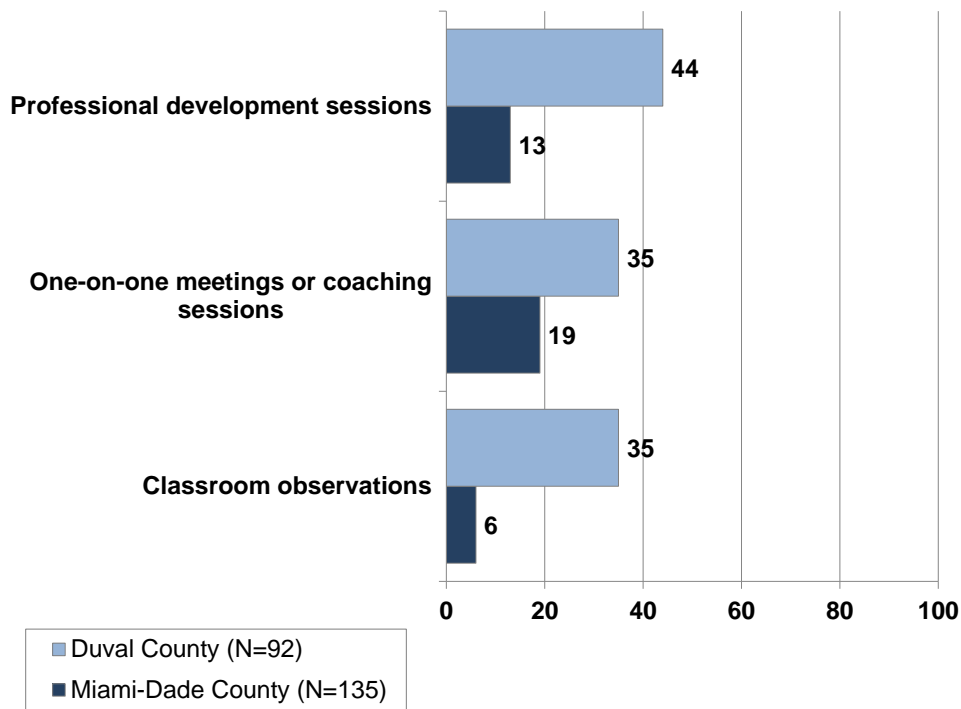


Exhibit reads: Forty-four percent of responding corps members in Duval County and 13 percent of responding corps members in Miami-Dade County reported that they interacted with TLD staff through professional development sessions more than once a month, a statistically significant difference.

Note: Only statistically significant differences are reported in the exhibit.

The regions also differed in the substantive focus of the training and support that the TLD teams provided, according to corps members’ survey responses. A significantly greater percentage

of Miami-Dade corps members than Duval corps members reported that they received training or support in implementing effective academic instruction, planning engaging lessons, assessing students' academic progress, exposing students to new ideas or experiences, and differentiating instruction to meet diverse learning needs (Exhibit 12). Miami-Dade corps members commented in interviews that they had learned content-specific strategies and skills through ongoing professional development sessions and from their MTLT.

This year, I've felt like they have been a lot more targeted to our needs. At least, I know that in science, our PDs have been really helpful in terms of actually useful stuff that I can leave and actually teach the very next day. Or at least use in my teaching the next day. That week I see a change in my results, and I am like, this is working and I'm gaining more confidence in TFA and it's this positive feedback cycle.

In contrast, a significantly greater percentage of Duval corps members reported that they received training and support in managing their classroom effectively and managing behavior effectively.

Exhibit 12
Regional statistically significant differences
in areas of additional training and support from TFA

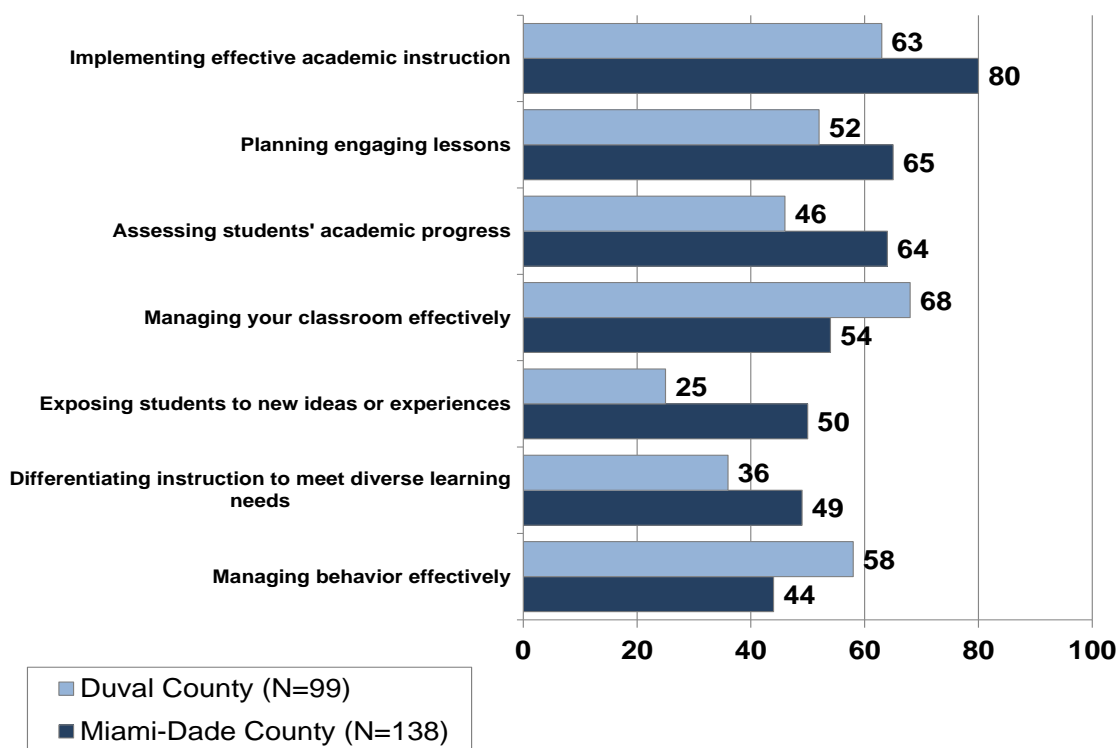


Exhibit reads: Eighty percent of responding corps members in Miami-Dade and 63 percent of corps members in Duval reported that they received additional training and support from TFA during their time in the classroom on implementing effective academic instruction, a statistically significant difference.

Note: Only statistically significant differences are reported in the exhibit.

Plans for Future and Career

One of the policy issues surrounding investments in TFA is the extent to which corps members pursue careers in education beyond their two-year commitment. Research evidence indicates that participation in TFA has a positive impact on recruitment into the education sector, in that applicants selected for the program are more apt to pursue an education career than very similar applicants who are not selected (Dobbie & Fryer, 2015). Nevertheless, several studies have shown that TFA teacher retention is lower than that of non-TFA teachers (Houston Independent School District Department of Research and Accountability, 2011; Patterson & Bastian, 2014; Henry et al., 2014; Strategic Data Project, 2012). Similarly, an analysis of Duval County Public Schools retention rates among five recent cohorts of TFA corps members found that the corps members were more likely to leave than other early-career teachers in the district (Ready, 2014). Another study found that a small percentage of TFA teachers remain in the classroom long-term (Noell & Gansle, 2009).

A variety of factors play into why novice teachers leave the field. These factors may include school environment or work overload. One study found that corps member' initial teaching assignment is associated with retention (Donaldson & Johnson, 2010). In this study, corps members in elementary schools assigned to teach multiple grades were more likely to transfer to a school different from their initial placement compared to corps members who taught a single grade. Likewise, corps members in secondary schools assigned to teach multiple subjects, or assigned to teach subjects outside of their field of study, were more likely to leave the profession, compared to TFA corps members who taught one subject or a subject aligned to their field of study.

TFA has found that a mixture of professional and personal considerations enters into the decision to stay in teaching, and TFA strives to immerse corps members in a positive, meaningful experience that increases their likelihood of remaining in the education field. In the TFA-administered 2014-15 mid-year program survey, 57 percent of corps members teaching in Florida reported that they had a positive or very positive view of their overall satisfaction with TFA. In TFA's alumni survey, among all alumni who taught in Florida regions as corps members and remained in or returned to a classroom setting, more than three-fourths of respondents (79 percent) reported that their relationship with students was a factor (Exhibit 13). Fifty-six percent reported that their academic impact was one of the reasons they decided to continue teaching, 53 percent reported that commitment to educational equity was a reason, and 44 percent reported that the school environment was a reason.

In Florida, TFA regional staff have ramped up the supports offered to corps members for thinking about their future post-TFA as well as supports to alumni. Both regions have created career pathway guides spelling out the certification and leadership opportunities that will position corps members for future teaching or administrative positions. TFA regional staff in Duval established an alumni board to help identify ways to increase retention and to offer resources and supports for alumni. The Duval regional staff also established professional development sessions for alumni in their third, fourth, and fifth years of teaching. Miami-Dade regional staff organized forums for corps members and alumni with school district and local non-profit leaders, designed and led career workshops where corps members can receive feedback on their resumes, and created an educational

leaders fellowship and a mentorship program that matches corps members and recent alumni with leaders in the community. Miami-Dade staff is working to grow this program.

Exhibit 13
TFA alumni’s reasons for remaining in or returning to a classroom setting

Reason	Percent of respondents (N=196)
a. Relationship with students	79%
b. Academic impact	56
c. Commitment to educational equity	53
d. The school I teach in/my school environment	44
e. My role as a teacher in the community	31
f. Passion for the subject matter	30
g. My colleagues	27
h. Continued challenge and professional growth	26
i. My current leadership role (i.e., department chair, lead teacher, instructional coach, athletic coach)	25
j. Impact on non-cognitive skill development of my students	21
k. Job security and/or compensation	18
l. Relationships with families	14
m. Personal/family circumstances	6
n. My manager	5
o. Leadership for Educational Equity (LEE) programming ⁶ and/or fellowships	1

Exhibit reads: Seventy-nine percent of respondents reported that one reason for remaining in or returning to a classroom setting was relationships with students.

Source: 2014-15 TFA alumni survey.

In survey responses and interviews, corps members in both regions expressed a wish for more opportunities to engage with and learn from alumni in the area, and staff in both regions commented that they were working to better align the work of their TLD team with their alumni engagement efforts in order to facilitate this.

Duval regional TFA staff are working with principals as part of the effort to get corps members to stay beyond their two-year commitment. Roundtable conversations allow principals to share their feedback and allow TFA to express the needs of corps members. The regional staff also have invited principals to their community summits to connect them to TFA’s mission and

⁶ LEE is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering TFA corps members and alumni to grow as leaders in their communities and help build the movement for educational equity (<https://educationalequity.org/>).

to help them better understand the training and supports corps members receive. Duval regional staff acknowledged:

Us asking [corps members] or encouraging them to stay a third year is usually nice to have or something that they see as just certainly important, but it is really their principal that is usually the person who can guarantee that they would have a job that next year by reappointing them and having them continue on their staff but also their principal is able to highlight all of the strengths that they bring to the school. Help them identify a pathway for themselves in the future.

Corps Members' Career Plans

This study's survey of current Duval and Miami-Dade corps members provided information about their reported career plans. Among first-year corps members, a very high proportion (91 percent) reported that they were likely or very likely to complete their two-year commitment to TFA. Beyond that two-year commitment, most corps members in both their first and second years also reported planning to continue teaching and/or stay in the education sector in some other capacity.⁷ Seventy percent of corps members reported that they were likely or very likely to continue teaching. Within that group, about half (48 percent) reported that they had plans to stay in teaching for at least three more years, and 31 percent reported planning to teach for more than five more years.

Corps members who reported planning to stay in education outnumbered those who reported planning to leave the sector by more than two to one (72 percent vs. 28 percent) among those survey respondents who reported having decided on their career plans (i.e., excluding the 15 percent who said they had not decided). Corps members' reported plans within the education sector included going to graduate school for a degree that would advance their careers in education (20 percent), school leadership (12 percent), long-term teaching (11 percent), and other education jobs (30 percent). In focus groups, corps members shared that they were interested in pursuing jobs such as running an early childhood education center, working for a youth development-focused nonprofit, or working in education policy or research.

The mid-year corps member survey administered by TFA during the 2014-15 school year gathered additional insights into the reported career interests of corps members in the Duval and Miami-Dade regions. In that survey, 60 percent of second-year corps members reported that they were interested in further professional development as a classroom teacher. With multiple responses allowed, respondents reported a potential interest in a range of school-based careers opportunities. Fifty percent of second-year corps members across both regions reported that they were interested in becoming a department chair, lead/master teacher, teacher coach, or a similar role. Forty-eight percent reported an interest in becoming an assistant principal, dean, or instructional coach. Thirty-nine percent reported an interest in becoming a principal.

⁷ All analyses regarding future plans to teach, stay in the education sector, and remain in Florida are limited to those individuals who reported that they intended to complete their two-year TFA commitment.

Corps members' reported decisions about remaining in the education field were found to be associated with two elements of their self-reports: feeling prepared for teaching at the end of pre-service training; and substantive breadth of the additional training and support received from TFA while teaching. For this analysis, the research team employed multivariate logistic regression. This technique allowed the exploration of the strength of the relationship between reported career plans and each one of several characteristics and experiences, controlling for the other characteristics considered in the model. Logistic regression is appropriate for analyses where the dependent variable is categorical. For this analysis, the dependent variable, the responses about future plans is a dichotomous yes/no outcome, with "yes" including career pathways in the education sector.

Among multiple models tested, the best fitting was one that included two independent variables: (1) the index of preparedness, summarizing the corps member's reported recollection of his or her preparedness to teach, across 15 aspects of teaching, after Summer Institute; (2) and the number of aspects of teaching on which the corps member received ongoing training and support from TFA ($\chi^2=27.09$, $p<.01$, pseudo $R^2=13\%$). With each one unit increase in feeling prepared to teach (e.g., from not all prepared to somewhat prepared, somewhat prepared to well prepared, etc.), corps members were 4.5 times more likely to report that they planned to stay in the education sector. At the same time, each additional area of ongoing training received as a corps member was associated with slightly higher odds of staying in the education sector (OR=1.13).

In focus groups and interviews, some corps members and alumni talked about what has supported their desire to continue teaching for a third year and beyond. The opportunity to see professional growth was one influence that they discussed. Some alumni noted that between the second and third year of teaching they started to make progress and see the impact of their work in their classrooms. They said that they do not want to leave because they have gained momentum and can see both their own professional growth and their students' growth. As a TFA alumna explained, "I do encourage corps members to stay that third year, because that is when you explode. You become this amazing teacher, because you're no longer stressed. You've got it." In contrast, one corps member reported that her school was not investing in her growth and believed if she stayed her professional development would be at a standstill.

Within Duval County, corps members in transformation schools reported that they were likely or very likely to continue teaching beyond their two-year commitment at significantly higher rates than corps members who were not in transformation schools (59 percent vs. 36 percent). In fact, teaching in a DTO school was found to be a significant predictor of the likelihood of continuing to teach ($\chi^2=5.32$, $p=.02$, pseudo $R^2=5\%$). Corps members who taught in DTO schools in Duval County were over three times more likely (OR=3.14) to continue teaching beyond their two year commitment. Teachers in transformation schools receive monetary incentives, which may provide an incentive for these corps members to continue teaching.

Influences on Reported Plans to Remain in Florida as an Educator

Florida can see the greatest return on its investment in TFA if those corps members who stay in the field of education also stay in Florida. Among the corps members who reported plans to stay in the education field and also reported having decided whether to remain in Florida, over half (55 percent) reported that they saw themselves staying in Florida. Forty-one percent said they could see a long-term future in Florida, and 14 percent saw a short-term future.

Three features of corps members' characteristics and experiences had a statistically significant relationship with an expectation of staying in Florida, based on analysis of the survey responses. These features were: a prior personal connection to the state; experience beyond a bachelor's degree; and having been placed in a region they had designated as preferred when they applied to TFA.

- Personal connections to Florida prior to TFA included being raised in Florida, attending college in Florida, working in Florida, or having family in Florida. Among respondents who planned to stay in the education sector, 77 percent of corps members with a connection to Florida reported that they would stay in Florida, compared to 40 percent of corps members with no connection to Florida.
- Experience beyond a bachelor's degree included work or pursuit of a graduate degree before joining TFA. Seventy-three percent of corps members who had such experience reported planning to stay in the education sector in Florida, compared to 45 percent of those who had completed their bachelor's degree prior to joining TFA.
- Finally, some corps members were teaching in a region that they reported having included in their list of preferred regions when they applied to TFA. Of these corps members, 60 percent reported planning to stay in the education sector in Florida, compared to 44 percent of the corps members who were teaching in a region that they said they had not designated as preferred.

Additional logistic regression models were constructed to allow a multivariate analysis of the relationship between these and other corps member characteristics and their reported plans to remain within the education sector specifically in Florida. The best fitting model for the prediction of the likelihood of a corps member's plans to stay in Florida long-term involved all three of the predictors just described ($\chi^2=37.91$, $p<.01$, pseudo $R^2=26\%$). Corps members with each one of these predictors were over four times more likely to plan to continue to work in the education sector in Florida, even after controlling for the other characteristics. Those with a prior connection to Florida were 4.66 times more likely to plan to continue in Florida than other corps members; those who had been working or pursuing a graduate degree were 4.35 times more likely; and corps members who were placed in a region on their list of preferred regions were 4.27 times more likely.

Several focus group participants who were not from Florida said they were considering or planning to leave the area to be closer to their family and friends or because they simply did not see themselves living in the region long term. As one current corps member with plans to go

back to her city of origin explained, “I don’t want to keep building and building here and then I’m leaving. I figure do it now than later.” Other corps members acknowledged that they haven’t been able to put down roots and make connections outside of TFA and their school.

Interviews with corps members and alumni provided insight into other factors that may influence corps members’ decision to continue teaching in Florida schools, especially support from school leadership and peers.

Focus group participants commented that experiences with their school culture and administration played a role in their decision whether to teach in the region beyond two years. They said building positive relationships with individuals at the school and having a principal who championed TFA and was supportive of corps member professional development were key factors in making corps members and alumni feel needed and part of the school community. One second-year corps member who had decided to teach for a third year said the reason was the support of her administration. She described her school environment as home, and said that she felt committed to the school and its students—that not returning to the school after her TFA commitment would feel like abandonment.

Some focus group participants said that they did not feel supported by their school administration and that they wanted to leave their school and possibly the district after their two-year commitment. A first-year corps member noted that she had always wanted to work in education, but her experience at her particular school with an unsupportive administration caused her to question her choice.

I’ll say, if I had more support, I would [stay a third year]. Having the support from your administration, that is very important. And when you’re teaching first year, or even if you’re a veteran teaching, and you don’t have that support, it’s like, ‘Why do I want to stay here? I’m doing all I can. I’m staying these extra hours.’ Just trying to keep up with the demands of my job, but I feel like my administrators aren’t supportive of me. So that adds more stress.

Peer influence was described as a factor not only within a school but within a TFA cohort in general. A perception of a lack of community in TFA was evident in the reflections of a first-year corps member:

Overall I feel like where there is room for improvement is relationship building. That’s with corps members and MTLDs, amongst corps members and between first-years and second-years, and amongst alumni and corps members. All of that has to play a role in retention and until relationships are strengthened, people will leave... I feel like it’s not because they want to leave education, but they don’t feel that tied to here.

On the other hand, several corps members and alumni pointed to community in TFA as a positive influence. They said knowing that other corps members at their school planned to continue to teach for a third year influenced their own decision to continue. An alumna spoke to the feeling of community and how it influenced corps members from her cohort to stay in the area.

There's social factors. I wouldn't say none of us, but the vast majority of us, did not have ties to Jacksonville, and yet I think over half of us stayed. It was kind of like a domino effect. Five people said they were going to stay, and then five more people, and so all of a sudden, there was kind of this movement of, 'I'm going to have friends,' because life is not all about the career piece.

Conclusions

Overall, corps members reported being satisfied with their TFA experience. They generally held a positive view of Institute but reported limitations in the adequacy of pre-service training alone as preparation for the realities of the classroom. They reported that Institute introduced them to teaching, but corps members also desired more practical “nuts and bolts” information about teaching practice—a perspective that is also common among beginning teachers prepared in other programs.

At least half of corps members rated many elements of TFA’s training and ongoing support as effective in helping them transition into and grow in their role as a teacher. They appreciated these TFA activities not only for providing relevant and concrete strategies for teaching, but also for the opportunities to bond with and learn from other corps members. Interpersonal support was highly rated as a source of help, and in fact focus group findings suggest that at least some corps members wanted more individualized support from the TLD team.

Nearly three-quarters of corps members reported that they intended to teach beyond their two-year TFA commitment (70 percent), and most reported planning to remain in the education sector in some capacity long-term. Plans to remain in the education sector were more apt to be reported among those who reported having felt a relatively high level of preparedness at the end of pre-service and who had received ongoing TFA training or support in a relatively wide range of aspects of teaching.

Of those who said they planned careers in education, about half reported that they saw themselves staying in Florida. Plans to settle in Florida were more often reported among those corps members who had prior connections to the state, who had worked or attended graduate school before joining TFA, and who had been placed in a region they had designated as preferred. The influence of school leaders and peers also reportedly played a part in corps members’ decisions to continue to teach in their region.

References

- Boyd, D., Grossman, P., Hammerness, K., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., Rondeldt, M., & Wyckoff, J. (2012). Recruiting effective math teachers: Evidence from New York City. *American Educational Research Journal*, 49(6), 1008-1047.
- Clark, M. A., Chiang, H.S., Silva, T., McConnell, S., Sonnenfeld, K., Erbe, A., & Puma, M. (2013). *The effectiveness of secondary math teachers from Teach For America and the Teaching Fellows programs*. (No. NCEE 2013-4015). Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences and Mathematica Policy Research.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Holtzman, D.J., Gatlin, S.J., & Heilig, J.V. (2005). Does teacher preparation matter? Evidence about teacher certification, Teach for America, and teacher effectiveness. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 13(42).
- Decker, P.T., Mayer, D.P., & Glazerman, S. (2004). *The effects of Teach for America on students: Findings from a national evaluation*. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.
- Dobbie, W., & Fryer, R.G., Jr. (2015). The impact of voluntary youth service on future outcomes: Evidence from Teach For America. *The BE Journal of Economic analysis & Policy*, 15(3), 1031-1065.
- Donaldson, M.L., & Johnson, S.M. (2010). *The price of misassignment: The role of teaching assignments in Teach For America teachers' exit from low-income schools and the teaching profession*. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 32(2), 299-323.
- Glazerman, S., Mayer, D., & Decker, P. (2006). Alternative routes to teaching: The impacts of Teach For America on student achievement and other outcomes. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 25(1), 75-96. doi:10.1002/pam.20157
- Hansen, M. & Backes, B. (2015). *Estimates of Teach For America corps members in Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2013-14*. Washington, DC: CALDER Center at the American Institutes for Research.
- Hansen, M., Backes, B., Brady, V., & Xu, Z. (2014). *Examining spillover effects from Teach For America corps members in Miami-Dade County Public Schools*. Washington, DC: CALDER Center at the American Institutes for Research.
- Henry, G.T., Purtell, K.M., Bastian, K.C., Fortner, C. K., Thompson, C.L., Campbell, S.L., & Patterson, K.M. (2014). The effects of teacher entry portals on student achievement. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 65(1), 7-23.
- Henry, G.T., Thompson, C.L., Bastian, K.C., Fortner, C.K., Kershaw, D.C., Purtell, K.M., & Zulli, R.A. (2010). *Portal Report: Teacher preparation and student test scores in North Carolina*. Chapel Hill, NC: Carolina Institute for Public Policy.

- Houston Independent School District Department of Research and Accountability. (2011). *Teach for America (TFA) 2009-2010*. Houston, TX: Author.
- Kane, T.J., Rockoff, J.E., & Staiger, D.O. (2008). What does certification tell us about teacher effectiveness? Evidence from New York City. *Economics of Education Review*, 27(6), 615-631.
- Melnick, S.A. & Meister, D.G. (2008). *A comparison of beginning and experienced teachers' concerns*. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 31(3), 39-56.
- Noell, G.H., & Gansle, K.A. (2009). *Teach For America teachers' contribution to student achievement in Louisiana in grades 4-9: 2004-2005 to 2006-2007*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana Board of Regents.
- Patterson, K.M., & Bastian, K.C. (2014). *UNC teacher quality research: Teacher portals effectiveness report*. Chapel Hill, NC: Education Policy Initiative at Carolina.
- Ready, D.D. (2015). *Teach For America Teachers in Duval County Public Schools: An analysis of student performance, 2013-2014 academic year*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Ready, D.D. (2014). *Teach For America Teachers in Duval County Public Schools: An analysis of retention and performance*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Strategic Data Project. (2012). *SDP human capital diagnostic: Los Angeles Unified School District*. Cambridge, MA: Author.
- Tennessee Higher Education Commission and the State Board of Education. (2014). *2014 report card on the effectiveness of teacher training programs*. Nashville, TN: Author.

Corps Member Survey

Evaluation of the Impact of Teach For America Educators on Student Achievement in Florida Public Schools

Corps Member Survey¹

Introduction

Dear Teach For America (TFA) corps member,

The State of Florida has funded a study to examine TFA's impact in Florida public schools. TFA has contracted with Policy Studies Associates (PSA), an independent education research firm from Washington, D.C., to conduct this study with the goal of learning about corps members' perceptions of their experience with various aspects of the TFA program.

As part of this study, PSA is administering a survey to all corps members currently teaching in the TFA – [region name] and conducting follow-up focus groups with approximately 40 randomly selected corps members. This survey will ask you to reflect on the effectiveness of the preparation and ongoing training and support you received from TFA regional staff and to share your career aspirations. The data collected in this survey will be used to inform TFA and the State of Florida about the quality, utility, and effectiveness of training and support of TFA corps members.

We estimate that the survey will take no more than 20 minutes to complete. Please complete this survey no later than **Friday, January 30, 2015**. If you have any questions about this study, please contact Colleen McCann, PSA Survey Administrator, toll-free at 877-939-5494 or at TeachForAmericaSurvey@policystudies.com. Thank you for your time and feedback.

Sincerely,
Colleen McCann
Survey Administrator

CONSENT: Your participation in this survey is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relations with TFA, your school, [region name] County Public Schools, or the State of Florida. All responses to the survey will remain confidential. Only members of the PSA evaluation team will have access to your survey responses, which will be maintained on a password-protected secure network. No individual or school names will be cited in any report submitted to TFA or to the State of Florida.

By choosing "YES" below, you are granting your consent to participate. You are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

_____ **YES, I will participate in this survey.**

_____ **NO, I do not want to participate in this survey.**

¹ This is the version of the survey administered to corps members teaching Miami-Dade County. Corps members teaching in Duval County received the same survey, with a few exceptions that we have noted.

Background Information

1. Are you a first- or second-year corps member? *(Select one choice.)*
 - a. First-year (I started in school year 2014-15)
 - b. Second-year (I started in school year 2013-14)

2. What grade level do you teach? *(Select one choice.)*
 - a. Elementary school
 - b. Middle school
 - c. High school

3. What content area do you teach? *(Select all that apply.)*
 - General elementary
 - Elective (music, art, drama, etc)
 - Science
 - History/Social Studies
 - Language Arts
 - Foreign Language
 - Math
 - Other - please specify: _____

4. What was your undergraduate major? *(Select one choice.)*
 - a. Education
 - b. Humanities or Liberal Arts
 - c. Science, Technology, Engineering, and/or Math
 - d. Other - please specify: _____

5. What were you doing prior to joining TFA? *(Select one choice.)*
 - a. Completing a bachelor's degree
 - b. Completing a graduate degree (e.g., Master's degree, juris doctorate)
 - c. Serving in the Armed Forces
 - d. Working in an education- or youth-related field
 - e. Working in non-education- or youth-related field
 - f. Other - please specify: _____

6. Which of the following describes your connection to Florida prior to joining TFA? *(Select all that apply.)*
 - Raised in Florida
 - Attended college in Florida
 - Worked in Florida prior to joining TFA
 - Have family in Florida
 - Did not spend considerable time in Florida prior to joining TFA

7. What was your primary reason for applying to TFA? *(Select one choice.)*
- a. I wanted a job where I could specifically work to end educational inequity.
 - b. I was interested in teaching as a potential career.
 - c. I wanted a job where I could have an impact in an underserved community.
 - d. It was one option to secure employment after I completed school or my time served in the Armed Forces.
 - e. I thought it would be a good experience for me before pursuing other employment or further education (e.g., graduate school).
 - f. Other - please specify: _____
8. When you applied to TFA, was [region name] on your list of preferred TFA regions? *(Select one choice.)*
- a. Yes
 - b. No, but it was one of the places I said I was willing to consider
 - c. No, I was assigned here
 - d. Don't remember

[If YES to Q8]: Why were you interested in teaching in [region name] in particular?

Summer Institute and Other Pre-Service Training

9. How effective were the following elements of Summer Institute in preparing you to teach?
(Select one choice in each row.)

Summer Institute	Not at all effective	Somewhat effective	Effective	Very effective	Did not participate	I don't remember
a. Opportunities to teach students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Being observed and provided with feedback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Lesson planning clinics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Using the Teaching as Leadership framework and rubric	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Curriculum session: instructional planning and delivery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Curriculum session: investment, classroom management and culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Curriculum session: diversity, community, and achievement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Curriculum session: literacy development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other Pre-Service Training²						
i. Regional Induction prior to Summer Institute	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Regional Orientation after Summer Institute	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. MDCPS New Teacher Orientation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

² Miami-Dade TFA regional staff requested that PSA include items i-k on the Miami corps member survey. These items were not available to corps members teaching in Duval County.

10. After completing Summer Institute and other pre-service training, how prepared did you feel to carry out the following aspects of your job as a teacher? (Select one choice in each row.)

	<i>Not at all prepared</i>	<i>Somewhat prepared</i>	<i>Well prepared</i>	<i>Very well prepared</i>	<i>I don't remember</i>
a. Implement effective academic instruction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Develop positive character in students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Develop relationships with your students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Plan engaging lessons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Manage your classroom effectively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Establish a positive classroom culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Manage behavior effectively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Get your students excited about learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Expose your students to new ideas or experiences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Contribute to the school community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. Differentiate your instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of your students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l. Use data to inform instruction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m. Develop positive relationships with your colleagues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
n. Engage families and/or the community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
o. Assess students' academic progress	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Training and Support While Teaching

11. Please indicate the areas in which you **receive or have received** additional training and/or support from **TFA** during your time in the classroom (This includes but is not limited to work with your MTLT or other MTLTs in the region, Content Director, sessions at Teaching and Learning Summits, sessions at national Corps Member of Color Summits, or work with other TFA national team members.) *(Select all that apply.)*

a. Implementing effective academic instruction	<input type="radio"/>
b. Developing positive character in students	<input type="radio"/>
c. Developing relationships with your students	<input type="radio"/>
d. Planning engaging lessons	<input type="radio"/>
e. Managing your classroom effectively	<input type="radio"/>
f. Establishing a positive classroom culture	<input type="radio"/>
g. Managing behavior effectively	<input type="radio"/>
h. Getting your students excited about learning	<input type="radio"/>
i. Exposing your students to new ideas or experiences	<input type="radio"/>
j. Contributing to the school community	<input type="radio"/>
k. Differentiating your instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of your students	<input type="radio"/>
l. Using data to inform instruction	<input type="radio"/>
m. Developing positive relationships with your colleagues	<input type="radio"/>
n. Engaging families and/or the community	<input type="radio"/>
o. Assessing students' academic progress	<input type="radio"/>
p. None of the above	<input type="radio"/>

12. *[Pipe in areas where respondent indicated in Q11 that they received help from TFA; drop down menu for rating effectiveness appears]* Please rate the effectiveness of the training and/or support you received from TFA in [area indicated in Q11]:

Example: If “Implementing effective academic instruction” was chosen in Q11:

Please rate the effectiveness of the training and/or support you received from TFA in **implementing effective academic instruction**:

(Drop down menu with following options:)

Not at all effective
Somewhat effective
Effective
Very effective

[If selected NOT AT ALL EFFECTIVE in Q12 for any area] Briefly describe how and/or why the training or support you received in this area was **not** effective in helping you to improve.

This is repeated for all areas indicated in Q11.

13. In general, has the training and/or support you received from TFA (both nationally and regionally) been differentiated for your particular needs as a teacher? *(Select one choice.)*

- a. Yes, a lot
- b. Yes, somewhat
- c. Yes, a little
- d. No, not at all

On average, during your time as a corps member, in what ways and how frequently have you interacted with staff from the Teacher Leadership and Development team (e.g., your or another Manager of Teacher Leadership Development, the Director of Teacher Leadership Development, Content Director, Managing Directors, etc.)? *(Select one choice in each row.)*

	<i>Never</i>	<i>Once a year</i>	<i>Once per semester</i>	<i>A few times per semester</i>	<i>A few times a month</i>	<i>Weekly</i>	<i>More than once per week</i>
a. Phone calls	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Email	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. One-on-one meeting or coaching session	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Classroom observation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. MTL cohort time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Professional development sessions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. How effective have other nationally based TFA resources been in supporting you as a teacher?
(Select one choice in each row.)

	<i>Not at all effective</i>	<i>Somewhat effective</i>	<i>Effective</i>	<i>Very effective</i>	<i>I have not utilized this resource</i>
a. Corps Member Advisor (CMA) during Summer Institute	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Resource exchange on TFANet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Content Communities on TFANet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Videos available on TFANet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Teaching as Leadership Impact Model and rubric	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. TeacherPop	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Current TFA corps members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. TFA alumni	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. In what ways can TFA improve its training and support structures to better serve corps members?

Plans for Future and Career

16. *[If first-year CM]:* How likely are you to complete your two-year TFA commitment? *(Select one choice).*

- a. Very likely
- b. Likely
- c. Unlikely
- d. Very unlikely

17. *[If C or D to Q17]:* What would be the primary reason you would not complete your two-year TFA commitment? *(Select one choice.)*

- a. I am not enjoying teaching
- b. I am not enjoying my placement site
- c. I don't like the region I'm teaching in
- d. I don't feel supported by TFA
- e. I don't feel supported by my school/school district
- f. I have personal matters to attend to
- g. Other - please specify: _____

18. *[If C or D to Q17]:* Is there anything that TFA could do to change your mind about your decision to not complete your two-year commitment?

19. *[If second-year CM OR if selected A or B in Q17]:* How likely are you to continue teaching after you complete your two-year TFA commitment? *(Select one choice.)*

- a. Very likely
- b. Likely
- c. Unlikely
- d. Very unlikely

20. *[If C or D to Q20]* What are your plans after you complete your two-year TFA commitment? *(Select one choice.)*

- a. Find another job **within** the education sector
- b. Find a job **outside** the education sector
- c. Go to graduate school to pursue a degree that supports my **education-focused** career goals
- d. Go to graduate school to pursue a degree that supports my **non-education-focused** career goals
- e. Undecided
- f. Other - please specify: _____

21. *[If A or B to Q20]:* How long do you plan to continue to teach after you have completed your two-year TFA commitment? *(Select one choice.)*

- a. 1-2 years
- b. 3-5 years
- c. More than 5 years
- d. Undecided

22. *[If A or B on Q20]:* What are your plans beyond teaching? *(Select one choice.)*

- a. Does not apply – I plan to make a career out of teaching
- b. Go into school leadership
- c. Find another job **within** the education sector
- d. Find a job **outside** the education sector
- e. Go to graduate school to pursue a degree that supports my **education-focused** career goals
- f. Go to graduate school to pursue a degree that supports my **non-education-focused** career goals
- g. Undecided
- h. Other - please specify: _____

23. [A or B on Q20 AND A, B, C or E on Q23; OR C or D on Q20 AND A or C on Q21] Do you see yourself remaining in Florida to pursue your goals in the teaching or education sector? (Select one choice.)

- a. Yes, I see myself here long-term
- b. Yes, I see myself here short-term
- c. No, I likely will relocate
- d. Undecided

Corps Member Interview Guide

Evaluation of the Impact of Teach For America Educators on Student Achievement in Florida Public Schools

Corps Member Interview Guide

Introduction and Consent Process

Thank you for participating in this focus group for Teach For America corps members from [region name]. This focus group is part of a study commissioned by the State of Florida to learn about the impact of Teach For America in Florida. The purpose of the focus group is to learn about corps members' perceptions of the adequacy and effectiveness of the preparation, training and support you have received from Teach For America before and during your time as a corps member, as well as learn about your career aspirations.

As detailed in this consent form, your participation in this focus group is entirely voluntary – you can decline to answer any question or you may choose to leave at any time without penalty. Everything we discuss will be confidential and your name or any other identifying information will not be used in any reports or information provided to TFA or the State of Florida. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes. The second section of the consent form asks for your permission to audio-record this interview. The transcript will only be used for the purposes of writing the report and will not be shared with TFA.

Background, Experience, and Current Roles

1. We would like to start with brief introductions. Let's go around and share your name, where you're from originally, whether you are a first- or second-year corps member, and what subject(s)/grades you currently teach.
2. Thinking back to when you applied to TFA, why did you choose TFA over other career opportunities, or other routes into teaching such as a traditional teaching program or alternate route programs?
3. Was [region name] on your list of preferred regions? If so, why here in particular?

Perceptions of Adequacy of Training and Support from TFA

Pre-service training: Our first few questions ask about your perceptions of the adequacy of training and support from TFA focus on your pre-service experience.

4. How adequately did Summer Institute and other pre-service training prepare you for the demands of the classroom? Were there areas in which you felt your pre-service training adequately prepared you? What elements of Summer Institute or other pre-service training were most effective in preparing you for the demands of the classroom and why?

Ongoing training and support: Now we would like to learn about your experiences with the ongoing training and support you received from TFA regional staff here in [region name] once you started teaching.

5. Do you feel as though the training and support you receive from TFA regional staff is differentiated and individualized to your needs? Where have you seen that TFA regional staff were responsive to your needs and suggestions? If certain TFA staff can't provide what you need, do they point you to resources or other people that can help?
6. In what areas did you struggle, or are struggling with, most as a new teacher? Were/are there areas in which you felt you needed more preparation or training? Were/are you able to get adequate training and support from TFA – [region name] staff in these areas? *Probe for specifics on from whom they got training and support; if they had to seek it out or if TFA staff proactively reached out to them; how frequently they received support; the nature and quality of the support.*
7. How helpful are your Saturday professional development sessions and [day] content-specific development sessions in addressing the areas you are struggling with as a new teacher? What about the diversity and inclusiveness trainings? Cohort time? What components of the sessions are most effective in helping you overcome challenges you were experiencing in your classroom?
8. Do you feel that you have had or are having a positive impact on your students' academic achievement and character development? What about school culture? In what areas do you feel you've been or are effective? How do you know whether or not you are effective in these areas?
9. ***For second-year corps members only:*** Did the nature and/or frequency of the support you received from TFA – [region name] staff change in your second year? Are you still receiving the type and amount of support that you need to be effective?
10. In what areas do you think the TFA training and support structures have been strong? Think about both national and regional structures.
11. How can TFA improve their training and support structures to better serve corps members? Think about both national and regional structures.

Teaching as a Profession

12. In what ways did becoming a TFA corps member affect your career aspirations, if at all?
13. ***For second-year corps members only:*** What do you plan to do next year? If you are planning to teach, what factors from your experience as a corps member encouraged you to stay in the classroom? In the long run, do you see yourself as an educator or at least remaining in the education field? Why or why not?
14. For those considering leaving the teaching field, what factors led you to this decision?
15. What could TFA do differently that would encourage corps members to continue teaching beyond their two-year commitment? *Probe for national and regional influences.*

Alumni Interview Guide

Evaluation of the Impact of Teach For America Educators on Student Achievement in Florida Public Schools

Alumni Interview Guide

Introduction and Consent Process

Thank you for participating in this focus group of Teach For America alumni from [region name]. This focus group is part of a study commissioned by the State of Florida to learn about the impact of Teach For America in Florida. The purpose of the focus group is to learn about alumni's perceptions of the adequacy and effectiveness of the preparation, training and support you received from Teach For America while serving as a corps member, as well as about your career aspirations.

As detailed in this consent form, your participation in this focus group is entirely voluntary – you can decline to answer any question or you may choose to leave at any time without penalty. Everything we discuss will be confidential and your name or any other identifying information will not be used in any reports or information provided to TFA or the State of Florida. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes. The second section of the consent form asks for your permission to audio-record this interview. The transcript will only be used for the purposes of writing the report and will not be shared with TFA.

Background, Experience, and Current Roles

1. We would like to start with brief introductions. Let's go around and share your name, where you're from originally, your TFA cohort, what subject(s)/grades you taught as a corps member, and what you have been doing since the completion of your two-year commitment.
2. Thinking back to when you applied to TFA, why did you choose TFA over other career opportunities, or other routes into teaching such as a traditional teaching program or alternate route programs?
3. Was [region name] on your list of preferred regions? If so, why here in particular?

Perceptions of Adequacy of Training and Support from TFA

Pre-service training: Our first few questions ask about your perceptions of the adequacy of training and support from TFA focus on your pre-service experience.

4. How adequately did Summer Institute and other pre-service training prepare you for the demands of the classroom? Were there areas in which you felt your pre-service training adequately prepared you? What elements of Summer Institute or other pre-service training were most effective in preparing you for the demands of the classroom and why?

Ongoing training and support: Now we would like to learn about your experiences with the ongoing training and support you received from TFA staff once you started teaching.

5. In what areas did you struggle most as a new teacher? Were there areas in which you felt you needed more preparation or training? Were you able to get adequate training and support from TFA staff in these areas? *Probe for specifics on from whom they got training and support; if they had to seek it out or if TFA staff proactively reached out to them; how frequently they received support; the nature and quality of the support.*
6. How helpful were your Saturday professional development sessions in addressing the areas you were struggling with as a new teacher? What components of the sessions were most effective in helping you overcome challenges you were experiencing in your classroom?
7. Did you feel as though the training and support you received from TFA during your time as a corps member was differentiated and individualized to your needs?
8. During your two years as a corps member, did you feel that you were having a positive impact on your students' academic achievement and character development? In what areas did you feel you were effective? How did you know whether or not you were effective in these areas?
9. Overall, how can TFA improve their training and support structures to better serve corps members? You can comment on any aspect on training and support, including pre-service and ongoing training and support while you were teaching.

Teaching as a Profession

10. In what ways did becoming a TFA corps member affect your career aspirations, if at all?
11. For those of you that have continued teaching, what factors encouraged you to continue as an educator in Florida beyond your TFA commitment? Do you see yourself continuing as an educator or at least remaining in the education sector in the long run? Why or why not?
12. For those that are doing something else, what factors led to your choice to move on from teaching?
13. What could TFA do differently that would encourage corps members to continue teaching beyond their two-year commitment?