

What the Research Says

Research over time has shown conclusively that Teach For America corps members' impact on student achievement is at least as great as that of other new teachers. The most rigorous studies have found that corps members' impact on student achievement exceeds that of other teachers in the same high-needs schools. This is true even when corps members are compared with veteran and fully certified teachers in their fields. The evidence of corps members' positive impact spans multiple regions and subject areas and all grade levels, from pre-kindergarten through high school. Additionally, we are beginning to see robust research on the impact of Teach For America beyond the classroom.

As one of the largest teacher-preparation program in the country, Teach For America welcomes and pursues rigorous independent evaluations in order to measure our impact and continuously improve our program. We are among the most-studied teacher-preparation programs in the nation.

The Latest Findings on Student Impact

In 2009 and 2010, three states—Louisiana, North Carolina, and Tennessee—studied the effectiveness of teachers from different teacher-preparation programs, and each of the three concluded that Teach For America corps members have a greater impact on student achievement than other new teachers. Additionally, Teach For America won the largest grant out of nearly 1,700 applications to the U.S. Department of Education's prestigious Investing in Innovation (i3) grant competition in 2010. The i3 scale-up grants required applicants to provide demonstrated evidence of success through objective, methodologically sound studies (e.g., experimental and quasi-experimental research designs) of student achievement.

Research-Quality Report Card

Not all research is created equal. In a 2008 research "report card," the education policy journal *Education Next* analyzed and graded the most frequently cited research studies on Teach For America. The journal noted that the studies vary widely in both their central findings and the quality of their methodologies; a 2004 Mathematica Policy Research study, which found that corps members outperformed other teachers in math, was the only one to receive an A for its methodology (see appendix A for the *Education Next* report card). Teach For America is looking forward to seeing the results of the next rigorous Mathematica study, currently under way.

Impact Beyond the Classroom

In addition to assessing our corps members' effectiveness, research on their impact beyond the classroom is starting to appear. Teach For America works to ensure that corps members become lifelong leaders for education reform, regardless of their professional sector. We are beginning to see evidence of this aim. A 2011 study conducted by a Harvard University research team concluded that more founders of prominent entrepreneurial education organizations participated in Teach For America than in any other organization or program.

Snapshots of each major research study produced by universities, research centers, and government bodies (e.g., state boards of education and school districts) are provided below.¹ Studies which have undergone the peer-review process have been labeled as such.²

¹ Each snapshot contains the study's title, author(s), school level (in the case of studies on classroom impact) of interest, region of study, whether the study was peer reviewed, and research design. A study is labeled as descriptive, correlational, quasi-experimental or experimental. Experimental studies provide the strongest evidence of causal effects (e.g., Does having a Teach For America teacher cause higher student achievement?). A quasi-experimental study also allows for causal inference, but is not as robust as an experimental study. A correlational study is one that describes the statistical associations between two or more factors (e.g., the association between teacher preparation program and student achievement); and a descriptive study is one in which data is collected to describe persons, organizations, settings, or phenomena.

² Studies that have been published by a peer reviewed journal have been designated as worthy of publishing by the editor(s) and scholars who are knowledgeable about the topic under discussion. In a peer review process, the proposed paper is submitted to experts within the field, and a double-blind evaluation process is then followed. Reviewers are not told the identity of the author, and the author, though given a copy of the comments, is not told the identity of the reviewers. Reviews from at least two scholars must be received prior to publication. Editors may ask authors to revise papers in light of reviewer comments. A decision of whether or not to publish is based on reviewer comments and the editors' own assessments of the quality of the paper.

IMMEDIATE IMPACT IN THE CLASSROOM

Teacher Preparation Programs and Teach For America Research Study *The University of Texas at Dallas, Education Research Center (2011)*

Grade Level: 3-11
Region: Texas
Design: Descriptive

The Texas legislature requested a study of Teach For America's impact in the state as part of the requirements for funding allocated to Teach For America starting in the 2009-10 school year. The report, examining changes in passing rates on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), states that non-Teach For America teachers are making the same or greater gains with Hispanic students, but that Teach For America teachers are leading higher levels of student achievement with several other groups, including African-American students and all students in math. Because of limited data, however, the student achievement results are mostly descriptive. The report finds that Teach For America corps members in Texas are more likely to teach in high-needs schools than the average new teacher in Texas and corps members return for a second year at higher rates than non-Teach For America teachers.

- The full study is available at www.tea.state.tx.us/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=2147496842&libID=2147496839
- The *Houston Chronicle* published an editorial about the results, which is available at www.chron.com/dispatch/story.mpl/metropolitan/7408506.html

Portal Report: Teacher Preparation and Student Test Scores in North Carolina

Grade Level: K-12
Region: North Carolina
Design: Correlational

Gary Henry, Charles Thompson, Kevin C. Bastian, C. Kevin Fortner, David C. Kershaw, Kelly M. Purtell, and Rebecca A. Zulli (2010)

Researchers at the University of North Carolina conducted a study of pathways into teaching in the state of North Carolina. Their objective was to understand better the effects on student achievement of graduates of the UNC teacher-preparation system (the leading provider of teachers in the state) compared with teachers from other pathways, including Teach For America. At every grade level and subject studied, Teach For America corps members did as well as or better than the traditionally prepared UNC graduates. Teach For America corps members had a greater impact on student achievement in middle school math and high school math, science, and English than did traditionally prepared teachers from UNC's teacher-preparation program.

- The full study is available at [publicpolicy.unc.edu/files/Teacher Portals Teacher Preparation and Student Test Scores in North Carolina 2.pdf](http://publicpolicy.unc.edu/files/Teacher%20Portals%20Teacher%20Preparation%20and%20Student%20Test%20Scores%20in%20North%20Carolina%202.pdf)
- More information on the new study is available in a PowerPoint presentation on the UNC website at www.aplu.org/NetCommunity/Document.Doc?id=2572

2010 Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs *Tennessee State Board of Education and Tennessee Higher Education Commission (2010)*

Grade Level: 4-8
Region: Tennessee
Design: Correlational

Teach For America was the top new-teacher-preparation program in the state of Tennessee, based on an analysis of the value-added student achievement data of 42 programs. The average Teach For America-Tennessee teacher outperformed the average new fourth- to eighth-grade teacher in the state across all subject areas and grade levels, did just as well as the average veteran teacher in mathematics, and outperformed the average veteran teacher in reading/language arts, science, and social studies. Teach For America was the state's only source of new teachers who outperformed veterans in these three subject areas.

- The full study is available at www.tn.gov/thec/Divisions/fttt/report_card_teacher_train/report_card.html
- This study received coverage in *The [Memphis] Commercial Appeal* at m.commercialappeal.com/news/2010/dec/03/teaching-program-beating-colleges

Teach For America: A Review of the Evidence

Julian Vasquez Heilig and Su Jin Jez, The Great Lakes Center for Education Research & Practice (2010)

**Grade Level: K-12
Region: National
Design: Descriptive**

The authors conducted a meta-analysis, assessing Teach For America's effectiveness by reviewing past research on Teach For America. The two main takeaways were: 1) retention rates for Teach For America teachers are low; and 2) corps members' student achievement results are, at best, mixed. There are substantial problems with both findings. With respect to retention, the report consolidates findings from previous studies that in one way or another conflated leaving a school with leaving teaching. Additionally, the authors employed a narrow definition of retention that did not account for the share of teachers who leave the classroom but remain in education as school or district administrators. On the question of aggregate Teach For America performance, the report also fell short. As noted in the first footnote, there are various research methods, and they do not hold equal analytic leverage. The authors emphasized studies with negative results as opposed to studies with the most rigorous methodology. As made evident in the *Education Next* report card, the studies that employ the most rigorous methodologies conclude that Teach For America teachers perform as well as or better than other teachers, not only emergency-certified teachers but those who are traditionally trained and veteran.

- The full report is available at greatlakescenter.org/docs/Policy_Briefs/Heilig_TeachForAmerica.pdf
- Andrew Rotherham reviewed the study on *Eduwonk* at www.eduwonk.com/2010/07/teach-for-america-and-the-problem-of-study-laundering.html

Recruiting Effective Math Teachers, How Do Math Immersion Teachers Compare?: Evidence From New York City

Donald Boyd, Pamela Grossman, Karen Hammerness, Hamilton Lankford, Susanna Loeb, Matt Ronfeldt, and James Wyckoff (2010)

**Grade Level: 3-8
Region: New York City
Design: Correlational**

Researchers examined the effectiveness of middle-school math teachers from various teacher-preparation pathways in New York City and found that Teach For America middle-school math teachers were more effective than other beginning middle-school math teachers. Their analysis included new teachers from traditional teacher-preparation programs (or "college recommended" teachers), NYC Teaching Fellows, and the NYC Teaching Fellows Math Immersion program, which was created in 2002 to bring non-math majors into the classroom as math teachers. This study, the latest in a multi-year examination of teachers and teacher-preparation programs in New York City, concluded that Teach For America corps members have a positive impact relative to all other new teachers, and that this impact was stronger than the researchers had found in their previous studies (see below).

- The full study is available at www.nber.org/papers/w16017.pdf?new_window=1

Making a Difference? The Effects of Teach For America in High School ***Zeyu Xu, Jane Hannaway, and Colin Taylor, The Urban Institute/CALDER (2009)***

**Grade Level: High School
Region: North Carolina
Design: Quasi-Experimental
Peer Reviewed**

This study, for which researchers used North Carolina end-of-course student-exam data from 2000 through 2006, found that Teach For America corps members were, on average, more effective than non-Teach For America teachers in all subject areas, and especially in math and science. This finding held even when Teach For America teachers were compared with experienced and fully certified teachers. These findings were confirmed in a 2009 update of the study, which employed a larger sample of corps members and additional comparison groups. In all cases, the positive impact of having a Teach For America teacher was at least twice that of having a teacher with three or more years of experience relative to a new teacher.

- The full study is available at www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411642_Teach_America.pdf
- The study is forthcoming in *The Journal of Public Policy and Management*
- The *New York Times* published an editorial about this study at www.nytimes.com/2008/05/16/opinion/16fri4.html

Teach For America Evaluation Report
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Center for Research & Evaluation
Office of Accountability (2009)

Grade Level: 3-12
Region: Charlotte,
North Carolina
Design: Correlational

Assessing data from two academic years (2007-08 and 2008-09), the report found that corps members, on average, were about as effective as other teachers in their schools. In math, depending upon the year studied and the method for measuring students' achievement, corps members were as effective as or slightly more effective than other teachers. In reading, they were as effective as or slightly less effective. Teach For America teachers were observed to be effective classroom managers who foster high levels of respect in the classroom, both between student and teacher and among students. Moreover, principals who had hired and managed Teach For America corps members reported high levels of satisfaction with their performance in the classroom.

- The full study is available at www.cms.k12.nc.us/cmsdepartments/accountability/cfre/Documents/TFA_Evaluation_Report.pdf

Teach For America National Principal Survey
Policy Studies Associates, Inc. (2009)

Grade Level: K-12
Region: National
Design: Descriptive

Principals who manage Teach For America corps members expressed a high level of satisfaction in this independent survey, reporting that corps members are well prepared and have a significant and positive impact on their schools and on student achievement. Specifically:

- 95 percent of the principals surveyed rated corps members as effective as other beginning teachers in terms of overall performance and impact on student achievement; 66 percent rated corps members as more effective than other beginning teachers.
- 94 percent of the principals reported that corps members have made a positive impact in their schools.
- 91 percent of the principals reported that corps members' training is at least as good as the training of other beginning teachers; 63 percent rated corps members' training as better than that of other beginning teachers.
- More information on the study results is available at www.teachforamerica.org/assets/documents/2009_Principal_Survey_National_Results_Highlights_08_09.pdf

Teach for America Teachers' Contribution to Student Achievement in Louisiana in Grades 4-9: 2004-2005 to 2006-2007
George H. Noell and Kristin A. Gansle (2009)

Grade Level: 4-9
Region: Louisiana
Design: Correlational

Part of a multi-year statewide study of teacher-preparation programs in Louisiana, this report found that Teach For America corps members in Louisiana were outperforming other new teachers and were as effective as veteran teachers across the state in math, science, reading, and language arts. Researchers found that corps members' impact on student achievement was more like that of experienced teachers than that of other new teachers. Corps members were more effective than other teachers with the same level of experience, even in their first year. Prior reports from this multi-year study had grouped Teach For America corps members and alumni with all other participants in the Louisiana Practitioner Teacher Program, which corps members in South Louisiana and Greater New Orleans complete to earn their certification.

- The full study is available at www.nctq.org/docs/TFA_Louisiana_study.PDF
- The *New York Times* published an editorial about the earlier results at www.nytimes.com/2008/12/12/opinion/12fri2.html?_r=2&ref=opinion

Achievement Levels and Growth in D.C. Preschool and Pre-K Classes Taught by Teach For America Teachers
Westat, Inc. (2008)

Grade Level: Pre-K
Region: Washington, D.C.
Design: Correlational

This study found that pre-kindergarten students of Teach For America corps members in Washington, D.C., made significant growth during the 2007-08 school year in vocabulary, letter recognition, and early math skills. Their progress was particularly robust in letter recognition; by the end of the year, these students exceeded the national averages in this area. Their vocabulary and early math skills remained below national norms, but by less than they had been in the fall. These students were also more advanced in both vocabulary and letter recognition than comparable children in Head Start programs. For example, students taught by Teach For America corps members knew all the letters of the alphabet, while Head Start students knew an average of 10 letters.

- *Education Week* published an article about the study at www.teachforamerica.org/assets/documents/EdWeek_Pre-K_Article.pdf

What Does Certification Tell Us About Teacher Effectiveness? Evidence From New York City

Thomas J. Kane, Jonah E. Rockoff, and Douglas O. Staiger (2008)

Grade Level: 3-8
Region: New York City
Design: Correlational
Peer Reviewed

Using six years of data on student test scores in New York City for grades three through eight, researchers compared the relative impact of traditionally certified teachers with that of alternatively certified teachers, including Teach For America corps members. They concluded that a teacher's classroom performance during the first two years was a more reliable indicator of future effectiveness than was their certification status; certification status had, on average, small impacts on student test performance.

- The full study is available at www0.gsb.columbia.edu/faculty/jrockoff/certification-final.pdf

How Changes in Entry Requirements Alter the Teacher Workforce and Affect Student Achievement

Donald Boyd, Pamela Grossman, Hamilton Lankford, Susanna Loeb, and James Wyckoff Teacher Pathways Project (2006)

Grade Level: 3-8
Region: New York City
Design: Correlational
Peer Reviewed

Using data on students and teachers in grades three through eight in New York City, researchers investigated whether teachers from alternate routes, including Teach For America, were more or less effective at improving student achievement than traditionally certified teachers. Teach For America corps members were found to be more likely to work with poor and low-performing students than teachers from other pathways, more likely to return to teaching in the second year, and as effective as—and at some grade levels, more effective than—their certified counterparts in math. Corps members were less effective than traditionally certified teachers in English/language arts in year one but achieved similar results by year two.

- The full study is available at www.teacherpolicyresearch.org/portals/1/pdfs/Reducing%20Entry%20Requirements%20EPF%202006.pdf

Does Teacher Preparation Matter? Evidence About Teacher Certification, Teach for America, and Teacher Effectiveness
Linda Darling-Hammond, Deborah J. Holtzman, Su Jin Gatlin, and Julian Vasquez Heilig (2005)

Grade Level: 4-5
Region: Houston, Texas
Design: Correlational
Peer Reviewed

Researchers found that, controlling for teacher experience, degrees, and student characteristics, certified Teach For America corps members (essentially those in their second year in the region studied) performed about as well as other certified teachers. They also concluded that uncertified Teach For America corps members (essentially those in their first year in the region studied) were less effective than certified teachers and performed about as well as other uncertified teachers.

- The full study is available at epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v13n42/v13n42.pdf

- Concerns about the methodology of this study led it to receive a “C” on the *Education Next* report card.
- University of Missouri–Columbia Middlebush Professor of Economics and Department Chair Michael Podgursky also wrote a response to this study, which is available at www.nctq.org/nctq/research/1114011044390.pdf

The Effects of Teach For America on Students: Findings From a National Evaluation

Paul T. Decker, Daniel P. Mayer, and Steven Glazerman, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (2004)

Grade Level: 1-5
Region: National
Design: Experimental
Peer Reviewed

Using random assignment of students to teachers—research methodology widely regarded as the gold standard—this study found that students of Teach For America corps members attained at least as much progress in reading as would be expected, and attained significantly greater gains in math compared with students of other teachers, including veteran and certified teachers. The study also found that corps members were working in the highest-need classrooms in the country, where students begin the year on average at the 14th percentile against the national norm.

- The full study is available at www.teachforamerica.org/assets/documents/mathematica_results_6.9.04.pdf
- The report was modified and published in the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* with the title “Alternative Routes to Teaching: The Impacts of Teach For America on Student Achievement and Other Outcomes.” This study is available at web.missouri.edu/~podgurskym/Econ_4345/syl_articles/glazerman_MPR_TFA_JPAM.pdf

IMPACT ON THE EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PIPELINE

Teach For America Alumni Project

Monica Higgins, Rick Hess, Jennie Wiener, and Wendy Robison (2011)

Harvard education professor Monica Higgins, American Enterprise Institute’s Rick Hess, and their research team conducted one of the first independent studies to look at the impact of the Teach For America experience on participants’ career paths. They compiled a list of prominent entrepreneurial education organizations and traced the work histories of the founders and top management to identify the “originating organizations.” Teach For America served as an originating organization for 15 percent of the entrepreneurial organizations. The next-greatest originating activity came from seven organizations: McKinsey and Company; the U.S. Department of Education; the White House Fellows program; and the Chicago, Los Angeles, Newark, and Oakland public school districts. Each served as an originator for 4 percent of the education entrepreneurial organizations. These findings indicate that more founders and leaders of education organizations participate in Teach For America than in any other organization or program.

Region: National
Design: Descriptive
Peer Reviewed

- The study was published in *Education Next* at educationnext.org/creating-a-corps-of-change-agents/

The Price of Misassignment: The Role of Teaching Assignments in Teach For America Teachers’ Exit From Low-Income Schools and the Teaching Profession

Morgaen Donaldson and Susan Moore Johnson (2010)

More than 2,000 Teach For America alumni in the 2000-2002 cohorts were surveyed to better understand their career decisions and pathways after completing their two-year corps commitment. The study found that an estimated 61 percent of Teach For America corps members remained in the teaching profession for more than two years, with 44 percent remaining in their placement schools beyond their two-year commitment.

Grade Level: K-12
Region: National
Design: Correlational
Peer Reviewed

- The full study is available at www.nctq.org/docs/Donaldson_Johnson.EEPA.pdf

Assessing the Effects of Voluntary Youth Service: The Case of Teach For America

Doug McAdam and Cynthia Brandt (2009)

Region: National
Design: Correlational
Peer Reviewed

Stanford University researchers studied the “civic engagement” of alumni, looking at measures including voting rates, volunteering, and political activity. McAdam and Brandt surveyed Teach For America alumni from the 1993 to 1998 corps and concluded that they had less of this sort of civic engagement than two control groups consisting of dropouts of the program and accepted applicants who did not matriculate to the program. However, the data show that all three groups of people recruited by Teach For America (alumni, non-matriculants, and dropouts) are highly engaged, and differences between the groups are very small. Moreover, in the area of civic engagement Teach For America focuses on—education—Teach For America alumni are more involved than non-matriculants.

- The full study is available at muse.jhu.edu/journals/sof/summary/v088/88.2.mcadam.html
- The *New York Times* published an article about this study at www.nytimes.com/2010/01/04/education/04teach.html?_r=1&adxnnl=1&adxnnlx=1296904128-xaN30tWVlzL1nU0LNqC8FQ
- Stanford University political science professor Rob Reich also wrote a response to this study at www.stanford.edu/group/reichresearch/cgi-bin/site/2010/01/03/teach-for-america-and-civic-engagement/

Appendix A

Source: *Education Next*, Spring 2008 (vol.8, no. 2), educationnext.org/teachers-for-america/

