

# Matching Students to Excellent Teachers

## How a Massachusetts Charter School Innovates with Teacher Preparation

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# **Matching Students to Excellent Teachers**

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Cara Stillings Candal

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### **Executive Summary**

Known throughout the Commonwealth and the nation as a network of high-performing charter public schools, Match Education takes a highly specific approach to education reform. Match aims to help students who have been traditionally underserved in the public school system achieve at very high levels, and it does so by taking a structured, ‘No Excuses’ approach to education. That approach entails a very specific approach to teaching; one that quickly diagnoses student needs and meets them in order to help students make large gains in small amounts of time. For Training teachers for its very specific approach to education has been a foundational component of Match’s success. Recently, Match has sought to enable schools across the country to replicate some of its success by providing them with Match-trained teachers.

Already confident in its ability to train and continuously cultivate cadres of tutors to work in its schools, through a program known as Match Corps, in 2008 Match formally launched its own teacher training program. Match Teacher Residency (MTR) trains “unusually effective rookie teachers” by putting them through a intensive course of study and practice designed to help them succeed in impacting student achievement from the moment they set foot in a classroom. Drawing from a pipeline of candidates working in the Match tutor corps, MTR trains teachers for the classroom in what might be the most tactical way possible: teachers live in housing provided by (and often within) Match schools, work the majority of the week as tutors for Match students, attend classes on long weekends, and receive intense coaching and feedback on practice teaching throughout the year. Though not conceived for the purpose of certifying

teachers, those who complete MTR do become certified after one year. Furthermore, since 2012, successful teacher residents have had the opportunity to earn a master’s degree (Master’s of Effective Teaching) through Match’s very own Sposato Graduate School of Education (SGSE).

The MTR approach to teacher training turns traditional notions of teacher preparation on their head because trainees are engaged in practice (much like a medical residency) from the beginning of the program. Unlike in traditional schools of education, the emphasis at MTR is on execution—the tactical moves that good teachers make to ensure student success—as opposed to pedagogy. This approach, according to Match, fills a specific niche, especially in the world of high-performing No Excuses charter schools, which rely on highly-skilled teachers trained to accelerate learning for students who often start school woefully behind.

Though the program is still in its infancy, MTR graduates are already highly sought after not only in Boston but also in high performing schools across the country. This detailed description of MTR, its purpose and design, and the role that it is playing in redefining teacher education highlights yet another important innovation coming out of the Boston charter school sector and out of Match Education, in particular.

### **Introduction**

In his 2007 book *The Trouble with Ed Schools*, David Labaree explores what he refers to as the “lowly status” of education schools and departments in U.S. colleges and universities. Although Labaree examines the issue from a number of angles, exploring the historical and societal forces that have shaped public opinion about teacher preparation

programs, he also acknowledges that schools of education are in some ways culpable for their reputations. In short, he charges, these schools are generally ineffective at producing the one thing that matters most: good teachers. Among the reasons for this ineffectiveness is a failure to disabuse the public of an all too common but false notion: that teaching is an easy thing to do. Labaree writes:

*teaching is an enormously difficult job that looks easy. . .the sheer complexity and irreducible uncertainty surrounding teaching as a practice have made it unusually difficult for education schools to develop effective programs for preparing practitioners for the field . . .as a result, teacher education programs struggle mightily and often in vain to prepare teacher candidates for the challenges they will face in the classroom. . .*<sup>1</sup>

The validity of Labaree’s main claim, that traditional teacher education programs often struggle to produce teachers ready to confront the realities of the classroom, is underscored when one considers the great number of alternative certification programs—programs that enable college graduates who have not attended traditional schools of education to earn a teaching certification—that have been created in recent years. In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts alone, willing teacher candidates can choose among numerous alternative paths to certification, including high-profile programs such as Teach for America (TFA)<sup>2</sup> and the Boston Teacher Residency as well as those sponsored by individual districts.<sup>3</sup> Even individual schools (many of them charter schools, which are technically their own districts) are now licensed by the Commonwealth to provide certification programs to aspiring teachers. Without spending four years in a school of education, candidates can

apprentice teach while working toward an alternative certification.

While teachers in Massachusetts charter schools are not required to be certified when they are hired, charters encourage and often make it easy for teachers to obtain certification because federal law (No Child Left Behind) punishes schools for not having “highly qualified teachers” on staff, and the law interprets highly qualified as ‘certified.’<sup>4</sup> More important than why they certify teachers, however, is that some charters that provide alternative certification tout the importance of being able to train teachers their own way. As one school staff member puts it, we focus specifically on “training effective teachers to work in *urban public high schools*,”<sup>5</sup> a mission far narrower than most traditional schools of education would espouse.

In Boston, where charter schools have proven to be particularly effective, this narrowly focused teacher preparation is important. Not only do some of the most successful Boston charters train their own teachers by being providers of alternative/practice-based licensure programs,<sup>6</sup> charters that do not have their own programs often hire from other alternative certification providers.<sup>7</sup> To these charters, the type of training a teacher has received matters; there is plenty of research to confirm that, among all factors within the four walls of a school, it is the teachers at the front of classrooms who have the greatest impacts on student achievement.<sup>8</sup>

Boston’s charter schools have been touted as some of the best schools in the country, charter or otherwise. Given their track records, it is clear that many teachers in Boston charters have received excellent training. According to a recent study by the Center for Research on Education Outcomes

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at Stanford University, “the average reading and math growth found in Boston’s charter schools is the largest state or city level impact CREDO has identified thus far.”<sup>9</sup>

Among this group of excellent Boston schools, one of the *most* effective providers is Match Education. Currently a network of three schools (Match High School, Match Middle School, and Match Community Day), Match Education helps students achieve great academic success, even when the demographic odds are stacked against them. From its beginning in 2000, Match has focused on serving poor and minority students in urban centers, many of whom come to Match with great gaps in learning, having been underserved in their previous schools. With what Match calls “obsessive attention to detail” and the use of “genuinely inventive solutions to important problems,” the schools achieve their goal of preparing every student for success in college.<sup>10</sup>

In the 2012-13 school year Match 10<sup>th</sup> graders placed first state-wide among high schools where more than 70 percent of students are low-income; they placed 22<sup>nd</sup> among all 305 high schools in the Commonwealth.<sup>11</sup> These achievements, among others, have received national recognition. Match high school has been cited by the US Department of Education (USDOE) as one of the nation’s eight best charter high schools, and Match Middle School and High School have both received the prestigious EPIC award, which recognizes value-added proficiency gains by students, for each five years between 2008 and 2012.<sup>12</sup>

Given its great success, it’s not surprising that Match Education is one of several Boston-area charter school operators that has opted to train teachers. In 2008 it began

the Match Teacher Residency (MTR), which “trains unusually effective rookie teachers” by putting them through a intensive course of study and practice designed to help them impact student achievement from the moment they set foot in a classroom. Drawing from a pipeline of candidates working in an existing Match program, the Match tutor corps, MTR trains teachers for the classroom in what might be the most tactical way possible: teachers live in housing provided by Match that is often in one of their schools, they work the majority of the week as tutors for Match students, attend classes on long weekends, and receive intense coaching and feedback on practice teaching throughout the year.<sup>13</sup>

Though not conceived for the purpose of certifying teachers, those who complete MTR do become certified after one year. Furthermore, since 2012, successful teacher residents have had the opportunity to earn a master’s degree (Master’s of Effective Teaching) through Match’s very own Sposato Graduate School of Education (SGSE).<sup>14</sup>

Aside from its small size and history of growing out of a small network of effective charter schools,<sup>15</sup> MTR is unique in that it provides a narrowly focused form of teacher education with the intent of producing teachers not only for Match schools but also for urban schools across the country. In brief, MTR believes it can impact student achievement in schools nationwide by preparing new teachers to work in particular environments—high-performing urban public schools, many of which take a ‘no excuses’ approach to teaching.<sup>16</sup> In doing so, MTR is filling a gap in the teacher pipeline, the gap between those with a broad academic and, as Labaree might have it, progressive “ed school” education grounded in pedagogy

and those who are prepared, from day one, for the practical rigors of teaching in a particular kind of classroom.

The pages that follow document the growth and approach of MTR as well as its philosophy of teacher education and the program’s initial results. They conclude with ideas about the potential impact of the kind of ‘niche’ education that MTR provides and recommendations for what can be learned about teacher education, generally speaking, from an in-depth look at this focused and alternative way of educating new teachers.

**The MTR Approach: In the Trenches Teacher Training**

When the MTR program was officially established in 2008 Match education had already been informally training future teachers for some time. In 2005 the first Match school, Match High School, had a fully implemented a tutor corps (Match Corps).<sup>17</sup> Since then, the high school has been the literal home to up to 45 tutors at a time (corps members live on the top floor of the building)—graduates from prestigious universities who agree to commit a year of service to Match and supplement student learning by providing comprehensive tutoring services throughout the school day.<sup>18</sup>

Match has plenty of evidence that its tutor corps produces strong student outcomes, and it has expanded the model not only within its own network of schools but also to other charter and traditional public school districts in Boston and in cities across the country such as Houston, New Orleans, Denver, and Chicago.<sup>19</sup>

From the beginning, it was clear that the tutor corps was a great source of potential teachers. Match knew that many of its best tutors were going on to become teachers, whether at Match or other urban schools.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, by 2008, Match was already investing heavily in training tutors, making sure that they understood the fundamentals of the curricula they were teaching, building strong relationships with students and families, and the ‘moves’ that make teaching in the small group setting most effective.<sup>21</sup> In part due to this training, Match’s tutor corps had driven “huge academic gains” for Match students for a number of years. Match believed that within each corps there were at least a handful of members who, with the right training, could continue to drive huge academic gains in their own classrooms.<sup>22</sup>

Though they function as two separate entities, all Match Teacher Residents are also members of Match Corps. Applicants submit

**Table 1: MTR 2013-2014 Cohort**

Entering Number	75
Female	65%
Male	35%
Asian American	8%
African American	11%
Latino	3%
White	78%
Largest number of residents coming from:	Williams College, Northwestern University, Duke University, Colby College, University of Chicago

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an application for both programs, if they so desire, but no applicant can be a resident without also being a member of Match corps and not all Match Corps members who apply will be accepted into the residency program. Residents sign on for one full-time year of tutoring, studying, and practice teaching on a Match campus. Those who wish to pursue a Master's of Effective Teaching (MET) continue with the program after placement in a teaching position, engaging with instructors and peers in an online format and continuing to undergo intense evaluation and scrutiny.<sup>23</sup>

Because the program's goals are so clear, MTR seeks candidates who are philosophically aligned with its mission: to prepare teachers to work in urban public schools that take a no excuses approach to schooling—an approach in which instruction tends to be teacher centered, where student behavior is closely monitored, and where all students take a college preparatory curriculum and are expected to put in longer days, longer school years, and huge amounts of effective effort.<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, this means that most MTR residents are not graduates of nor have they had any exposure to traditional schools of education. While someone with an education school background does not automatically present a 'red flag' for admission, explains MTR Chief Operating Officer, Scott McCue, admissions staff might desire to "dig in" to that person's comfort level with no excuses-style schools, which are not necessarily well aligned with the more progressive brand of pedagogy often taught in schools of education.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to looking for philosophical alignment, upon admission MTR seeks to understand each candidate's "ability to assimilate and apply new information and capacity to withstand the emotional and

other difficulties of teaching without giving up (grit)." Perhaps most importantly, MTR also seeks to understand each candidate's willingness to put in large amounts of sheer hard work throughout his or her time at MTR. Candidates who are "strongest out of the gate" not only exhibit the qualities outlined here, they also tend to have "experience working with low-income populations and are open to receiving and integrating large amounts of feedback about their practice." In a word, they are coachable.<sup>26</sup>

This screening process is very important, because once they admitted, MTR requires its residents to work hard. Each lives in tutor corps-provided housing within or near a Match school. Residents work Monday through Thursday as full-time tutors, which entails meeting with small groups of students throughout the school day, working closely with teachers to ensure proper student support, and building and maintaining close relationships with parents. Indeed, the life of a Match tutor is, as one corps member describes, "incredibly challenging and demanding." The life of a Match tutor who is also a teacher resident is even more so.<sup>27</sup>

After a full week of tutoring, residents attend classes and, over the course of the year, engage in simulated and real practice teaching every Friday and Saturday. Although, as tutors, residents already receive plenty of training and feedback to ensure their effectiveness, MTR instruction concentrates heavily on equipping residents with a skill set that is different from that needed for tutoring. Teachers, for example, need to understand "how to write lesson plans, engage in long-range instructional planning, review student-level data that will help to drive instruction, and establish a positive and productive classroom culture." Academic

engagement with these things and many others is an important part of MTR, as is a very heavy dose of actual practice teaching and clear, pointed, and constant feedback on that teaching.<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, if there is one major thing that separates MTR from more traditional teacher preparation programs, it is the amount of practice in front of actual students residents get and the amount of feedback they receive on their teaching. “The average teacher-to-be does about 12-15 weeks of student teaching” and may or may not receive actionable feedback on what they have done and what they could do better.<sup>29</sup> Each Match teacher resident, on the other hand, benefits from over 80 hours of practice teaching scenarios (simulations) in the first semester of the program alone, all under the watchful eyes of coaches, themselves expert teachers, who give precise and actionable feedback on every move the resident makes.<sup>30</sup> In this sense, MTR recognizes and communicates to its residents that teaching is incredibly hard and precise work. The term ‘residency’ in this context is intentional; Match is training teachers “in the way we train doctors and pilots, with intense realistic practice, using humans, simulations, and master instructors.”<sup>31</sup>

While the first semester of the one-year MTR program includes practice teaching scenarios in conjunction with more traditional classwork, including reading, discussion, and guidance on lesson and curriculum

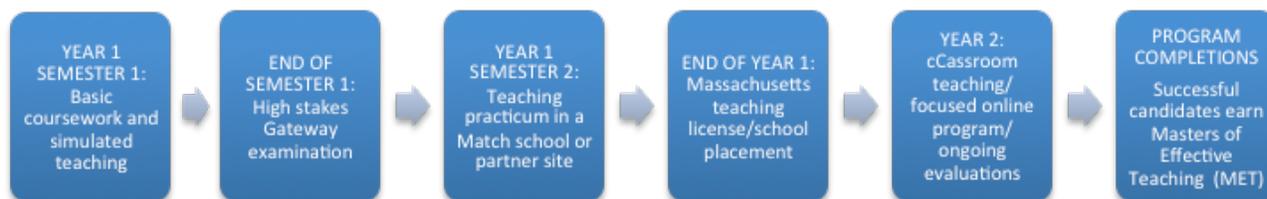
planning, the second semester is even more tactical. Each resident student teaches at one of Match’s schools or three partner sites. As with the simulated practices in which they engage in the first semester, each student teacher has the benefit of a full-time coach observing his or her lessons. That coach is charged, as in the first semester simulations, with giving specific, concrete, and actionable feedback to residents—feedback designed to make their practice as effective as it can be.<sup>32</sup>

According to teacher residents the amount of feedback provided throughout the program is at once the most difficult and the most rewarding aspect of MTR:

*The feedback component is, in my opinion, unique to MTR, and it has made me the teacher that I am today. I have the thickest skin in the world now. During my time with the corps and with MTR I received feedback on everything in the world—from the little things that I do in lessons to the way that I dress to whether or not the e-mails that I send home to parents are too long. It makes you realize that as educators we give so much feedback to our kids, we have to be able to take it, too. Because of our ability to take and use feedback I see a marked difference between the teachers at my school who went through MTR and those who didn’t.<sup>33</sup>*

Another former teacher resident echoes the sentiment that learning to receive and

**Figure 1: Match Teacher Residency Program Outline**



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integrate specific feedback is one of the biggest challenges MTR poses for future teachers. “Initially it is really difficult,” he notes, “but with coaching and support you come to see that the feedback works. We even get feedback on how we take feedback from our coaches, but you come to realize that they are the experts.”<sup>34</sup>

The experts to whom this former resident is referring are all teachers who have become teacher coaches with Match’s help. They have helped students achieve outstanding growth in their own classrooms and Match has confidence that they understand what constitutes good teaching, especially in the types of schools in which teacher residents will work.<sup>35</sup> Orin Gutlerner, founding director of MTR, explains that there is a link between strong professional development and strong coaching, which is one of the major things that sets MTR apart:

*We have a framework, boiled down to six big buckets of what we think constitutes good teaching, and we work to make sure that all of our coaches are fully aligned to help teachers make the right choices at the right time. The time that our teachers spend in front of students is setting them up for their own practice and the feedback that they will receive. It lets residents see replicable techniques and instills the need to focus on the nuance of execution. There isn’t a debate around whether these techniques are good and bad. It’s about answering the questions: ‘what will you do when?’ ‘what tools will you pull out of your box?’<sup>36</sup>*

Gutlerner points out that MTR is about as tactical and practice-based a program as can be found in the education space. MTR seeks to capture what great teachers do and to teach those techniques to others. He is not saying,

however, that MTR has ‘figured it all out;’ he is not suggesting that the program has found the magic bullet for creating great teachers. Instead, he knows that Match knows a lot about good teaching from its own research and that of others. He also knows that the MTR team is constantly seeking to “raise the bar” on effective teaching and revise its curriculum accordingly, which is no small feat.

According to MTR Director of Curriculum and Instruction Randall Lahan, part of MTR’s challenge as it seeks to constantly update its curriculum to include examples of best practices is that “a lot of times there is not language around what great teachers do—only the teachers themselves can characterize their actions.”<sup>37</sup> Thus MTR is constantly looking to expert teachers, those who help students to achieve the greatest outcomes, to explain how and why they do things. They even ask those teachers to explain the timing of what they do and to capture these things in a language that can be communicated to teacher residents.

This notion of a living curriculum and the idea that MTR is an output-based program designed to capture and replicate highly effective teaching underscores why the practice loop residents experience is so important; MTR knows that expert teachers might have good instincts, but it also knows that they aren’t born, they are made. If for example, MTR knows of a teacher who is an expert in rapid-fire questioning scaffolded to help students achieve increasingly high levels of discourse, they want residents to observe that person’s practice, identify why it is effective, simulate it with fellow residents, receive feedback on that simulation, and implement the feedback again and again until they are able to practice the same loop in

front of live students and with the support of their coaches.

Of course, given this kind of intense, practice-based curriculum, not everyone succeeds. The MTR evaluation process is specific: in addition to weekly quizzes and a rigorous final exam that measures mastery of the “details of effective teaching” that students have learned through coursework, each resident is required to sit for a “Gateway” examination at the end of the first semester. “During the Gateway, students are scored on a set of mini-lessons delivered to real Match School students.” Coaches are looking to see whether residents have acquired “basic skills of classroom management” and “instructional delivery.” They also seek to gauge residents’ ability to “assess students’ thinking and deliver appropriate feedback.” The Gateway is a high-stakes examination and residents who do not pass do not go on to participate in a teaching practicum

during the second semester of the program. Residents who do go on to complete the practicum are further evaluated throughout the spring semester. Specifically, coaches evaluate these apprentice teachers on their ability to implement feedback, their overall classroom performance, effectiveness of their instructional planning, and their ability to act as a team member and contribute to a strong school culture. Residents who pass this final assessment earn a Massachusetts teaching license.<sup>38</sup>

In many cases, those who aren’t making progress toward becoming highly effective teachers—those who can’t pass the Gateway—are well aware of their status. This is another benefit of the frequent and specific feedback that MTR provides. When a resident is not progressing, he or she will, in most cases, decide that teaching, or MTR’s brand of teaching, is not for them. In all cases, MTR supports these residents and promotes

**Figure 2: MTR Effective Teaching Loop**



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the idea of a ‘healthy exit.’ Those who leave the program continue to be effective members of the tutor corps and some have even gone on to work at Match in non-teaching roles. According to COO Scott McCue, “up until residents have a classroom of their own, there is absolutely no stigma attached to leaving the program.”<sup>39</sup> In many ways, MTR’s healthy exit concept underscores the idea that teaching is a specific kind of hard work, work for which not just anyone is equipped. This challenges the common adage “those who can’t do teach.”

Indeed, the very concept and structure of MTR challenges many common notions about teachers and how we prepare them. Though the program is very clear that its role is to fill a niche market, to augment the teacher pipeline for urban, high-poverty, no excuses schools in particular,<sup>40</sup> it would be a mistake to think that more traditional teacher induction programs cannot learn from what MTR is doing. MTR also realizes that there are plenty of positive aspects of traditional teacher training programs.

Having come to Match from Harvard, where he directed the Undergraduate Teacher Education Program, Orin Gutlerner is uniquely equipped to comment upon the major differences between MTR and high-quality traditional teacher education. He notes:

*There is a pull within the academy not to talk about practice but to speak about what you can control outside of the classroom. When PD and practice are separate from one another, the tendency is to look big picture. For us, the big question is ‘what do you leave out?’ At MTR we don’t prioritize learning about the social and historical context of education, and that can result in missed opportunities for our*

*teachers to ground themselves in the idea that we are a part of something bigger. We sometimes suffer under the weight of emphasizing so many details. Our hope is that this is somewhat mitigated by immersing them in a school culture, which is why participation in Match Corps is so important. They are still going to get a lot of their education simply by being in the schools.*<sup>41</sup>

Thus, MTR sees itself not as competition for traditional teacher education programs but as singularly focused on being the best it can be for the market it serves. It is evident, however, despite how MTR positions itself, that there is a lot of reciprocal learning that can take place for teachers of teachers.<sup>42</sup> Even if MTR is not poised to radically change the way in which most students become teachers, it is well positioned to contribute to the conversation, a claim that is supported not only by its outcomes but also by its many high profile supporters who are interested in improving upon aspects of traditional teacher preparation programs.

### **Informing the Conversation: MTR’s Outcomes**

Although residents pursuing the MET degree have a full year of online coursework and teaching evaluations ahead of them during their rookie year of teaching, all who complete the first year of MTR emerge fully certified teachers, at least in Massachusetts. While certification is important, it is not the focus or even one of the MTR’s main goals. The program’s main goal is to put the most effective teachers in front of the students who most need them. For this reason, MTR is very intentional about helping residents find jobs, starting in the spring semester of residency, when it has become clear which rookies have

mastered enough content and practice to lead their own classrooms.

Placement in Massachusetts and the greater Boston area is common, and MTR grads are sought after, especially by the city's high-performing charters. They are also increasingly sought after by high-performing schools and networks across the country, often in places where Match already has partnerships (such as Dallas, Chicago, Denver, and New Orleans). It is not uncommon for schools and networks that are particularly well aligned with Match's mission and no excuses approach to hire several MTR graduates in the same year. Scott Given, CEO of Unlocking Potential, which has schools in Boston and Lawrence, Massachusetts, "hired six Match teacher residents in 2013, three in 2012, and three in 2011. When we have teacher resumes from the grad schools at Harvard, Stanford, and Match, we move fastest to consider the Match candidate," says Given. "It's not even a close call. Their teachers are the best from any graduate school of education in America."<sup>43</sup>

Match has as much, or even more faith in the quality of its program and graduating residents than Given. Not only does MTR guarantee job placement by asking graduates to pay the program's very low \$5,000<sup>44</sup> tuition only after they are employed, it also charges hiring schools "a finder's fee of \$6,000 for the ability to hire a Match-trained teacher."<sup>45</sup> These finder's fees serve the dual purpose of ensuring that Match is delivering only the best-trained candidates to principals and of keeping MTR tuition low, so residents don't face the burden of paying back education loans on a teacher's salary.<sup>46</sup>

Of course, it is still difficult to tell just how this 'faith' in the quality of the program and quality of MTR residents directly translates

into measures of program quality. With its first class of MET students slated to graduate in 2013, MTR thus far has only a limited idea of the impact it will ultimately have on the schools for which it seeks to prepare teachers. For the time being, MTR is most interested in understanding whether and where its graduates are hired, the extent to which principals express satisfaction with MTR graduates' performance, and the impact of individual graduates on student achievement.

By these measures, MTR is currently quite successful. As of the 2012/2013 school year, every MTR graduate had found a job. In blind evaluations<sup>47</sup> of their performance, MTR's fourth cohort of rookie teachers scored 9 percentage points higher than the other rookie teachers to whom they were being compared in each school.<sup>48</sup> In addition to this impressive evidence of the program's effectiveness, there is also evidence that MTR grads are staying in the classroom. Of the cohort that began MTR in 2010, now in its third year of teaching, all but one graduate is still in the classroom, and that person has moved on to a school leadership position. Of the cohort that began in 2011, all MTR graduates are currently in the classroom.<sup>49</sup>

While this anecdotal evidence may be satisfying for MTR's leaders, no one is ready to rest on the laurels of a few successful years. MTR is constantly seeking new ways to measure the effectiveness of its teachers, beyond conducting blind evaluations and keeping in close contact with hiring principals. Ideally, for example, MTR would like to evaluate its approach to teacher education by understanding if it can improve the performance of traditional teacher education program graduates. Such a complicated experiment would involve isolating the training and coaching variables

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**Table 2: MTR Outcomes, Cohort IV\***

MTR Grads—Blind Evaluation, Average Score	67/100
Other Rookies—Blind Evaluation, Average Score	58/100
# Graduated from Program	36
# Hired	36
# In Classrooms as of 2013-2014	36

\* Cohort entered MTR in Fall 2011 and is in second year of classroom teaching

(the MTR approach) to understand whether they can always contribute to making a better teacher.<sup>50</sup>

Another future measure of MTR's success may be its ability to place teachers in traditional district school settings and see those teachers achieve the same success as they do in high-performing no excuses charters. As district schools start to look to MTR as a source of great teachers, the program is, however, wary of how a district's structures and policies could impact the work of its residents. Whereas the majority of schools in which MTR residents are currently placed have, for example, the autonomy to hire and fire teachers and therefore to create strong and intentional school cultures conducive to raising student achievement, many traditional districts continue to be hampered by union and other rules that prevent them from building the kinds of schools in which MTR graduates are best prepared to teach.<sup>51</sup>

Of course, MTR itself will not be the only one that ultimately has a say in what continued programmatic success looks like. With some of the money for the program coming from philanthropic partners such as New Schools Venture Fund and the Lynch Foundation, for the time being at least, MTR has partners who will help craft and measure the definition of its success. Each of the aforementioned organizations is looking to MTR as one way to drive change in the larger education space.

Says Julie Mikuta of the New Schools Venture Funds “one of the main reasons we are investing in MTR is because there is a strong theme of tying what they are doing to student outcomes.” Additionally, notes Mikuta, MTR is lowering the cost of teacher education; “we don't want to see teachers going into huge amounts of debt, because when they do staying in the classroom becomes difficult.”<sup>52</sup> Katie Everett of the Lynch Foundation echoes this sentiment, noting that MTR is working on a model where “the tuition that residents pay is appropriate to salary.”<sup>53</sup> For both funders, there is a great interest in helping the model get to scale, so that MTR can be self-sustaining while keeping the cost of educating teacher residents realistically low enough to allow excellent teachers to stay in the field.

As it does begin to scale, MTR's leaders are very aware of the program's potential to influence a broader conversation around American teacher education. “We have no particular appetite,” says Orin Gutlerner, “to become as big as an organization like TFA or even some traditional schools of education. What we do hope is that we can influence the conversation around how teachers are produced. We are very interested in figuring out how to measure what makes an effective teacher effective.”

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

In a time when schools in general are facing an impending shortage of teachers and when some of the most effective schools in the country are facing a dearth of high-quality teachers in the hiring pool, Match Teacher Residency is filling an important need. With its precise approach to recruiting and training highly effective rookie teachers, MTR is slowly building a new pipeline of highly effective rookie teachers and, in doing so, influencing the conversation around teacher preparation and induction in a meaningful way.

MTR raises important questions, such as: How much time does a teacher really need to spend in front of live students in an apprentice capacity before going on to lead his or her own classroom? What kind of clear and actionable feedback do teachers require to improve even the most granular aspects of their practice—aspects that can have the greatest impact on student conceptual understanding and success? How can we make teacher preparation programs affordable as well as sustainable, so graduates can go on to teach without feeling pressured to leave the classroom just to make ends meet?

Although MTR does not view itself as competition for traditional teacher education, traditional programs and others would do well to look to MTR and the ways in which it is innovating. Together then, MTR and other teacher preparation programs might stand the chance of improving teacher quality nationwide.

### **Recommendations**

*Sharing Best Practices*—Other charter schools, traditional districts, and even traditional schools of education should seek to understand MTR’s approach to teacher

training and the extent to which it can and should be replicated to ensure a more effective overall teaching force. MTR’s emphasis on feedback and coaching and on ensuring that teachers in training have ample practice with actual students could be replicated not only in other induction programs but also in school settings (charter, district, and independent alike), where teachers receive ongoing professional development.

*A Strong Focus on Outcomes*—Match Education and MTR should continue to focus on understanding the specific outcomes that graduates help students achieve and how those outcomes change, if at all, as these unusually effective rookie teachers become more seasoned professionals. They should also continue to gather as much data as possible on whether and how MTR graduates are retained in the classroom and, if they are not, whether they continue to work in education. With a strong focus on student outcomes and the retaining effective teachers, MTR will be able to fill an increasingly large portion of the gap that currently exists in the high-quality teacher pipeline.

*Bring the Program to Scale*—Philanthropists and public providers should invest in MTR in an effort to bring the program to scale and make it self-sustaining. Public providers in particular, such as the state and federal governments, should look to MTR’s low-cost model as a viable alternative for training high-quality teachers who will be more likely to remain in the classroom than their peers who have to bear the burden of high student loan debt. Public providers may also provide incentives to MTR to help other organizations replicate its programming.

## ■ **Matching Students to Excellent Teachers**

### *About the Author:*

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## **Endnotes**

1. Labaree, David, F. (2004) *The Trouble with Ed Schools*. New Haven, Yale University Press, P. 39.
2. Teach for America, the organization, is not technically a certification provider, though it provides a route to alternative certification. TFA trains candidates and places them in schools and districts where they are needed and then partners with external entities to provide certification to its teachers. TFA teachers can but need not have degrees from traditional schools of education to be certified.
3. See <http://www.doe.mass.edu/educators/directory.html>.
4. “Understanding the No Child Left Behind Act: Teacher quality,” Learning Point Associates, <http://www.learningpt.org/pdfs/qkey6.pdf>, accessed Nov. 17, 2013.
5. City on a Hill, “Urban Teaching Fellowship Program,” <http://www.cityonahill.org/fellowship.php>, accessed Nov. 15, 2013.
6. See <http://www.doe.mass.edu/educators/directory.html> for further explanation of licensure options in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
7. City on a Hill Charter Public School, Match Education, and Community Day Public Charter School (in Lawrence, MA) are just three examples of schools that provide “alternative/practice based licensure programs.” Charters can house alternative licensure programs in part because in the Commonwealth they are considered to be their own districts. Formerly, the Massachusetts Alternative/Practice-based Licensure Program was known as the District-based licensure program, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/educators/directory.html>
8. See: Rice, Jennifer King (2003) *Teacher quality: understanding the effectiveness of teacher attributes*. Economic Policy Institute.
9. Center for Research on Education Outcomes (2013). *Charter school performance in Massachusetts*, Stanford University.
10. Match Education, “Our Approach,” <http://www.Matchededucation.org/about-us/our-approach>, accessed November 17, 2012.
11. Match Education, “Fall 2013 school results,” Press Release.
12. Match Education, “Match Education history,” <http://www.Matchededucation.org/about-us/history>, accessed November 17, 2013.
13. *ibid*
14. “Application of Charles Sposato Graduate School of Education, Inc. to award the Master of Effective Teaching,” Board of Higher Education, request for committee and board action, AAC 12-28, March 6, 2012.
15. Although Match’s history is unique, other traditional school districts and some charter schools across the nation do train teachers and grant masters degrees. The Boston Teacher Residency Program is one example of a district-based teaching fellowship, at the end of which teachers can earn a master’s degree. Other urban districts (such as the Chicago Public Schools) and charter networks, such as Aspire Public Schools and Rocketship Education offer similar programs. <http://www.breakthroughcollaborative.org/teacher-pipeline-project>
16. Interview with Scott McCue, Chief Operating Officer, Match Teacher Residency, August 30, 2013. The ‘No Excuses’ approach is described in greater detail below.
17. Match Education, “Match Education history”

## ■ **Matching Students to Excellent Teachers**

18. Match Corps Recruiting for 2013-14 Corps Data Analysis Summary, internal document provided by Match Education
19. See Candal, Cara (2013) *Matching Students with Excellent Tutors: How a Massachusetts Charter School Bridges Achievement Gaps*. Pioneer Institute White Paper No. 109.
20. Interview with Michael Goldstein, Match founder, Sept. 5 2013.
21. Interview with Scott McCue, chief operating officer, Charles Sposato Graduate School of Education/ Match Teacher Residency, Sept. 5 2013.
22. Interview with Michael Goldstein
23. Interview with Scott McCue
24. Interview with Scott McCue; also, for more information about the No Excuses model, see: Pondiscio, Robert (Spring 2013). No excuses kids go to college: will high-flying charters see their low-income kids graduate? *Education Next*.
25. *ibid*
26. *ibid*
27. Interview with Anne Pinnell, Match Corps member, Sept. 12, 2013
28. Interview with Scott McCue.
29. See Ripley, Amanda (June 2012) Boot camp for teachers. *The Atlantic*. <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/07/boot-camp-for-teachers/309029/>, accessed Nov. 18, 2013.
30. Interview with Scott McCue
31. Ripley, Amanda. Boot camp for teachers.
32. Interview with Randall Lahan.
33. Interview with Aleah Starr, former Match Corps member and Match Teacher Residency graduate, Sept. 9, 2012.
34. Interview with John Bachner, former Match Corps member and Match Teacher Residency graduate, Sept. 5, 2012.
35. Interview with Randall Lahan.
36. Interview with Orin Gutlerner, founding director Match Teacher Residency, Nov. 2 2013
37. Interview with Randall Lahan.
38. MATCH Education, "Assessment in MTR and SGSE," <http://www.Matchededucation.org/Match-teacher-residency/assessment-mtr-and-sgse>, accessed Nov. 20 2013.
39. Interview with Scott McCue
40. Interview with Randall Lahan
41. Interview with Orin Gutlerner
42. Interview with Randall Lahan
43. Quoted in: "Teachers trained by Match education have 100 percent job placement for fifth consecutive year." Press Release, (PRWEB) June 5, 2013. <http://www.prweb.com/releases/MatchEducation/MTR/prweb10833877.htm>, accessed Nov. 21, 2013.

44. In contrast, a full time graduate student enrolled in the one-year Masters of Teaching program (leading to initial licensure) in the School of Education at Boston University, which is located just blocks from Match High School, can expect to pay roughly \$44,000 in tuition for one year. See: <http://www.bu.edu/sed/admissions/graduate-students/costs-and-tuition/>

45. *ibid*

46. According to Match COO Scott McCue, MTR costs roughly \$15,000 per resident to run. Since Match only recoups about \$5,000 of this from each graduated resident, the remaining costs are currently covered by philanthropic organizations.

47. Blind evaluations of MTR graduates are conducted when they have been teaching for 4 to 7 months in their various schools. The evaluators (most of whom are No Excuses principals or instructional leaders) observe and score a lesson. The evaluators do the same for other first-year teachers in the same school who came from other programs, many of which are also selective (e.g. Harvard Graduate School of Education, Teach for America). (Personal correspondence with Scott McCue, Nov. 21, 2013).

48. Personal correspondence with Scott McCue, Nov. 21, 2013.

49. *ibid*

50. Interview with Orin Gutlerner.

51. *ibid*

52. Interview with Julie Mikuta, partner, New Schools Venture Fund, Sept. 7, 2013.

53. Interview with Katie Everett, executive director, Lynch Foundation, Monday Sept. 16, 2013.

