Elementary Literacy Coursework

The following elements undergird RTR’s literacy instruction:

1. **Training on key literacy skills and assessments.** Before completing their summer practicum, residents learn key proficiencies related to scientifically-based reading instruction. By learning how to maintain running records and how to administer proper assessments, residents construct foundational knowledge that will be utilized during their immersive practicum experience. Residents also have the opportunity to teach several lessons; these lessons serve as a key experience before the intensive tutoring practicum that occurs each summer.

2. **An immersive practicum experience.** RTR partners with local schools to host individual tutoring for struggling students each summer. During this practicum course, residents practice administering a battery of literacy assessments and use the results to write detailed lesson plans that address students’ needs in each component of literacy. The incorporation of assessment, classroom management, and differentiation into this experience provides the resident with the content knowledge and teaching methods necessary to help all students progress.

3. **Daily observations and feedback.** During their practicum experience, faculty supervisors observe residents’ enactment of core literacy-building proficiencies. These observations are the basis for feedback sessions wherein faculty assist residents in deconstructing their emerging practice. The frequency and impact of these observations and feedback sessions propel residents forward as they model meaningful literacy instruction.

Anecdotal program evidence suggests that the quality of literacy coursework has a persistent, positive effect on residents’ reading instruction and their students’ growth. In particular, residents note an enhanced interest and motivation to read from their students.
Summer school considerations. RTR must plan months in advance to secure a partnering site for summer coursework since not every school within Richmond Public Schools houses a summer school program. Similarly, site leaders for summer school programs are typically not actual school principals; this shift requires additional relationship-building and consideration as summer coursework is being designed. Students attending summer school also occasionally struggle to attend school regularly, requiring a watchful eye from instructors and supervisors so that residents still have opportunities to tutor and teach.

Expanded pathways and time constraints. The Richmond Teacher Residency expanded the potential paths that residents take to earn licensure. In addition to the students who are earning their Master of Teaching degree, RTR also has students who are earning a Post-baccalaureate Certificate. Those students take the foundations of literacy course during the summer before their residency year. Then, during the first semester of their residency year, students complete their reading practicum. To ensure that they are receiving on-site supervision and feedback, the residents need to be in the same school for the one-on-one literacy tutoring experience. This frequently stresses residents’ schedules and forces them to miss time from their residency classrooms.

For More Information:
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