



Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute

# Teachers Institute Curriculum Units Are Used

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January 2018



# Research Brief: Teachers Institute Curriculum Units Are Used<sup>1</sup>

Public school districts, in partnership with one or more universities and colleges, form Teachers Institutes that offer seminars led by faculty on topics that teachers have identified as important to their work. The seminar schedules vary across Institutes, but typically seminars meet weekly over a period of several months. In the seminars, the faculty seminar leader guides participating teachers (Fellows) in learning about the seminar topic, and the Fellows develop curriculum units on some aspect of the topic to use with their students. The curriculum units are also published online for other teachers to use.

## Both Authors and Other Teachers Use Institute Curriculum Units

Curriculum units forge a strong link between Institute seminars and teachers' classrooms. Nearly all Fellows use the units they write in the Teachers Institute, sharing what they learned in their seminar with their students.

### Teachers Institute Curriculum Unit Study

The study focuses on curriculum units completed in 2014 and 2015 in three Teachers Institutes (Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Delaware Teachers Institute and Teachers Institute of Philadelphia) and the Yale National Initiative.

The study draws on multiple data sources, reflecting different perspectives on curriculum units:

- (1) online questionnaires completed by Fellows at the end of the program;
- (2) a systematic review of curriculum units;
- (3) a Web pop-up survey (Yale National Initiative and Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute Web sites only);
- (4) Online teacher survey (New Haven, CT school district only); and
- (5) focus groups (Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute only).

It is common for Fellows to use units written by other Fellows also. In New Haven, CT, where a long-established Teachers Institute operates, half of the Fellows who responded to an online teacher survey had used units written by other Fellows.

Other teachers use Institute curriculum units, too. At the end of their seminar, most Fellows report that they plan to share their unit with other teachers. While the extent of use by other teachers is uncertain, the study found that 11% of other teachers in New Haven had used Institute units. A Web pop-up survey also identified more than 100 teachers per month across the United States and around the world who had used or planned to use the Institute curriculum units they found online.

## Teachers Use Institute Units in Multiple Ways

Institute curriculum units, which focus on subject matter and teaching strategies but do not include complete lesson plans, can be used in a variety of ways. New Haven Fellows were most likely to implement their own units as written (49% of Fellows) or with adaptations (49% of Fellows). Many also used the teaching strategies (57% of Fellows) or subject matter (41% of Fellows) from the unit to prepare for teaching other materials.

When using Institute units written by other teachers, New Haven teachers were most likely to read the teaching strategies (66% of teachers) or subject matter (62% of

<sup>1</sup> Prepared by Ellen Eliason Kisker, Twin Peaks Partners, LLC, January 31, 2018.

teachers) in the units to get ideas or prepare for teaching their own curriculum. Many reported that they implemented the most recent unit they had used with adaptations (43% of teachers) or read the bibliography to identify other resources (31% of teachers). As expected, few said they implemented the unit as written.

## Teachers Compare Institute Units Favorably to Commercial Curriculum

Institute curriculum units are well-regarded. In New Haven. Nearly all teachers who responded to the online survey were satisfied with the units they had used and planned to implement again the unit they had used most recently.

Fellows and other teachers in New Haven who had used Institute curriculum units as written or with adaptations reported that they compare favorably to commercial curriculum materials they had used. Most teachers found that Institute curriculum units usually require as much or more preparation time than commercial curriculum units, and they elicit greater student attention, interest, and motivation, and lead to higher student mastery.

“I found that the units contained rigor and caused students to think and reflect in ways that they are unaccustomed to with the current curriculum.” *(New Haven teacher)*

## Publication of Institute Units Online Expands Unit Use

As noted above, publication of Teachers Institute curriculum units online leads to their use by thousands of other teachers, many of them public school teachers, across the United States and around the world.

The use of Institute curriculum responded to the Web pop-up that of the teachers in New Haven.

Other people who find Institute online find them useful. Most to use the units to learn about a were interested or to identify other subject matter that may be useful.



units by teachers who surveyed is similar to

curriculum units often, they planned subject in which they resources about the

## For more information...

For more information about the Teachers Institute or the research summarized in this brief, please send inquiries to: [teachers@yale.edu](mailto:teachers@yale.edu)

Teachers Institute curriculum units are published online and can be reached through the following Web site: <http://teachers.yale.edu/units/>