

The Teachers Institute Approach: University-School Partnerships to Provide Intensive Teacher Professional Development¹

What is a Teachers Institute?

- A **school district-university partnership** that **offers intensive seminars** in which:
 - University faculty bring content expertise and K-12 teachers bring knowledge of students to learn about topics that teachers themselves have identified as useful to their teaching.
 - Each teacher writes a curriculum unit on some aspect of the seminar topic, with the support of colleagues and the seminar leader, to teach to their students in the following year.
 - Admission is not selective, but teachers must commit to full participation and their principal must verify that they will be able to teach their curriculum unit.
 - New and long-serving teachers from all grade levels, subject areas in the humanities and STEM, and multiple schools participate.
- **Teacher leadership and collegial relationships** among teachers and faculty are fundamental to the approach.
- An Institute includes **features of high-quality teacher professional development programs**: alignment with district and school goals and standards; a focus on content knowledge and how to teach it; involvement of teachers as active learners; collegial exchange of ideas and sharing of expertise among teachers and faculty; and long duration with substantial involvement in seminar sessions, meetings, research, and curriculum writing.

What benefits does this approach have?

- Almost all participating **teachers experience important benefits**:
 - Professional and intellectual growth; professional respect
 - Stronger knowledge of the seminar subject and confidence in teaching it
 - Collegial relationships with teachers from other district schools
 - New opportunities for leadership and motivation to pursue leadership opportunities in the district
- Teachers develop **higher expectations of their students' ability to learn the unit subject**:
 - The curriculum units include more deeper learning strategies than the teachers' usual teaching.
 - Teachers expect their units to **increase student engagement** in learning and mastery of unit materials and to contribute to higher student achievement.
- **Curriculum units are well-received and extend the benefits** of a Teachers Institute:
 - Units are published and used by other teachers.
 - According to teachers who use them, Institute curriculum units elicit the same or greater student attention, interest, and motivation as commercial units, and lead to the same or higher student mastery.
 - Faculty reviews indicate that the curriculum units are accurate and acceptable to exceptional in quality.
- Participating **faculty also experience benefits**:
 - Improvements to their own teaching or scholarship
 - Greater understanding of local schools and the challenges confronting teachers and students
 - An opportunity to share their expertise with their community
- For school districts and university partners, these benefits contribute to **improved teaching, higher teacher morale and retention, and stronger connections between the university and local public schools**.

Can the Teachers Institute approach be implemented successfully in other communities?

- The Teachers Institute approach is well-defined in **published understandings and procedures**.
- Consistency in program experiences and outcomes in New Haven over decades suggests that the approach **can succeed under a variety of conditions**.
- **Successful implementation in other locations** further demonstrates program replicability.
 - Institutes are more likely to be sustained when they continue to adhere to the understandings and procedures of the approach.

¹ This is the executive summary of a report prepared by Dr. Ellen Eliason Kisker, Twin Peaks Partners, LLC, which is available at <https://teachers.yale.edu/download/reports/the-teachers-institute-approach-university-school-partnerships.pdf>. For more information about the Teachers Institute approach, visit <https://teachers.yale.edu> and <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>.