

## **STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN CAPITAL - TEACH FOR AMERICA -**

The goal of SMHC is to dramatically improve student achievement in large, urban public school districts by restructuring their human capital management systems. SMHC reforms aim to recruit top teacher, principal and central office talent and to performance-manage those individuals to improve the effectiveness of instruction in all classrooms. As part of this effort, SMHC is conducting case studies of effective SMHC practices in leading-edge districts and organizations. The case studies focus on the three major elements of all human capital management practices: talent acquisition, talent development and motivation and talent retention, as discussed in the foundational paper defining SMHC by Odden and Kelly (2008).

SMHC case studies have been completed in the following districts:

1. Boston
2. Chicago
3. Fairfax County
4. Long Beach
5. Minneapolis (local district Q Comp program)
6. Minnesota
7. New York City

SHMC case studies have been completed for the following organizations:

8. Teach For America
9. The New Teacher Project
10. New Leaders for New Schools

This paper is available in the Resources section of <http://www.smhc-cpre.org>.

**October 2008**

The research reported in this paper was supported by grants from the Carnegie Corporation of New York (Grant No. BD07164.R02) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Grant No. 49915) to the Consortium for Policy Research in Education at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the institutional partners of CPRE, or the Wisconsin Center for Education Research.

# STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN CAPITAL: TEACH FOR AMERICA<sup>1</sup>

Michael Goetz and Anabel Aportela

Teach For America (TFA) is an organization committed to recruiting some of the country's top young talent to, in the short term, teach in schools in low-income areas and, in the long run, be a critical leadership group in classrooms, in education beyond the classroom, and as an advocacy force from non-education sectors, and for education reform to raise the achievement of all students. It has become an important pipeline of teacher talent for hard-to-staff urban and rural school districts, and, increasingly, as a pipeline for districts and states that have not had talent problems in the past. To date, TFA has placed 20,000 teachers in schools and these teachers have served about 3 million students in urban and rural areas; currently, there are over 6,000 active Corps members in schools and about 14,000 TFA alums. About two-thirds of all alumni work in the education system in some capacity, from teachers, to superintendents to education policy analysts. This case report serves to give insight into the program's mission and theory of action; its recruitment, selection, professional development, and alumni efforts; some research on effectiveness; and whether the program is meeting its established goals.

## 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 1989 Wendy Kopp founded Teach For America, a non-profit organization, based on ideas presented in her Princeton University undergraduate thesis. With \$2.5 million in start-up funds from several private donors,<sup>2</sup> Kopp launched the program in 1990, placing about 500 teachers into urban schools.

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<sup>1</sup> The case is based on a review of documents (including the website: <http://www.teachforamerica.org>) and interviews with key organizational leaders.

<sup>2</sup> Initial funders included such donors as The Hertz Corporation and Ross Perot (Sellers, 2006).

The current mission of the organization includes the original call to recruit and disperse a talented group of dedicated teachers (also referred to as “Corps members”) to work with students in schools in low-income communities, with the expectation that they will continue to work for educational equity as leaders in education and across all sectors:

“Our mission is to build the movement to eliminate educational inequity by enlisting our nation's most promising future leaders in the effort. In the short run, our Corps members work relentlessly to ensure that more students growing up today in our country's lowest-income communities are given the educational opportunities they deserve. In the long run, our alumni are a powerful force of leaders working from inside education and from every other sector to effect the fundamental changes needed to ensure that all children have an equal chance in life.”

The program’s theory of action is to recruit what they believe are the most talented recent college graduates, train them in teaching methods, place them in schools, and give them on-going training and support. This process, TFA believes, will increase student academic achievement in the short run, and in the long run will change the career paths of the Corps members, so that most of them will dedicate their careers and lives to this mission, hopefully creating fundamental change over time.

In 2005, TFA created a set of goals through FY2010. These goals include:

- *Grow to scale with increasing Corps diversity*, which includes quantitative sub-goals related to new teachers, teacher economic and racial diversity, and retention of teachers during their first and second years of service.
- *Maximize the impact of Corps members on student achievement*, which includes quantitative sub-goals related to the academic performance of students.
- *Foster the leadership of our alumni as a force for change*, which includes quantitative sub-goals related to alumni in leadership positions in schools, elected offices, and social entrepreneurship.

- *Build an enduring American institution*, which includes quantitative sub-goals concerning fundraising, staff diversity, and “organizational strength, as measured by a Gallup staff survey.” This goal also includes alumni giving back time and/or money to the TFA effort.

The following details the organization's specific goals:

### **Teach For America Goals and Results<sup>3</sup>**

\*2007 goal was set excluding New Orleans due to impact of Hurricane Katrina; 2007 projection excluding New Orleans is 86.5%.

\*\*Student achievement standards changed significantly between goal setting and end of year in 2007.

\*\*\*25.5% African-American staff and 39.5% for Latino/Hispanic staff.

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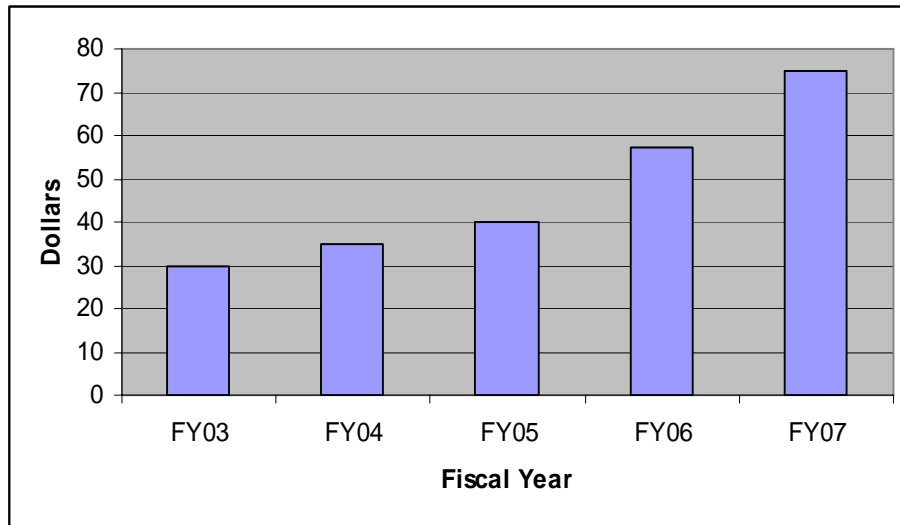
<sup>3</sup> Source: Archived statistics summaries received from TFA 3/24/08

## 2. SCOPE OF TEACH FOR AMERICA

Teach For America operating expenditures topped \$75 million in 2007, with about 30% of organizational revenues from government sources and 70% from private donors (Allen, 2006).

Table 1 illustrates the program's growth in operating revenue for years FY03 to FY07.

**Table 1**  
**Teach For America's Annual Operating Revenue: FY03-FY07**  
**(In millions)<sup>4</sup>**



Teach For America has grown considerably over the past several years. Since 2000, it has grown from 13 to 29 regional sites. Over that time period, revenues grew from \$11 million in 2000 to around \$112 million in 2008, while the organization also built its cash reserves. It has increased from about 1200 to more than 6000 Corps members. The organization now has around 1000 full-time and 1000 seasonal (summer) staff. Under current growth projections, TFA anticipates that by 2015 there will be more than 50,000 alumni and Corps members across the country.

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<sup>4</sup> Source: Archived statistics summaries received from TFA 3/24/08

The Operating Committee includes Wendy Kopp, who is the Chief Executive Officer, plus a President, a Chief Operating Officer, Chief People Officer, Executive Vice President of Public Affairs, Executive Vice President for Growth Strategy and Development, Chief Program Officer, Chief Financial and Infrastructure Officer, and Chief Marketing Officer. Five Vice Presidents are on the Program Team, in the areas of admissions, alumni affairs, recruitment, teacher support and development, and teacher preparation. Other senior positions include: General Counsel and Vice President of Diversity and Inclusiveness. All but one member of the Operating Committee live outside of New York City. About 60% of staff members are alumni (10% less than that of from a few years ago) as the organization recognized that to grow the staff from 250 (FY2005) individuals to 1000 (FY2008) required looking outside of the organization for talent and looking for individuals in diverse geographical areas. To attract and retain corporate talent, TFA began hiring individuals who were not previous Corps members and who do not reside in New York City. The current president, Matt Kramer, for example, lives in Minneapolis, MN.

With a focus on retention and professional development in the corporate office, TFA has implemented a Competency Model that drives recruitment, selection, and professional development for key roles in the organization. Each role has ratings of necessary competencies in the areas of: building relationships with others, managing and operating, and reasoning/strategic thinking. The model links these competencies to positions, and rubrics are used to evaluate performance—different roles require different skills—and different individuals require different trainings.<sup>5</sup> So, each role is given required competencies in these areas, staff are evaluated against these competencies, and training takes place given necessary development

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<sup>5</sup> The Competency Model approach to selecting and training staff is in its infancy.

areas. This approach to talent management is similar to that discussed in the first two papers of the Strategic Management of Human Capital Project (Lawler, 2008; Odden & Kelly, 2008).

The majority of staff members, however, are program (regional team) or recruitment (national team) staff. This year, about 40 Managing Directors lead 175 Program Directors who guide and support about 35 teachers each.

### **3. WHERE DOES TEACH FOR AMERICA WORK?**

Teach For America currently serves 29 urban and rural regions,<sup>6</sup> with a successful 2008 push to increase its presence in New Orleans. TFA's largest 5 districts (New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., and Greater New Orleans) comprise about 40% of their Corps members. New York City has about 1000 TFA teachers, which is 500 per year and which represents about 14% of their new teachers. Newark recently pulled 30% of their new hires from TFA (Sellers, 2006). So, in some districts, particularly large urban districts, TFA is heavily relied upon for new teachers and TFA teachers represent a substantial portion of the districts' non-tenured staff.

A total of 4488 teachers taught school in the 2006-07 academic year and 5059 began teaching in 2007-08. A regional breakdown, number of Corps members placed by year, and placement growth by school year are shown in Table 2.

As Hess and Finn (2007) suggest, TFA represents relatively few teachers in schools compared to 3 million public school teachers in the entire country's public education system. In most TFA districts, the organization provides between 10 and 30% of the new teachers hired annually; the percentage is lower in large districts and can be higher in some smaller districts, as TFA operates in both large urban, and small rural communities. Nearly all districts with which TFA work relies on the organization for new teachers for their high need schools (Hess & Finn,

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<sup>6</sup> "Regions" and "Districts" are synonymous to Teach For America.

2007). Still, few, if any university-based certification program in the country supply as many teachers to schools, especially to high needs schools (Hess & Finn, 2007), and TFA claims to be the largest source of new teachers to low-income schools in the country.

**Table 2**  
**Corps Members (CMs) Who Began Teaching In Regions**  
**2005-06 and 2007-08 School Years<sup>7</sup>**

|                           | 2004 CMs<br>who started<br>teaching 2nd<br>Year | 2005 CMs<br>who started<br>teaching 1st<br>year | Corps Size 05-<br>06 School Year<br>= # 2004 CMs<br>who began 2nd<br>year + # 2005<br>CMs who began<br>1st year | 2005 CMs<br>who started<br>teaching 2nd<br>year | 2006 CMs<br>placed who<br>started<br>teaching 2nd<br>year | Corps Size 06-<br>07 School Year<br>= # 2005 CMs<br>who began 2nd<br>year + # 2006<br>CMs who began<br>1st year | 2006 CMs<br>who began<br>2nd year | 2007 CMs<br>who started<br>teaching 1st<br>year | Corps Size 07-08<br>School Year = #<br>2006 CMs who<br>began 2nd year +<br># 2007 CMs who<br>began 1st year | Percent<br>Growth in<br>Total Corps<br>Size from 05-<br>06 to 06-07 | Percent<br>Growth in<br>Total Corps<br>Size from 06-<br>07 to 07-08 |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Chicago                   | 59  | 60  | 119   | 57  | 97  | 154   | 85                                | 145   | 230   | 29.41%  | 49.35%  |
| Greater<br>New<br>Orleans | 54  | 83  | 137   | 48  | 14  | 62  | 14                                | 112   | 126   | -54.74%   | 103.23%   |
| LA                        | 82  | 207   | 289   | 189   | 215   | 404   | 194                               | 192   | 386   | 39.79%  | -4.46%  |
| NYC                       | 282   | 504   | 786   | 442   | 525   | 967   | 469                               | 530   | 999   | 23.03%  | 3.31%   |
| Metro DC                  | 42  | 49  | 91  | 44  | 111   | 155   | 99                                | 143   | 242   | 70.33%  | 56.13%  |
| Other                     | 922   | 1269  | 2191  | 1143  | 1455  | 2598  | 1309                              | 1767  | 3076  | 18.58%  | 18.40%  |
| National<br>Total         | 1441  | 2172  | 3613  | 1923  | 2417  | 4340  | 2170                              | 2889  | 5059  | 20.12%  | 16.57%  |

<sup>7</sup> Source: Archived statistics summaries received from TFA 7/10/08

#### 4. TEACH FOR AMERICA CORE OPERATIONS

This section covers the core actions of TFA placing new teachers into schools: recruitment, selection, induction/mentoring and compensation.

Recruitment. Teach For America is focused on recruiting individuals who it believes are most likely to increase student academic growth. TFA suggests that it has learned over the last two decades the traits that are most important in selecting candidates for teacher positions:

- A record of past achievement: achieving ambitious, measurable results in academics, leadership, or work
- Perseverance in the face of challenges
- Strong critical thinking skills: making accurate linkages between cause and effect and generating relevant solutions to problems
- The ability to influence and motivate others
- Organizational ability: planning well, meeting deadlines, and working efficiently
- An understanding of the TFA vision and the desire to work relentlessly in pursuit of it
- Respect for students and families in low-income communities

The supply of applicants to Teach For America is primarily college seniors. In 2007, over 18,000 people applied to become a TFA Corps member; in 2008, just under 25,000 individuals applied. “Between 5 and 10% of the senior classes at 90 colleges and universities— including such institutions as Spelman, Howard, Morehouse, the University of Michigan, Princeton, Harvard and Yale— applied to join the 2007 Corps”.<sup>8</sup>

TFA aggressively recruits graduates from top universities, asking them to commit to 2 years of teaching.<sup>9</sup> The organization has 100 recruiters across the country sourcing talent

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<sup>8</sup> *Program Overview 2.6.07*, supplied by TFA on March 24, 2008. Twenty-one percent of these applicants were accepted into the program.

<sup>9</sup> Twelve percent of the 2004-06 cohort left positions before teaching for 2 years (Allen, 2006).

individually. Through emails, cold phone calls, as well as flyers, information sessions and other recruiting strategies, TFA proactively identifies individuals who have not expressed a previous interest in teaching and actively encourages them to consider a teaching job. In 2007, TFA recruiters met individually with 30,000 students on campuses across the nation, hoping to persuade students who meet TFA's criteria to apply to the program. "We recruit insanely aggressively," says Kopp, the founder of the organization. TFA accepted about 4000 of the 25,000 applicants in 2008. That makes Kopp's nonprofit teacher recruitment and training organization one of the largest hirers of college seniors, according to CollegeGrad.com -- bigger than Microsoft, Procter & Gamble, Accenture, or General Electric" (Sellers, 2006).

This recruitment has led several companies who compete for these students to partner with TFA. For example, J.P. Morgan, McKinsey, Bain, Monitor, Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs, GE, Google, and many others offer deferred employment and/or signing bonuses to students who choose to teach for 2 years via TFA (Sellers, 2006). Other partnerships exist to lure applicants who have the knowledge and desire to teach in the math and science fields; affiliations with a variety of organizations give opportunities for these teachers, such as the annual Amgen Teach For America Math and Science Summit, Medtronic working to improve the TFA math and science training; and the Noyce Foundation working to increase applicants in math and science. "Many graduate programs in math, science and engineering, such as the physics program at Harvard University and the chemistry program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, have partnered with Teach For America to grant 2 year deferrals and offer other benefits to admitted applicants who wish to join Teach For America before beginning their graduate studies." Ten law schools allow a 2 year deferment to any person accepted to their

program and TFA; TFA teachers automatically receive a deferral at Yale, which also supplies scholarships for two teachers after their TFA experience.

Selection. Individuals apply online and send a cover letter, resume, and supply other information about their experiences in college and life. Recruitment directors read these materials and score applicants against a TFA-created rubric, which is tailored to what TFA believes are the traits necessary to be successful in boosting student achievement in their classrooms. This recruitment and analysis process is partially computerized (i.e. a computer program initially scores applicants based on whether the individual is likely to produce significant gains<sup>10</sup>). Applicants who pass this stage of the process are interviewed over the phone; again, a rubric is used to judge fit with TFA. About 75% of applicants reach the stage of a phone interview, and these interviews are performed by TFA staff. Fifty percent of applicants then receive an in-person interview. Sellers (2006) suggests that college seniors “must endure hours of interviews and tests designed to assess their organization skills, perseverance and resiliency” during the TFA application process. The overall interview process actually takes nearly an entire day and includes sample teaching, discussion groups, essays and one-on-one interviews.

In 2007, TFA teachers had an average GPA of 3.6, 28% were non-white, and 25% had family incomes that qualified them for Pell Grants. TFA teachers averaged 1310 on the SAT; non-TFA teachers in these schools averaged an SAT score of 984 (Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Hundreds of applicants are reviewed by the senior leadership team; these reviews are typically performed when an applicant is just above or below the computer-based rubric threshold.

<sup>11</sup> TFA leadership suggests that selecting applicants with high GPA and SAT scores are not overt goals of the organization; they are an eventual outcome of recruitment and selection policies.

In 2007, 10% of seniors at Amherst, Duke, Spelman, and University of Chicago, 7% of seniors at Princeton and Yale, and 6% of seniors at Harvard applied for TFA teacher positions. Seventy percent of those selected come from “highly competitive” or “very competitive” colleges vs. 4% of non-TFA teachers come from these categories (rankings created by Barron’s Profile of American Colleges). It is interesting to note that nearly half of all Corps members come from the top *public* universities; for example, last year, 7% of the senior class at the University of Michigan applied to TFA.

In 2006, TFA placed 95% of their teachers in sites where the teachers preferred to live, i.e., if they wanted to live in New York City, TFA placed them in New York City (Allen, 2006). All teachers in all communities, however, are placed in high need schools in either large urban or rural districts.

Induction/Mentoring. TFA Corps members participate in 7 weeks of induction, training and orientation the summer prior to joining the school year teaching staff and teach in the district summer school program during training (Allen, 2006). The 5 week training institute is the most intensive summer experience.

TFA training is limited in duration but intensive and rigorous. After acceptance into the program, recruits participate in a 5 week summer institute that prepares them for placement in the classroom at the start of the school year. Their coursework covers teaching practice, classroom management, diversity, learning theory, literacy development, and leadership. Participants also spend 4 weeks of the institute in summer school classrooms as student teachers or team teachers. They meet regularly with subject- and grade-specific teachers and attend evening workshops. Institute faculty evaluates progress through regular assessment and feedback. TFA reports that a typical recruit carries out a number of preliminary assignments before arrival at the institute and then spends an estimated 70 hours a

week over the next 5 week period on institute-related activities. (Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004).

These summer institutes occur in Atlanta, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City, Philadelphia, and Phoenix; Chicago was added for 2009.

Beginning about 6-7 years ago, TFA decided to study the instructional practices of the most effective Corps members. They found that the top performers were implementing practices different from the non-top performers, and that the practices across the top performers were quite similar. The study identified six different categories of teaching behaviors by the top performers and labeled the findings as Teaching as Leadership (TAL):

- Set big goals
- Invest students and those who influence them in working hard to achieve big goals
- Plan purposefully so that every minute of each classroom counts
- Execute instructional plans effectively
- Continuously work to enhance effectiveness
- Work relentlessly until students attain learning goals, even if it includes working on Saturday and, Sunday

TFA has now incorporated many of the findings from these analyses into both revised training for the summer institute and into an on-line system of professional development, called the Teaching As Leadership Online Navigator (TALON). As their web site states:

TALON is, in effect, an annotated and illustrated version of the TAL Rubric. Together, the TAL rubric and its enhanced, online version TALON represent Teach For America's evolving knowledge of what it takes to lead students to dramatic academic achievement and to close the achievement gap. They represent years of organizational reflection and research about what distinguishes highly successful from less successful teachers. The central purpose of these resources is to provide teachers and their supporters with a common language for analyzing the elements of effective instruction. TALON and the rubric also generate data

that allows both individual teachers and TFA to identify trends and correlations that inform training and resource decisions.

The organization also has developed a mathematical model that links the data it collects in the recruitment process to the characteristics of these highest performing teachers, and is constantly recalibrating their selection criteria to give more preference to individuals who have the same characteristics.

“Almost all principals (95%) reported that TFA members’ training is at least as good as the training of other beginning teachers.” (Allen, 2006). Many TFA teachers take classes during the years when they are teaching and earn a master’s degree in education; further, many become certified teachers during this process (Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004). TFA teachers are required to attend weekly TFA workshops during the school year (Raymond & Fletcher, 2002).

Ongoing teacher support occurs with Regional Program Directors, typically former successful TFA teachers, in addition to the professional development received from the district professional development plan and any other mentoring program that the district or school may run. For about every 34 Corps members currently in teaching, TFA provides 1 Program Director, who serves as an instructional coach. The coaches observe classroom practices and give feedback to teachers identifying the level of their performance vis-a-vis the performance levels in the TFA TAL teaching standards and rubrics. The coaches also work with each teacher in analyzing student performance data, assessing which students are learning, which are not, and what strategies the Corps member can use to enhance the learning of all children.

Low retention rates are a common criticism of the TFA strategy to staffing schools. However, according to TFA, about 44% of TFA Corps members remain in the *classroom* in their third year (i.e., are still teaching in their third year), moreover, TFA’s 2 year retention rates are

higher than that for other teachers in the high needs schools in which they work; a recent Harvard University study further confirmed these retention rates.<sup>12</sup> Further, about 67% of Corps members remain in education *positions* after the 2 year program. As one example, many education policy doctorate programs across the country have experienced increases in applications from former TFA teachers.

Compensation. Compensation for TFA teachers is the same as for non-TFA teachers, and school districts now pay TFA a fee of \$2,000 to cover the costs of recruitment (Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004). Because of TFA's status as an AmeriCorps program, TFA Corps members also receive a stipend of \$4,725 to pay for education expenses for each of the 2 years they remain in teaching, in addition to the salary provided by the district.<sup>13</sup> In 2005-06, the average TFA teacher earned a salary of \$36,000. Teachers' salaries in urban areas varied from \$28,000 to \$44,000 and from \$25,000 to \$33,000 in rural areas..

## **5. PERFORMANCE OF TEACH FOR AMERICA**

“Ensuring that our Corps members successfully lead their students to significant academic achievement during their 2 year teaching commitments is the linchpin of fulfilling our mission. In the short term, academic achievement is the surest path to expanded life opportunities for students growing up in low-income communities today; and the experience of leading students to significant academic progress inspires our Corps members to commit their careers to eliminating educational inequity over the long term and gives them insight and credibility that enable them to be effective.”

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<sup>12</sup> See <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~ngt/Donaldson.TFA.AERA.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> The AmeriCorp program is funded by the federal government. However, for the 1 year (2003) when TFA did not receive an AmeriCorp grant—TFA raised the money from other sources to pay this supplement to TFA teachers (Allen, 2006).

Over the last few years TFA has been working to solidify the “significant gains project,” an attempt to evaluate teaching staff by tracking and analyzing the academic growth of the students who are taught by TFA teachers. Historically this process has used a variety of assessments: some state tests, some district level assessments, and some teacher-created assessments to evaluate teacher effectiveness. TFA has worked in recent years to standardize the tool used to evaluate student academic gains and its goal for 2010 is that 1.5 years of academic performance is produced annually by each TFA teacher. The significant gains goal is that a certain proportion of teachers’ students reach 1.5 years of academic growth per year. Currently, 30% of the teachers reach this goal; the future goal is to have 50% of first year TFA teachers and 80% of second year teachers reach this goal, though TFA teaching will need to improve more to get the trajectory at the right upward angle to reach this goal.

In 2007, TFA launched a pilot of Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments to standardize evaluation of teacher performance to increase student learning.<sup>14</sup> The pilot consisted of 350 teachers and 15,000 students in 10 regions. Next year, TFA will double the number of teachers using NWEA growth assessments.

TFA leadership suggests that the organization takes all of its goals with equal sincerity (i.e. TFA does not pursue one of the goals - defined as the four general areas - at the detriment of others). The “significant gains” goals are the hardest to measure and hardest to improve. The organization must meet this goal but it is difficult to measure, while the other goals are easier to measure (e.g. it is more straight forward to measure the number of Corps member recruits or the number of recruits hired who are non-white or the quantity of funds raised for the organization).

Some of the goals for TFA are very specific in the minds of operators and senior staff. Staff in the fundraising and alumni divisions do not consider significant gains in their everyday

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<sup>14</sup> See [www.nwea.org](http://www.nwea.org).

lives. Most other departments, however, deal with significant gains on a regular basis (e.g. departments of training, recruiting, and regional staff are concerned about the significant gains project). All 29 regions have their contribution to this goal as well as retention goals. Staff continually have to deal with an issue of, “Don’t push so hard that they all leave.” Broadly, retention and student academic performance are the goals for which TFA is on the hook.

## **6. RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACH FOR AMERICA**

There has been some research on the effectiveness of TFA Corps member teachers; we review four high-quality studies below. None of the research to date has assessed TFA teacher effectiveness since the launching of the new training around the TAL standards both in the summer institutes and in the ongoing coaching.

Using a sample of 17 schools and 100 classrooms Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. evaluated the performance of TFA teachers during the 2001-02 and 2002-03 school years in a variety of regions. This study, which randomly assigned students to TFA and non-TFA elementary school teachers in Grades 1 through 5, found that TFA teachers’ students performed better in math (0.15 standard deviations) and had no effect on reading scores based on pre- and post-Iowa Test of Basic Skills assessments. When only evaluating novice teachers (i.e. in their first 3 years of teaching) in TFA and the control group, this math effect increases to 0.26 standard deviations and no change exists in reading score improvement (Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004).

Reviewing performance of New York City students in Grades 4 through 8, Kane, Rockoff, and Staiger (2006) investigated math and reading test scores during years 2000 through 2005. Controlling for years of experience, they compared certified teachers, alternatively certified teachers, and TFA teachers. They found a small, but statistically significant (.01

standard deviations) increase in math achievement of students taught by TFA teachers and this increase was most pronounced for middle school students. Additionally, they found no statistically significant increase in reading achievement. However, high turnover groups, such as TFA, did not negatively affect student learning due to their lack of tenure (Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2006).

A study conducted by Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Rockoff, and Wyckoff (2007) reviewed the performance of New York City TFA teacher's students academic gains compared to students taught by 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers with university teacher certification licenses as well as teachers who became licensed by some other means. First, they found that the gap in teacher qualifications (e.g. measured by test scores, college status, tenure, and performance on teacher qualification exams) between high poverty and low poverty schools had decreased sharply from 2000 to 2005, partially due to the influx of The New Teacher Project (TNTP) and TFA teachers into high poverty schools, which may also be correlated to the teacher salary hikes in the City. To analyze the teach effect on student growth, they analyzed a database containing assessment data for typically 65,000 to 80,000 students from FY00 to FY05 (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Rockoff & Wyckoff, 2007). While it is difficult to create a causal relationship given the non-random nature of teacher assignment, findings suggest TFA teachers in middle school math outperformed other teacher groups while this statistically significant effect did not hold for reading (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Rockoff & Wyckoff, 2007)

The most recent study, which was the first and only study of the impact of TFA teachers on high school students, used FY2001 to FY2006 data in North Carolina and was conducted by Xu, Hannaway, & Taylor (2008). Working with North Carolina and Teach For America data, this team found that high school students taught by TFA teachers outperformed students taught

by non-TFA teachers (standard deviation of 0.12 overall). The authors utilized a student fixed effects model to compensate for widely different student and teacher populations. The measured was of end the course exams<sup>15</sup> and these findings were particularly strong for the areas of math and science. Adding classroom and school level fixed effects reduces effect sizes to about 1.07, but they remained statistically significant (Xu, Hannaway, & Taylor, 2008).

TFA has listed these and other studies on its web site, together with commentary on the soundness of the methodologies used, arguing that studies range in the quality of their analytic methods: [http://www.teachforamerica.org/mission/our\\_impact/impactStudies.htm?undefined](http://www.teachforamerica.org/mission/our_impact/impactStudies.htm?undefined).

## 7. CONCLUSION

TFA appears to have become an important pipeline of teacher talent on the American education scene. Moreover, it has doubled the number of teachers it wants to recruit and place in the future. The goal is to increase the number of new Corps members from 2,000 a year to 4,000 so that by the year 2010, TFA teachers will number at least 8,000 annually. It began this process of doubling production during the 2005 recruitment year. Its budget grew to \$120 million annually for 2008 and is up to \$150 million in 2009 and in the 2008 recruitment year applications for TFA grew from 18,000 to 25,000. TFA placed over 3,600 new teachers for the 2008-09 school year.

TFA leadership suggests that what TFA has learned in the last decade is that high performance organizations focus on all aspects of what makes an organization great: recruiting and selecting the best people, giving them clear goals, managing them tightly, holding them accountable, and providing rewards for producing results. And they believe that this is the way to improve student performance in America's schools where most students come from families with

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<sup>15</sup> See Xu, Hannaway, & Taylor (2008) for a description of end of course exams analyzed and not analyzed. Those included in the study were English I, Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Biology, Chemistry, Physical Science, and Physics.

poverty level incomes. This belief permeates all aspects of TFA, from Corps members to senior staff; human capital, being obsessed with talent, is the lever to success. Given the program's trajectory of operational expenditures, corporate staff, and Corps members, TFA will continue to recruit, train and place more and more teachers in America's toughest schools. When it meets the goal of recruiting, training and placing 4000 teachers a year, it will be one of the largest teacher recruitment and training organizations in the country. TFA is an organization that works at or close to scale in many districts and communities. Research on the effectiveness of the teachers it produces is important both to strengthen the organization and to have it take a recognized place on the American scene as a valid source of top teacher talent.

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