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GLOBE EDITORIAL

The Boston Globe

School-wise teachers

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FACED WITH an aging corps of educators, a high burnout rate for new teachers, and erratic offerings in schools of education, the Boston School Department is taking bold steps to train and certify its own teachers. Like a baseball team grooming talent through its farm system, the city is tapping the Boston Teacher Residency program to ready its future stars.

ADVERTISEMENT Roughly half of the new teachers in Boston flee the district or quit the profession outright within three years on the job. A 2002 study by Strategic Grant Partners, a consortium of family foundations, revealed that nearly every first- and second-year teacher in Boston believed that their training had failed to prepare them for the demands of an urban classroom. That knowledge led the consortium to provide an initial two-year, \$2.2 million grant to the Boston schools and a nonprofit educational foundation, the Boston Plan for Excellence, to design and implement a teacher-training program emphasizing classroom experience.

This year 40 teacher residents are working alongside mentors in five Boston schools. Trainees work four full days each week and attend theory classes on Friday. The carefully screened recruits include recent college graduates, midcareer professionals, and college graduates with a record of working successfully with Boston youths. All move easily in urban settings. Incentives include a \$10,000 stipend, loan forgiveness for their master's degree from the University of Massachusetts, and preferential hiring status in Boston.

Sean Moran, a 25-year-old computer specialist who grew up in Roslindale, looked more like a seasoned teacher than a trainee while conducting a recent pre-algebra class for sixth-graders at the McCormack Middle School in Dorchester. Moran, who says he foresees a long teaching career, adroitly held the attention of the class, allowing his mentor, teacher Amy Kiley, to work individually in the back of the room with struggling students. The presence of six other residents, and four new teachers who completed their residencies last year, creates a culture of teamwork at the McCormack School.

More urban school districts need to use the provision in the state's 1993 Education Reform Act allowing alternative methods to license teachers. Less dry pedagogy and more time practicing under the supervision of experienced teachers is the smartest way to train and retain teachers in urban schools. Boston school officials hope to bring an additional 300 teacher residents to local classrooms by 2008.

Good teachers give their all to make their material come alive. But they also need to survive their early forays into the classrooms. Homegrown certification programs may be the best way for schools to pull them through.

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