

# Beyond the Corps: Exploring the Efficacy of Teach For America-Greater Chicago/Northwest Indiana School-Based Alumni Suite Programming



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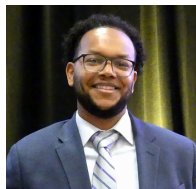
*Peabody College, Vanderbilt University  
Ed.D. Capstone Project  
Spring 2022*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the support, guidance, and encouragement of several individuals who assisted in the development of this capstone project. These include Kate San Juan and Caryn Lichtenberg of Teach For America Greater Chicago Northwest Indiana, and Peabody faculty member Claire Smrekar, Ph.D.

While we promised them anonymity, we extend our gratitude to the countless Teach For America Greater Chicago Northwest Indiana alumni and program mentors who welcomed us into their virtual communities and contributed their perspectives on the impact and effectiveness of their TFA Alumni Program experience.

Additionally, thank you to Beth Simpkins, our graphic design collaborator, and Erin Kenney, our co-editor, for their assistance with this publication.

Finally, we appreciate the unwavering patience and support of our spouses, families, friends, and colleagues over the course of the Ed.D. program.

## ABSTRACT

Within the past several years, Teach For America Greater Chicago-Northwest Indiana (TFA-GC) has adopted a strengthened desire to extend the development of alumni members who have completed their initial two-year commitment. This expanded mission has prompted Teach For America Greater Chicago/Northwest Indiana to cultivate a pipeline of programs that will support alumni members and non-alumni members to engage in professional development programs that prepare and support them in their leadership aspirations. Even in the most marginalized schools, strong principals make a positive difference in the academic outcomes of their students (Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2008). Therefore, part of TFA-GC's strategy is to boost the career trajectory of individual members by offering them targeted programs at key moments in their career that will prepare them for success as educational leaders.

This study appraises the efficacy of their school-based leadership suite programs through investigating the program participants' perceptions of the programs' efficacy. We examined the elements of TFA-GC's theory of change including building leadership programs, the impacts of coaching and mentoring, and the social benefits experienced by alumni who participate. We used a mixed-methods project design that combined quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis. Based upon our findings, we offer recommendations to TFA-GC on ways they can improve their school-based leadership suite programs.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

### Abbreviations

TFA - Teach For America

TFA-GC - Teach For America Greater Chicago/Northwest Indiana

PLC - Professional Learning Community

CFE - College of Further Education

CPS - Chicago Public Schools

### Definitions

Efficacy - Level at which a program is deemed effective at meeting goals; participants achieving the intended goals of their respective program

Leadership Suite - Group of programs along one pathway toward school-based educational leadership

## INTRODUCTION

The Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana branch of Teach For America (TFA-GC) is a non-profit organization that includes education and policy leaders who work to transform the landscape of education. Their work entails ensuring that the future of our country is one that provides all students access to an excellent education. TFA-GC seeks to accomplish this through the recruitment of young leaders, placing them as teachers in low-income schools initially for two years. Upon completion of their teaching program, TFA-GC educators are then encouraged to remain in education, with the eventual goal of becoming transformational leaders. According to their website, TFA-GC projected that their network of teachers, school leaders, and advocates will have taught one-third of the population of public schools in Chicago by 2020 (Teach For America, 2020).

School leaders play a key role in cultivating appropriate conditions for student and teacher success. TFA-GC has taken on the responsibility to create pipeline programs and partnerships that prepare their alumni for school-based leadership. They created a pathway that trains teachers for teacher leadership, and for mid-level leaders to become principals. Their aim is to increase the overall representation and diversity of their alumni in high-need areas and to support them in having a strong impact on the communities they serve. In order to achieve this end, TFA-GC designed several leadership development programs that make up their leadership suite. Each program has a unique set of goals that all lead to their alumni being prepared to lead effectively at the local education agency level.

The purpose of this study is to complete an evaluation of TFA-GC leadership suite programs from the perspective of the participants. We start by reviewing existing literature related to leadership development programs as well as the needs for and effects of high-quality leadership. We then discuss the problem that TFA-GC faces in their region along with their logic model and theory of change. We describe our research methods and our findings, and conclude by offering recommendations to TFA-GC personnel on how to improve their practice.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS*

Leadership development is seen as a social process that is developed in practice (Dalakoura, 2010). Leaders in various sectors are increasingly offering members on their team opportunities to join leadership development programs in an effort to increase the capacity of the talent within their organization. While the price of these programs can range from a few thousand to hundreds of thousands of dollars, the short- and long-term benefits are believed to be worth the cost. Yet, are these programs effective

in achieving their goals? Gurdjian, Halbetsen, and Lane detail why some succeed, why some fail, and how companies can make them more effective in developing the skill sets of their leaders. Where many organizations fail regarding leadership development programs is the use of a “one size fits all” model giving little attention to the specific needs of their participants. They suggest that organizations tailor what is presented in their leadership development programs to their particular contexts by focusing on problems that leaders are actually facing rather than hypothetical scenarios. Researchers also suggest focusing on changing mindsets and not presenting a litany of behaviors for novice leaders to display. They advise that these programs should focus on assisting their participants in mastering two or three training initiatives at a time and to consistently track their performance with these initiatives during the program and after completion. Researchers warn that programs tend to have a weaker chance of producing successful graduates when they are expected to demonstrate proficiency in too many competencies (Gurdjian, Halbetsen, and Lane, 2014).

One major critique of management development programs is that while they may develop managerial skills they do not substantially improve outcomes or attend to the criteria of success. Due to this misalignment, researchers urge the designers of programs to infuse the objectives and key competencies needed to effectively

“develop” participants. Cacioppe believes that the following three elements are central to getting responses from individual leaders: learning about themselves, learning skills that help them better lead their team and learning how to make substantial contributions to the organization’s success (Cacioppe, 1998).

The importance of leadership development programs is not diminishing the importance of individual leadership development experiences. There is more to be considered when contemplating the individual in the learning experience. Cacioppe provides an integrated model and approach for leaders, see below. Even

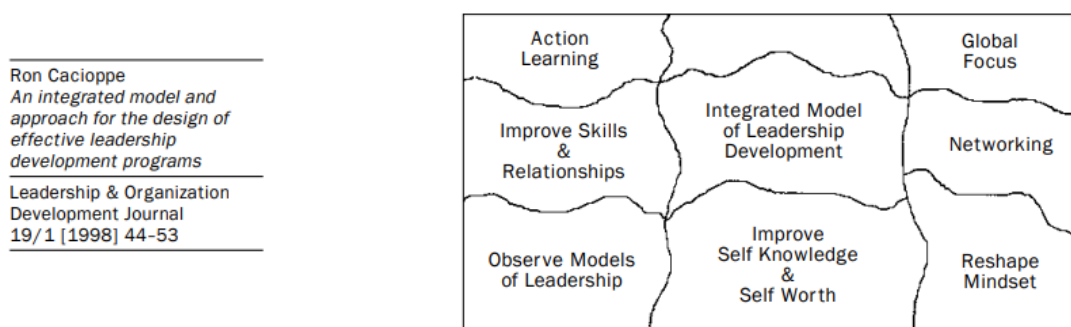
within the group setting of a program, a participant should feel that their personal ideas and input to the program are valued and worth-while. Using group projects, group discussions, and case studies are examples of activities that can leverage



individual contributions in a meaningful way. Emotional intelligence is another key factor that is pivotal for aspiring and current leaders; the mindset reshaping progress has the potential to be a more significant competency than intellectual intelligence (Cacioppe, 1998).

Providing participants with authentic, real-world situations and vivid emotions are another powerful element of leadership development. Through activities like simulations the participant is required to transfer their own experience through their own intellectual process (Mason et. al, 2014). For longer programs, participants might benefit from action learning in which organized teams have a project to complete over multiple months. An individual in a leadership development program should also have opportunities to improve their abilities, skills and relationships, all common components in average programs. While participating in leadership development programs, participants should pay close attention to the different models of leadership. Much could be uncovered and learned through a learning session; participants can be prompted to conduct an observation. During one professional development session participants can learn quite a bit about a leader's philosophy on life and leadership by how a leader presents information, answers challenging questions, structures learning experiences, applies humor and how they treat participants. Meeting and building relationships with other aspiring and/or current leaders can be deeply valuable. Time spent with others discussing similar issues and sharing experiences and advice has the ability to create a bond that can be utilized over and over for everyday problems (Cacioppe, 1998). See figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Effective Leadership Development Program Design



#### MENTORING AND COACHING

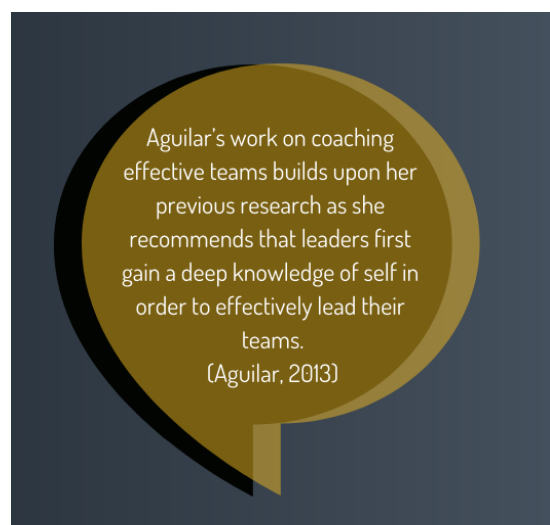
Fostering a mentor/protégé relationship has been a commonly used approach in leadership development programs. Dzikowski (2013) details some of the benefits and challenges associated with mentoring relationships. Knowing that mentees are operating in relatively new roles, mentoring serves as a source of stress and anxiety reduction. The individualized nature of mentoring can also increase the mentee's

self-esteem and proficiency in specific professional skills. Mentoring was found to be symbiotic in nature as both the mentor and the protégé benefit from new perspectives and increased insight. Dzikowski notes that time constraints, incompatible pairing, and lack of mentor training inhibit the efficacy of mentorship (Dzikowski, 2013).

Regarding educational leadership programs, Ehrich, Hansford, and Tennet (2004) advised that these programs should be intellectually rigorous, adequately resourced, and well planned to meet the needs of the mentee. They point out that while mentoring programs are mostly positive in impact, the effects of poor mentorship can be more harmful than not having a mentor at all. The researchers recommend that all such programs include a keen understanding of new and relevant literature, a careful selection of participants, ongoing training for mentors, and consistent evaluations of the program's efficacy (Ehrich, Hansford, and Tennet, 2004).

Daresh (2004) listed five benefits protégés experience when they are involved in formal coaching programs. He writes that these programs give protégés more confidence operating in their roles, allows them to better translate theory to practice, improves their communication skills, provides them with access to special techniques of the profession, and imparts to them a sense of belonging. Daresh also writes about benefits mentors and districts that support the coaching/mentor model experience. Mentors reported that they received renewed energy and enthusiasm from their interactions with their protégés, as well as an increase in confidence regarding the future of education in our country, knowing they contributed to the development of the next generation of leaders. District personnel noted that they are able to employ staff with higher capabilities as a result of mentorship and that those leaders serve their schools more vigorously in return (Daresh, 2004).

In *The Art of Coaching*, author Elena Aguilar offers school leaders several resources related to developing in-house talent by coaching individuals and teams.



Aguilar details some necessities to effectively implement the coaching model including intentional planning, deliberate practice, a knowledge of adult learning theory, a system-thinking mindset, and an understanding of effective communication. Aguilar's work on coaching effective teams builds upon her previous research as she recommends that leaders first gain a deep knowledge of self in order to effectively lead their teams. She then suggests that coaching effectively requires an established culture of trust, a sense of purpose for each session, agreed upon norms that have been created by all stakeholders, and clearly identified work products. Other essentials, such as high emotional intelligence and healthy

communication, play a pivotal role too (Aguilar, 2013).



### *COHORT MODEL IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP*

Another popular model employed in educational leadership programs is the use of cohorts, where leaders and aspiring leaders receive training for a period of time as a fixed group. As with all models of leadership development, the use of cohorts has its benefits and limitations. Barnett et al. (2000) and Teitel (1997) found that cohort participants reported strong interpersonal relationships with their classmates. These characteristics include collegiality, trust, a sense of support, and networking. Leithwood et al. (1995) wrote that graduates of leadership programs that used the cohort model were perceived as being effective educational leaders by those they lead.

The disadvantages of the cohort model have also been noted. While cohorts offer an opportunity for strong relationships to form, negativity can be fostered as well. The unofficial leaders that form organically within the cohort have the ability to negatively impact the ethos of the group (Barnett et al., 2000). Greenlee and Karanxha (2010) note that groupthink may inhibit the depth of conversation amongst cohort members during class sessions. Additionally, the intimacy that forms amongst cohort members makes it more difficult for participants to retain privacy (Barnett & Muse, 1993).

### *IMPACT OF HIGH-QUALITY LEADERS & RACE*

Building the capacity to lead others is another competency that is commonly included in leadership programs. However, Gooden (2021) suggests that leaders should spend a considerable amount of time during the beginning stages of their leadership journey reflecting on the ways in which race has impacted their life and career. These considerations may better position leaders to identify events that will arise in the serve where they serve and to respond appropriately (Gooden, 2021). Gooden postulates that an examination of your own racial history is an empowering exercise that allows leaders to see systems of racism clearly or perhaps proactively disrupt and dismantle them altogether. Rusch and Horford (2009) found that leaders who employ race-based theories are likely to create civic relationships amongst their followers where integration of ideas and values occur. Professors that engage aspiring leaders in race-based discussions provide them with experiences to attack racial biases and prejudice when they assume their roles as leaders (Diem & Carpenter, 2013).

### *IMPACT OF HIGH-QUALITY LEADERS & TEACHER DEVELOPMENT*

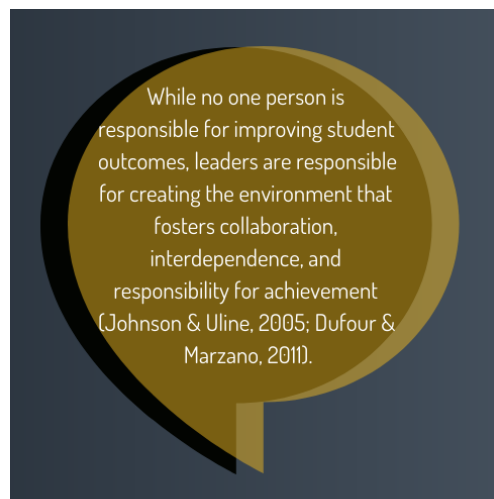
Literature also addresses how meaningful and critical reframing is for modern leaders, detailing the craft of seeing new possibilities and creating opportunities gives leaders the space to find choices when options seem severely limited. Within the human resources frame (Boyman & Deal, 1991), a principal's ability to place an emphasis on people's needs including cultivating care, community, and trust. One key

lever in this frame is to give participants power and opportunity to perform their work well, while being attentive to their needs for human contact, job satisfaction and personal growth. Similarly, Hitt and Tucker (2016) noted that effective leaders build the capacity of their teachers and create a supportive environment for learning.

#### *IMPACT OF HIGH-QUALITY LEADERS & ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT*

The relationship between student achievement and the overall knowledge and actions of principals is well-studied and documented. The most promising evidence identifies three abilities that principals need: skills and expertise to support instruction, manage and develop personnel, and skills and expertise connected to organizational management (Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2008). Leithwood (2005) and Jacobson (2011) contribute that direction setting, developing people, and redesigning the organization not only promotes student achievement, but also fosters long term success.

While no one person is responsible for improving student outcomes, leaders are responsible for creating the environment that fosters collaboration, interdependence, and responsibility for achievement (Johnson & Uline, 2005; Dufour & Marzano, 2011). Principals with strong competencies around defining high-quality instruction and providing highest leverage and actionable feedback, while motivating teachers to enhance their daily practice are key facets of strong instructional support from leadership (Wallace Foundation Report, 2021).



#### *HIGH-STAKES PRINCIPALSHIP WITH LOW SUPPORT*

Chicago has maintained unique facets of school leadership. Throughout many reforms and change efforts the report is a solid reminder of the immense work needed to enter, sustain, and thrive as a principal in the CPS school system. With many high hopes and high investments in education many principals in the report share that very little improvements have been made to the biggest issues that principals face in their daily work (Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago Urban Education Institute, 2008). TFA takes a critical look at this information as they prepare alumni members to enter the public school system with a toolkit of resources, strategies, and in-school support to optimize the complex and complicated work of a school principal.

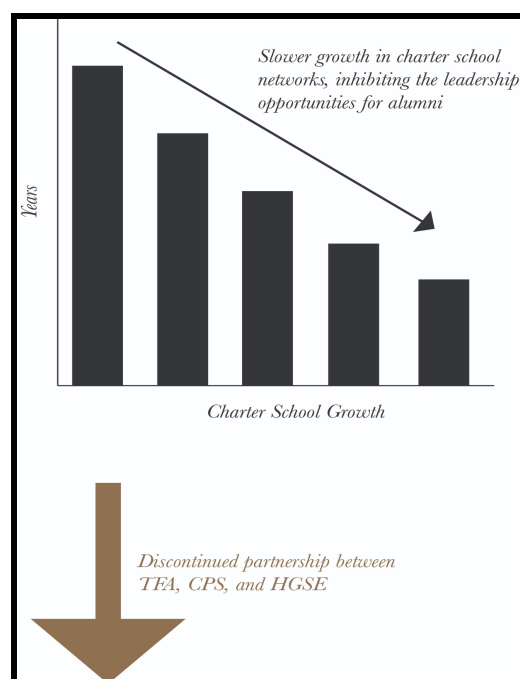
## DEFINITION OF PROBLEM

The educational achievement gap between white and non-white students (as well as the gap between wealthy and economically disadvantaged students) has been a perennial hot-button topic in education for decades. Countless efforts aimed at closing these gaps have been constructed, funded, and implemented in neighborhoods across the county. Some efforts have been immensely successful (e.g. Harlem Children's Zone; Success Academies in New York) while others have fallen short on their promises. In addition to student success, institutionalized racism has been brought to the forefront of many discussions and educational reforms. Educators are taking a deeper look at the underlying systems in education and evaluating their disparate impacts on different racial groups. These two problems are at the center of the work in which TFA-GC fully engages:

- Charter networks are not expanding in Chicago, which has meant fewer opportunities for alumni to step into school leadership roles.
- Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has shifted to the Chicago Leadership Collaborative (CLC), which provides principal residencies for aspiring school leaders. Previously, participants in the TFA Harvard program would join the CLC upon graduation To close the achievement gap and dismantle systems of oppression.

TFA-GC seeks to place their alumni in key positions to act as anti-racist, systems-change leaders. School principals have the greatest potential to impact student outcomes, because they create and sustain the environment in which students and teachers operate. However, while there has been a significant increase in Teach For America alumni members serving as assistant principals and mid-level school leaders, TFA-GC has observed a decrease in the number of alumni serving as school principals (The Chicago Public Education Fund Progress Report, 2017). TFA-GC has identified two primary drivers for downward movement in their principal footprint.

Figure 2: Decline in Principal Footprint

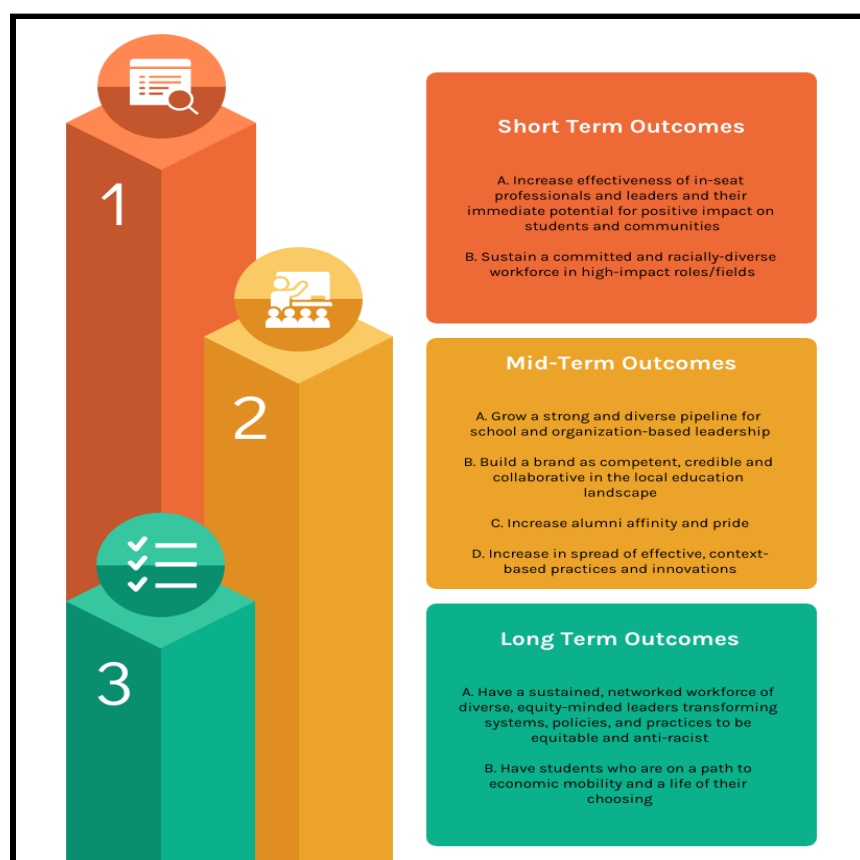


## LOGIC MODEL AND THEORY OF CHANGE

### PROGRAM THEORY

Knowing that school leaders are essential to the operation and success of schools, their preparation for their role is critical. The extant literature notes several different strategies to developing school leaders. In many cases, the research recommends that schools begin to leverage current teachers who have interest in becoming school leaders as the insights from teachers will add value to their leadership training (Grissom, et. al, 2021). Some of the literature points to the policy improvements to be made surrounding earning initial leadership licensure.

Figure 3: Expected Outcomes of the Leadership Suite Programs



Creating an alternative certification program that provides a high level of support for accomplished teachers who are interested in becoming principals. The program would allow them to bypass traditional preparation and have the opportunity to prove their effectiveness while on the job (Bottoms et al., 2003). Leadership preparation programs should consider the contextual knowledge and competencies that are important to the instruction, community-building, and change management of different school environments (Consortium on Chicago

School Research at the University of Chicago Urban Education Institute, 2008). The type of school as well as the school-community make-up, school history, cultural context, and economic stability of the school require unique skill sets of the school principals (Schleicher, 2012). School leaders make a huge difference in the performance of the school. Their preparation should include autonomy to make

important decisions, an opportunity to adapt programming to meet the special needs of their school context and should include ongoing support during their tenure (Grissom, et. al, 2021).

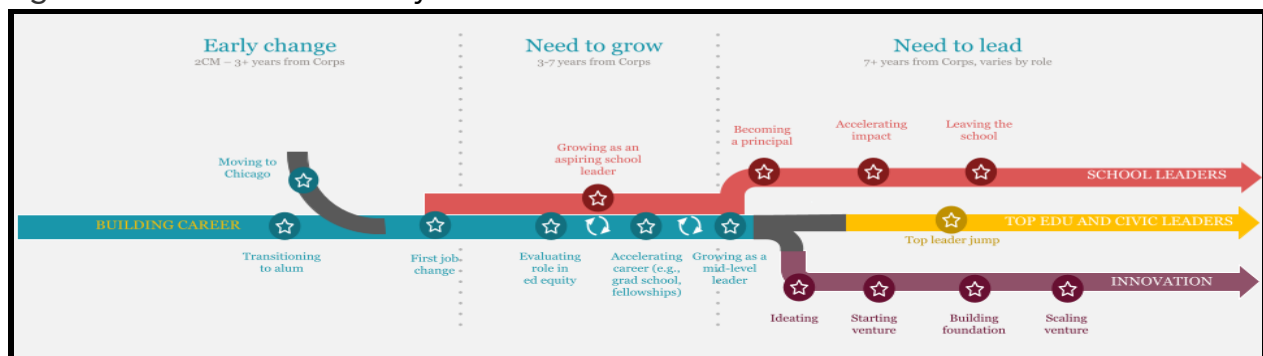
### LOGIC MODEL

*IF TFA-GC designs and delivers high impact programs/fellowships for alumni and close partners whose roles/industries have the potential to impact educational equity, at key moments in their career, THEN TFA-GC WILL:*

The mission of TFA-GC's leadership suite is three-pronged. First, they seek to design high quality professional learning programs that support the development of their alumni as anti-racist change leaders. Additionally, TFA-GC provides career supports that help their alumni find leadership roles in education, particularly at the local school level, but also at senior level leadership roles and other innovative organizations. Lastly, they aim to build partnerships with local organizations that can support the leadership and learning of their alumni and connect the organization to other facets of the educational network in the region. TFA-GC ensures that these partnerships are built with people and organizations that share the same vision and mission for educational equity.

During the first element of the TFA logic model, alumni receive targeted professional development geared towards preparing them for their prospective roles. TFA-GC expects that this professional development will distinguish their alumni from other aspiring leaders, leading to more members advancing in their careers. While in their leadership roles, TFA-GC expects alumni will consistently implement and advocate for innovative policies and practices that lead to more equitable outcomes for low-income and marginalized communities. As a result, they hope that those changes will be implemented on larger, more systematic levels. In short, TFA-GC has committed to invest time, resources, and professional development into alumni who demonstrate leadership potential with the expectation that their return on investment will be leaders who make a significant difference for children in the greater Chicago area and beyond. The intended outcomes of the TFA-GC's Alumni Leadership Suite logic model is depicted in Figure 3.

Figure 4: TFA Alumni Journey Peak Moments



## CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

### STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

TFA-GC has a host of stakeholders who are interested and involved in the operation and success of the alumni support programs. TFA as an organization has imparted bold dreams to transform education to be equitable and accessible for all children, thus is committed to supporting alumni members to perform at optimal levels. Moreover, the outcomes achieved by TFA corps and alumni members will have a profound influence on the reputation of TFA as a credible model for teacher and leader preparation. Since the sustainability of TFA rests upon the quality of its members, TFA programming and training is an incredibly important component of the member experience. Program participants, which include alumni members and non-alumni members, who are selected for the programs in the leadership suite have invested time, effort, and trust into the leadership program to deliver on its promise, expect to be prepared and potentially placed in leadership positions. The local charter and public school systems are also stakeholders because their partnership with TFA represents a consistent flow of eligible teacher and leader candidates available for hire.

#### *Offered Alumni Programs*

The alumni suite offers a myriad of options for leadership development. TFA-GC categorizes the leadership path in three parts: *early change* (early career); *need to grow* (mid-career); *need to lead* (later career). See Figure 5.

#### *Early Change Programs*

Offered to teachers after their completion of their initial two-year commitment, the TFA Teacher Sustainability Study Group (PLC/CFE) provides affinity group support to any teacher or leader focused on teacher sustainability. Current and aspiring teacher leaders are provided a “tasting menu” of teacher leadership knowledge and skills through the internally run program. The Rise Leadership Fellowship equips members to craft and develop leadership skills, increase their impact as a current or aspiring teacher leader and prepares members to take leadership roles within their schools.

#### *Need to Grow Programs*

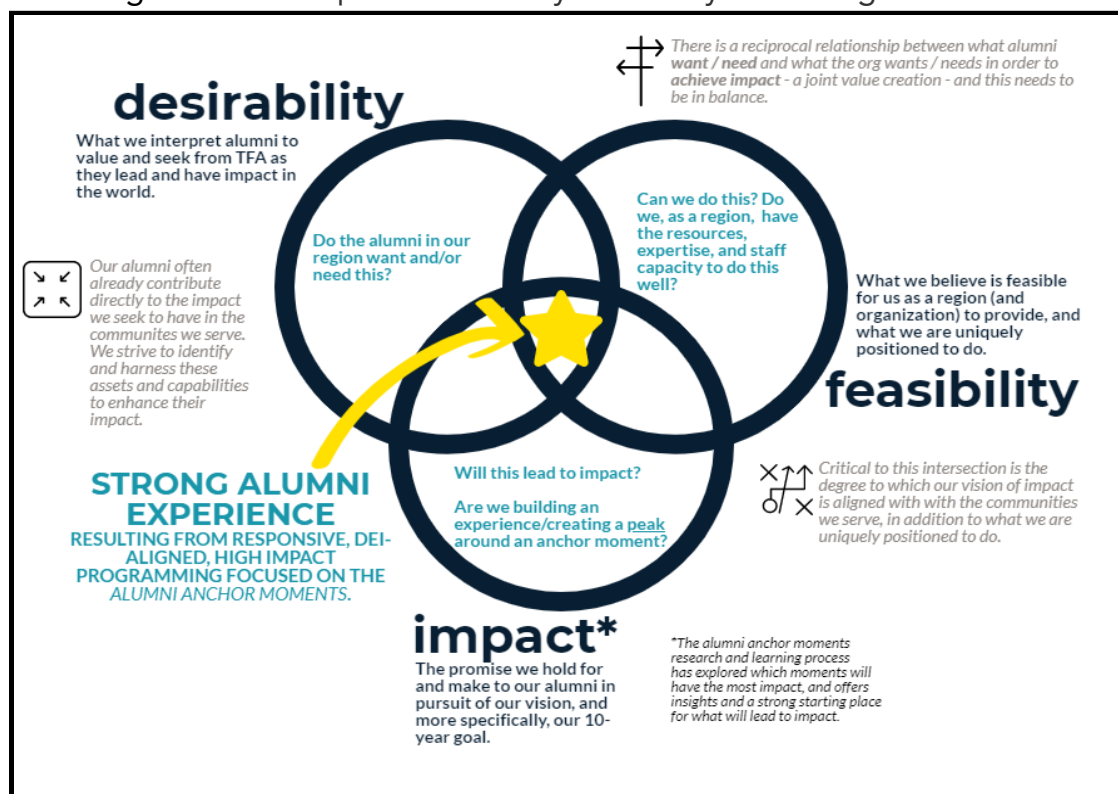
The Accelerate Leadership Program is designed to support aspiring leaders in managing a data-driven culture, internalizing patterns of success in high-performing schools, leading effective teams, and managing adults. Additionally, this program is designed to help leaders learn how to create a strategic plan based on the school’s needs. The participant’s role is to develop a three-year leadership development plan and to create systems within the school to advance equity work and student academic success. In the Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL) TFA Teacher Leadership Program members are placed in one of the 31 Chicago Public Schools in AUSL’s

network and take on personalized leadership opportunities within their school. They also receive mentoring, coaching, and content-based development sessions. The Aspire Fellowship, a signature internally run program of the suite, is intended to build a pipeline of experienced teacher leaders who reflect the diversity of Chicago students. The program provides preparation to enter the principal certification program, and ultimately aims for its participants to become Chicago Public School assistant principals or principals within three to five years after program completion.

*Need to Lead Programs*

A TFA-GC has a partnership with the University of Illinois named the EdD Program in Urban Education which develops strong teacher leaders and candidates for the Chicago Leadership Collaborative (CLC) through which members eventually participate in a full-time, full-year Chicago Public School principal residency. In addition, alumni members are offered access to the Chicago Public Education Fund PLC, a sponsored program that helps fellow principals tackle shared problems of practice, action planning around learning loss, leading school-wide anti-racist initiatives, leveraging community partnership, and ensuring student safety. Certified principals, or in-certification candidates seeking leadership roles in their schools, can receive principal eligibility coaching, a sponsored non-program benefit during peak moments of their career.

Figure 5: TFA Impact Desirability Feasibility Venn Diagram



\* published by Ashley Boven-Betz

### *Other Opportunities*

In addition to the programs listed above, alumni members have access to join pop-up pilot groups. Most recently, TFA-GC offered members the opportunity to join the Anti-Racist Teaching Cohort in which participants could grow their knowledge and competencies around anti-racist practices in the context of organizational change.

Figure 6: TFA-GC Leadership Suite Programs

Program Name	Target Audience / Goal
CFE-TFA Teacher Sustainability Study Groups (sponsored)	Early-Career Teachers
Rise Fellowship (internally run)	Current and Aspiring Teacher Leaders
AUSL - TFA Teacher Leadership Program (sponsored)	Current Teacher Leaders
Aspire Program (internally run)	Aspiring School Leaders of Color
Accelerate Leadership Academy (sponsored)	Deans and Assistant Principals
Principal Eligibility Coaching (sponsored)	Principal certified or in-certification candidates
Chicago Public Education Fund PLC (sponsored)	School leaders

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To better understand TFA-GC's goal of preparing the next generation of educational leaders through targeted programs, we sought to evaluate the efficacy of their leadership suite by exploring the following research questions:

1. What is the efficacy of the leadership suite programs from the perspective of alumni members?
2. How do TFA alumni perceive the impact of the leadership programs on their leadership development?
3. What is the impact of the TFA leadership program on the development of new professional communities and personal networks?

TFA-GC is particularly interested in their alumni's feedback on the quality of the programs they participated in, specifically regarding the relevance of the training, which components were most transferable to their leadership positions and how effective the programs were in producing education leaders. Although the leadership



suite offers programs for civic leaders and innovation leaders, our study fixates on the programs connected to school-based roles (See dark pink line on Figure 3).

## METHODS

We conducted a mixed methods study that included both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain the most insight possible from TFA-GC alumni (Patton, 1987; Maxwell, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Our work included a review of internal organizational literature, live observations of TFA-GC onboarding programs, interviews with alumni from each of their leadership programs, and a survey sent to all program participants. The qualitative component of our study (observations; interview data) gave us specific details about the alumni's experiences with the leadership suite programs. We included the quantitative (i.e. the survey) element to our study with the expectation of collecting data from a greater number of participants with less time restraints (Creswell & Creswell, 2014). This would allow us to generalize our findings with greater validity than our findings from the interviews alone (Bacon-Shone, 2022).

To analyze the data, we used grounded theory coding as described by Charmaz (2014) to closely follow the interviewee's line of thought and construct focused codes. We used inductive coding complemented with deductive coding specifically relating to the three research questions. We read the transcripts of the interviews we conducted for themes and the overall insights of the interviewees. Shortly after each interview, we synthesized observations and identified emerging patterns. After the first set of interviews, we met to discuss highlights and identified commonalities in experiences as well as overarching themes. Next, we collaboratively created categories to code the interviews based on our discussion. Afterwards, we used the protocol as a guide to create the following index codes: literature suite efficacy; professional and personal affiliation. Once the index categories were developed, we each coded the interviews using the index coding as a way to organize the data to find trends. The focused codes were used to code the remaining interviews allowing for additional focused codes to emerge as the researchers analyzed subsequent interviews.

## DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

During our initial client-facing meeting, we aimed to develop a shared understanding of the scope of work between TFA-GC and our study. We gained clarity about the scope of the project, including key project questions and contexts. Additionally, collaboration allowed us to describe the analytical focus and data collection strategy, including research literature, quantitative and qualitative design elements. The initial call with our clients revealed that we could garner a deeper sense of the leadership program suite goals and operations by a rich review of the existing documentation. Documentation we read included: program descriptions, TFA website review, TFA-GC website review, alumni team strategy and vision, pipeline building

brief, internally-created best practices and email protocols. We spent several days reading through, discussing, rereading and debriefing with each other. This reviewal process prepared us to understand the contextual and theoretical background of the leadership suite and to ask pointed, probing questions.

#### *OBSERVATIONS:*

We also launched our study by observing live virtual workshops of two of TFA-GC's programs, the Aspire Program and the Rise Fellowship, to get a more contextualized understanding of how the facilitators align the sessions' activities to the programs' goals. Each session lasted approximately two hours and consisted of a mixture of inspirational messages from the facilitators, breakout room sessions for participants to discuss reading material and discussion questions more deeply, and whole group conversations on topics relevant to the goals of the program. These sessions were conducted virtually with all participants living and working in the Chicago area or remotely. Our session observations were documented in real-time using a shared live document with time stamps.

#### *INTERVIEWS:*

Another component of our research was conducting interviews with alumni members. We anchored our protocol in Patton's (1987) advice on depth interviewing. We met with our client bi-weekly for two months to clarify the objectives, questions, and protocol of our interviews. Since both researchers conducted the interviews, we created a standardized, open-ended set of questions for each participant to answer to maintain continuity. Our questions were classified into three separate categories: background information; leadership suite efficacy; and organizational/professional/personal affiliations. The background questions gathered general information about each alumni, including where and when they completed their initial two-year commitment with Teach For America and the leadership suite program they completed. The leadership suite efficacy questions probed into participants' experience in their leadership program. Lastly, the questions related to alumni's organizational, professional, and personal affiliations with members of TFA-GC programs provided us with more data on how participants either maintained or discontinued relationships with TFA-GC personnel or their cohort members (Patton, 1987).

Once our questions were created, we emailed over 150 TFA-GC alumni in late October to solicit participation. We initially scheduled interviews with 20 alumni; however, we were able to confirm interview times with 16 people. This initial round of interviews occurred between November and December of 2021 and included a significant proportion of aspiring leaders (i.e. teachers; teacher leaders; non-profit organization workers). In an effort to garner more participation, we reached back out to alumni in mid-February, focusing specifically on individuals who are current educational leaders (i.e. principals; assistant principals, deans, academic coaches). We decided to

focus on this population specifically to gain deeper insight on the efficacy of the leadership suite programs on the practices of those who are currently serving as leaders and as well as the relationships they formed and maintained while in their program(s). We sent a second round of emails to 36 specific alumni asking for participation, and we were able to schedule an additional twelve interviews with alumni members. Most of them were still in a leadership role either at a school building or an educational non-profit organization.

We conducted both rounds of interviews virtually (via Zoom) and used an online note-taking application to capture the key points. Each interview was then transcribed to allow us to identify overarching themes and illustrative quotes from each interviewee. See Appendix F for the interview coding matrix.

#### *SURVEYS:*

The survey was sent to over 150 alumni members of the TFA-GC network and was available to them to complete for four weeks. We solicited participation with an initial email to all alumni, and then followed up with two more emails to encourage feedback. We created our survey to gain additional data on the alumni's perceptions of the programs in which they participated. Participants began the survey by identifying the program(s) they completed. We provided them with a brief description of each of the programs offered by TFA-GC to assist them in recalling the goals of the program they completed. Then, they transitioned to a set of questions that collected data on their perceptions of the efficacy and their satisfaction of the program they completed. The survey was then bifurcated into sections for current and aspiring educational leaders. Aspiring leaders were given questions that provided deeper insight into their future endeavors, while current leaders were given questions that gave us further knowledge on how the leadership suite programs benefitted them in their leadership journey. We concluded our survey by asking questions related to alumni members' affinity with TFA-GC and their leadership suite cohort members.

Figure 7: Research Questions and Data Sources, Collection Methods, and Analyses

Research Question 1: Perspective of Program Efficacy		
Data Source	Data Collection	Data Analysis
Alumni Surveys Alumni Interviews Session Observations Applicant-facing Recruitment literature and artifacts	Survey Responses Interview Responses Minute-by-minute notes Program descriptions provided by TFA-GC	Transcribe, categorize and code interview responses
Research Question 2: Impact on Leadership Development		
Data Source	Data Collection	Data Analysis
Alumni Surveys Alumni Interviews	Survey Responses Interview Responses	Transcribe, categorize and code interview responses
Research Question 3: Impact on Professional and Personal Connectivity		
Data Source	Data Collection	Data Analysis
Alumni Surveys Alumni Interviews Session Observations	Survey Responses Interview Responses Minute-by-minute notes	Transcribe, categorize and code interview responses

## DATA

### ALUMNI INTERVIEWS

We conducted a total of 28 interviews with TFA-GC alumni representing all seven of the current programs offered through the leadership suite as well as the one program TFA-GC discontinued. Alumni from the Rise Fellowship had the highest participation rate, representing 43% of all the interviewees. Alumni from TFA-GC's partnership with Harvard's Graduate School of Education (HGSE) and Chicago Public Schools represented 21% of the sample. (Note: TFA-GC, Chicago Public Schools, and HGSE discontinued their partnership in 2017) See Table 1 below for a breakdown of the representation of the interviewees in relation to the total number interviewed.

Table 1: Representativeness of Interviewees by Program

Program Name	Number of Participants Interviewed	Percentage of Total Interviewees (N = 28*)
Accelerate Leadership Academy	1	4%
Aspire Program	6	21%
AUSL - TFA Teacher Leadership Program	3	11%
CFE-TFA Teacher Sustainability Study Groups	2	7%
Chicago Public Education Fund PLC	3	11%
HGSE Leadership Program**	6	21%
Principal Eligibility Coaching	4	14%
RISE Fellowship	12	43%

\* Some interviewees participated in multiple leadership suite programs

\*\* The partnership between Harvard Graduate School of Education and TFA-GC has been discontinued

#### ALUMNI SURVEY DATA

Respondents to the survey represented all seven of TFA-GC's leadership suite programs. As with the interviews, alumni from the Rise Fellowship have the greatest representation of those that completed the survey. There were a total of 57 recorded responses to the survey which represents approximately 37% of the TFA-GC alumni base. However, 30 of those responses were of high enough quality to be considered for data analysis making our sample population closer to 18% of the alumni base. Some participants responded to the survey based on their participation in multiple leadership programs. Those responses reflect participants' perceptions based on their overall experience with the leadership suite programs. Table 2 displays the programs that are represented by those that completed the survey, the number of respondents from each program, and the percentage they comprise of the total interviewees.

Table 2: Representativeness of Survey Participants by Alumni Program

Program Name	Number of Participants Interviewed	Percentage of Total Interviewees (N = 30*)
Accelerate Leadership Academy	5	17%
Aspire Program	5	17%
AUSL - TFA Teacher Leadership Program	4	13%
CFE-TFA Teacher Sustainability Study Groups	2	7%
Chicago Public Education Fund PLC	3	10%
Principal Eligibility Coaching	2	7%
RISE Fellowship	11	37%

\* Some interviewees participated in multiple leadership suite programs

## LIMITATIONS

### *Sample Size*

At a high level glance, our survey collected 57 responses. Upon a deeper analysis, we realized that several respondents did one of the following: opened the survey but did not complete it, partially completed the survey or even typed unrecognizable responses. These occurrences created a sample size limitation for our study. Having a smaller dataset when conducting research, both quantitative and qualitative, is one important threat to the external validity of our study. We were able to interview 28 alumni and garner 30 alumni responses to our survey, which are roughly 18% and 19% of TFA-GC's alumni population respectively. While we were able to uncover some valuable information regarding the efficacy of TFA-GC's leadership, the results may not be the best representation of the alumni population as a whole. Additionally, our relatively small sample size may have inhibited us from uncovering other trends that could help in improving their programs.

### *Participants' Biases*

A significant portion of our study relied on interview and survey data that recorded participants' perceptions of the efficacy of the program(s) in which they participated. While we were able to identify some common themes regarding participants' perceptions of the programs' efficacy, these data are highly subjective. Having more objective measurements for success, such as number of participants that obtained leadership roles as a result of participating in one the leadership suite programs or the leader's impact on student achievement, would increase the generalizability of our results.

### *Nascent Programs*

Our data is also limited in its scope due to the stage of development and implementation of several alumni programs. The overall goal of some of the programs is to diversify educational leadership in the region and for its members to employ transformative practices in their buildings that result in greater equity. However, it is unlikely that members from either cohort have assumed positions as school building leaders this early in the program. This means that our findings are limited to reporting perceptions of efficacy of the program elements and not the efficacy of some of the programs' overall goals.

### *Limited Program Experiences Captured*

The goal of our program evaluation study is to provide insights on participants' experiences among all of the programs within the leadership suite. However, one limitation we faced was sourcing interviews for all of the programs in the leadership suite. The interviews we were able to conduct covered about 80% of the programming. Even with multiple rounds of email communication and incentives, our interview respondents exclude data from the Accelerate Leadership Academy and the Principal Eligibility Coaching program. While this is a constraint on our overall findings, this reality could also signify a broader circumstance, a circumstance that would be suitable in future research.

## FINDINGS

**Research Question 1:** *What is the efficacy of the leadership suite programs from the perspective of alumni members?*

### SURVEY DATA

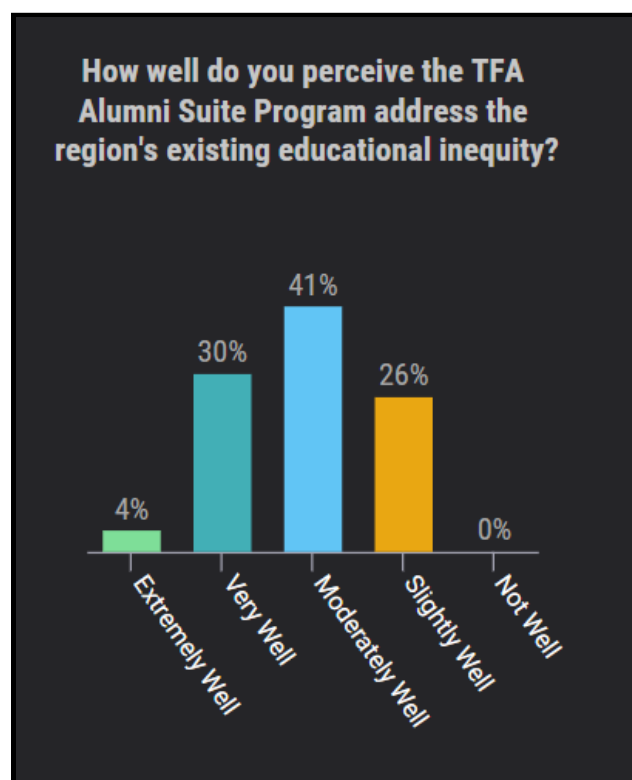
#### *Overall Perceptions of Program Efficacy*

Alumni spoke very favorably about being informed about the goals of the programs in which they participated. Of those surveyed, 93% agreed or strongly agreed that the goals of their respective program was made clear to them before enrollment, and 97% agreed or strongly agreed that those goals were reinforced throughout the duration of the program. A significant percentage of respondents (90%) agreed or strongly agreed that the programs were well designed and provided participants with sufficient access to resources that were in tight alignment with the goals of the program. Most participants (69%) agreed or strongly agreed that the assessments in each program were valid measures of each program's outcomes.

#### *Efficacy of Program Elements*

82% of respondents indicated that the timeliness of their program was appropriate to their context at the time, 14% mentioned it was too early, and 4% indicated it was too late. Specifically regarding aspiring leaders, 76% of survey respondents indicated that 1:1 mentoring or coaching had a high impact on their aspirations to pursue educational leadership, while 69% stated that 1:1 coaching or mentoring had a high impact on their decision to remain in the field of education.

Figure 8: Survey Question: *How well do you perceive the TFA Alumni Suite Program addressed the region's existing educational inequity?*





### *Addressing Educational Equity*


Part of TFA-GC's mission with their leadership suite programs is to address the persistent inequities in the Chicago area, particularly related to the lack of racial diversity within the pool of candidates for educational leadership positions. 41% of the participants responded saying TFA-GC is doing moderately well, 30% said they are doing very well, 26% indicated they are doing slightly well, and 4 % responded they are doing extremely well. No respondents indicated that TFA-GC is not doing well at all addressing educational equity.

#### *INTERVIEW DATA*

### *Built Technical Skills*

Participants in the AUSL-TFA Teacher Leadership Program reported that the single, most effective goal achieved by the program was the competency they gained from the content-based development sessions. Participants were exposed to content that extended beyond the professional knowledge of school leadership, while also delving into specific characteristics that effective leaders have. A former instructional coach and assistant principal said the program offered her “access to texts and to conversations and to experiences that I otherwise wouldn't have had in terms of emotional intelligence.” Alumni also had the opportunity to learn best practices in relationship-building and in navigating the political landscape of educational leadership. Additionally, the AUSL-TFA partnership granted participants access to a robust professional network that provided them with motivation and inspiration to offer students a high-quality education. All respondents indicated that the activities, discussions, assignments, and training aligned closely with the goals of the programs.

Respondents from the Rise Fellowship noted that the goal of increasing the impact of teachers and developing their leadership skills was achieved most effectively. Participants in this program learned the valuable skills of planning effective team meetings and creating agendas to make those meetings more efficient, as well as other skills such as grant writing, resource allocation and documentation. Regarding the utilizing the best practices for facilitating team meetings, a first year academic dean mentioned that her culminating artifact “had to do with creating agendas, which I still pretty much use.” As with the AUSL program, all respondents indicated



“The content of the readings and the things that we had discussions on were really important and all really high quality.” - Learning Specialist, RISE Fellowship

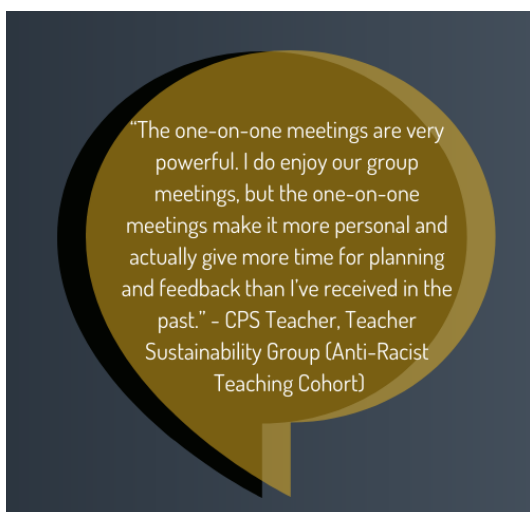
that the activities, discussions, assignments, and training aligned closely with the goals of the programs.

The Accelerate Institute is designed to provide deans and assistant principals with knowledge and skills for creating school-wide strategic plans and bringing them to life within their schools. The alumni of this program specifically reported that managing a data driven culture and the increased capacity as leaders were the goals that were achieved most effectively. 83% of the respondents also noted that there was a tight alignment between the goals of the program and its activities, discussions, assignments, resources, and training.

Alumni from the Chicago Public Education Fund PLC reported that their experience was rich with opportunities to discuss troubling situations in education. The applicability of the resources and discussion worked well for some of the participants. One alumni who is currently a principal stated that she “used some of those tricks even now that I’m in the principal’s seat.” For example, she created “a teacher action council [to] run things by them and get their support and help on different things.”

The Aspire Program, one of TFA-GC’s newest programs, aims to build a pipeline of experienced educational leaders that reflect the diversity of the students they serve. Respondents mentioned that Aspire is most effective at preparing leaders, especially those from minority communities, to enroll in principal certification programs. A sixth year bilingual teacher reflected on the confidence boost she received as a result of her participation in the program. She mentioned that “as a POC (person of color) woman, you’re just really shy about or really humble about [being in leadership]... I think through this program, you gave me more confidence to own it.” Respondents were also very pleased with the program structure as well, as all responded that the goals were reinforced throughout the program and that the activities aligned tightly with the completion of those goals.

The Teacher Sustainability Group participants reported that the affinity groups were most effective in providing them strategies to reduce burnout. The affinity groups within this program allowed teachers to confide in one another regarding the similar challenges they are encountering in their specific settings. Yet, they are encouraged to work toward changing their situations for the better. A Chicago Public Schools teacher joined a group designed toward building resilience in third year teachers. She found



it

very useful that her group “was a very specific group”, one constructed of similarly situated educators. Another respondent, a Chicago Public Schools special education teacher, mentioned the program pushed her “to not only think and reflect on a problem that is bothering me or something I want to change, or something that I think that needs to be changed... but it actually pushes me to do something about it rather than sit and wait for something to happen.”

### *Program-Context Congruity*

Two common themes arose in which several alumni indicated their dissatisfaction with the leadership suite. The first is centered around the relevance of their specific program. When discussing her experience in the AUSL-TFA fellowship, a fourth-year inclusion teacher mentioned that she did not feel as though the program was “as flexible as some of the other programs or as responsive to [her] experience in early childhood.” She noticed that much of the content was designed for educators in the K-12 sector, which was irrelevant to her context as a preschool teacher. A sixth year bilingual teacher and instructional leader noted that the Professional Development sessions for the Aspire Program may have been relevant for previous cohorts, but not for the time she completed the program.

### *Transferable Skills and Knowledge*

The second theme that arose was the participants’ discontent with the transferability of some of the content. A former teacher mentioned that her engagement in the Work on Purpose program “was a great thought exercise”, but that she did not “[walk] away with a ton” that she could implement in her immediate context. A former dean of culture mentioned that she felt mismatched with cohort members, which impeded her ability to gain personalized development. She stated that “I felt like I was interacting with [participants that] were just kind of starting their leadership journey in terms of education... I’ve been a dean for six years.”

## FINDINGS

***Research Question 2: How do TFA alumni perceive the impact of the leadership programs on their leadership development?***

## SURVEY DATA

### Impact on Leadership Capacity

We asked participants for their perceptions on how the leadership program(s) developed their educational leadership capacity. The majority of respondents (79%) indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that their experience with at least one of the leadership programs increased their capacity for educational leadership. We also asked alumni if the program(s) in which they participated adequately prepared them to succeed in their current role as educational leaders. 82% of respondents indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

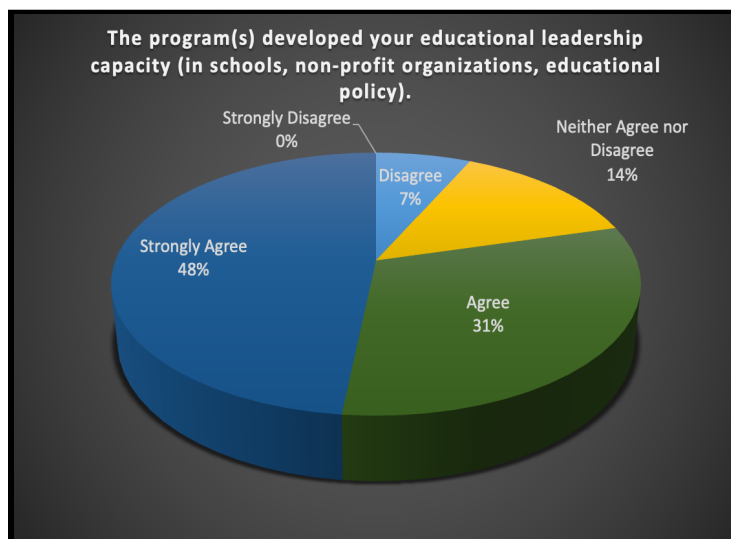


Figure 9: Perceptions on Impact on Leadership Capacity

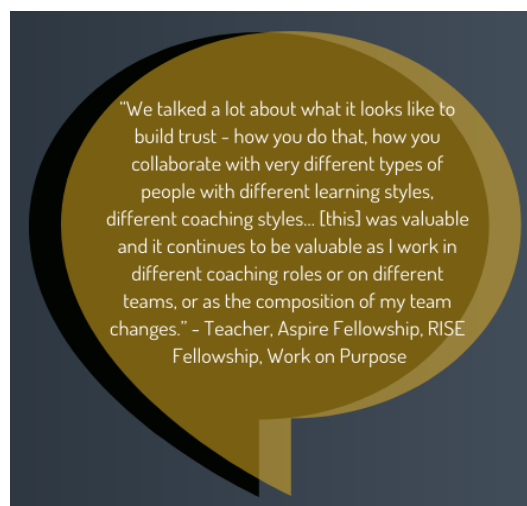
## INTERVIEW DATA

### Developing Adroit Leaders

Alumni from the Work on Purpose program shared that the program helped them clarify their values, passions, and how the skills they learned could be applied in a professional role. After completing several programs in the

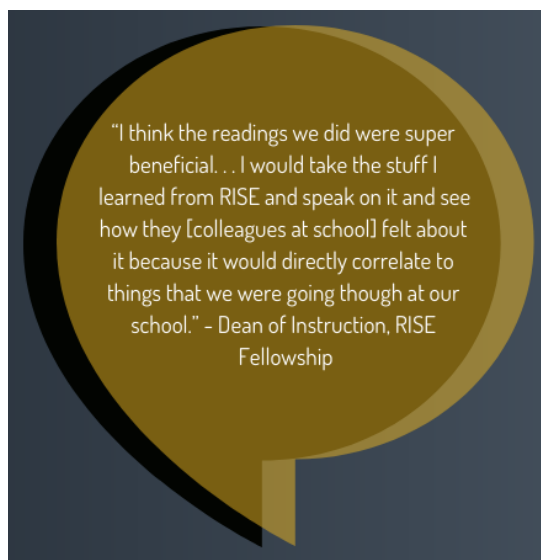
suite, alumni felt that Work on Purpose was one

of the standout programs that prepared them to launch into leadership. Another alumni member who participated in the Impact Teacher Leader Fellowship and the Work on Purpose program felt the readings were useful



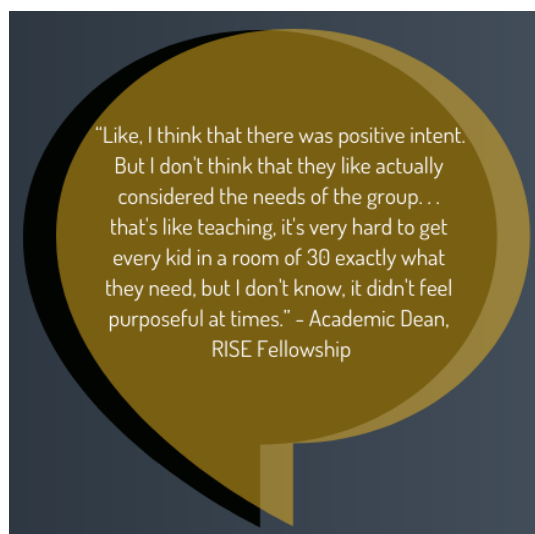
and shared that they intentionally looked for takeaways. Their sense was that the programs are as effective as participants' effort to gain new knowledge and that having an attitude of "I'm going to make this time productive" was key to the applicability of the skills and competencies taught in the program. One alumni member listed many practical tools they gained from being a program participant of two programs (Rise Fellowship and Teachers Supporting Teachers) including: helpful professional development sessions, encouragement to apply for grants, how to hold yourself accountable as a leader, documentation and tracking systems and creating effective agendas. Multiple alumni members who were enrolled in the HGSE program reiterated the benefit of learning "people management" skills, they specifically mentioned building their knowledge and practice around having courageous conversations.

### *Program Timeliness and Context-Awareness*



Each program in the leadership suite is designed for educators at specific points in their careers, and TFA alumni are free to apply to any of the programs that are applicable to their context. This implies that each program in the leadership suite should be timely and provide appropriate professional development for current and aspiring leaders. The culminating capstone project was a promising activity that an alumni member of the Rise

Fellowship and Work on Purpose programs mentioned that it "didn't come to full fruition" because of the COVID-19 pandemic. One alumni member from the Sustainability Teaching and Anti-Racist Teaching Cohort programs proudly stated that the components of both programs were very relevant to their context. The content of the sessions were centered around topics that their school is either currently attempting to operationalize or looking to implement in the future.



### *Turnaround Time of Securing a Leadership Role*

One alumni member who completed the Rise Fellowship specifically shared that the activity in which participants created a playbook helped him realize “he wasn’t quite ready for leadership at the time.” One alumni member expressed, “The RISE fellowship pushed me to seek out leadership roles. I think that people think the degree will get them the job, but it’s really the authentic experience.” Overall, the interviewees did not attest to their program participation as a key determinant of securing a leadership position. However, many of the participants who were not in official leadership positions, commented that the mindset and reflection work added depth to their existing knowledge about leadership. They explained that the program components brought clarity to their aspirations of leading a school and gave them the confidence to continue learning about leadership.

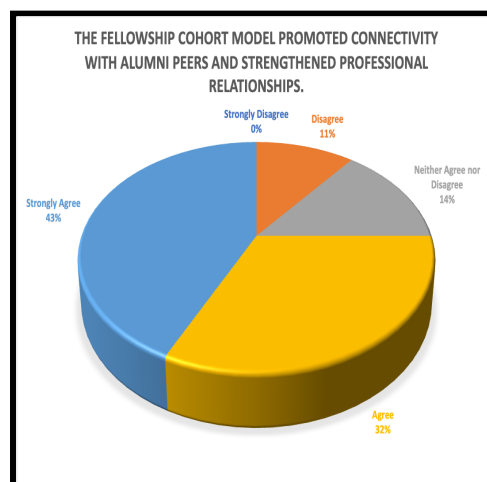
## FINDINGS

**Research Question 3:** *What is the impact of the TFA leadership program on the development of new professional communities and personal networks?*

### SURVEY DATA

Participants indicated if the fellowship cohort model promoted connectivity with alumni peers and strengthened their professional relationships. Three quarters (75%) of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, and 11% disagreed. The remaining 14% neither agreed nor disagreed. We also asked alumni if they solicit partnership, support, or collaboration from their TFA alumni network when they have professional challenges, and a little greater than a third (37.5%) either agreed or strongly agreed that they do. Half of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 12.5% were neutral. Additionally, participants provided data whether or not they sustained relationships with their alumni cohort members. From the survey, 48% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they maintained

Figure 10: Promotion of Connectivity

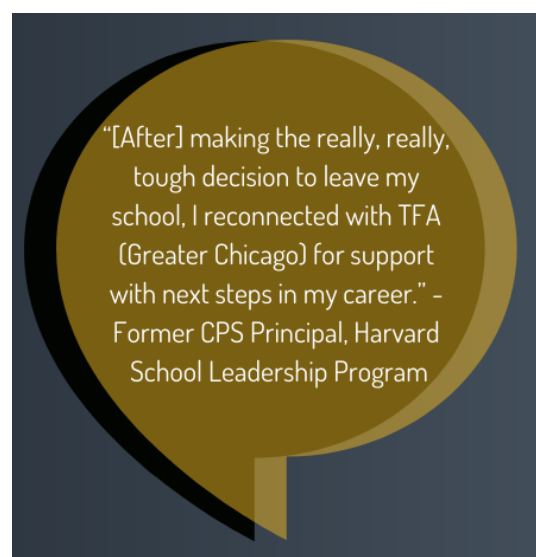
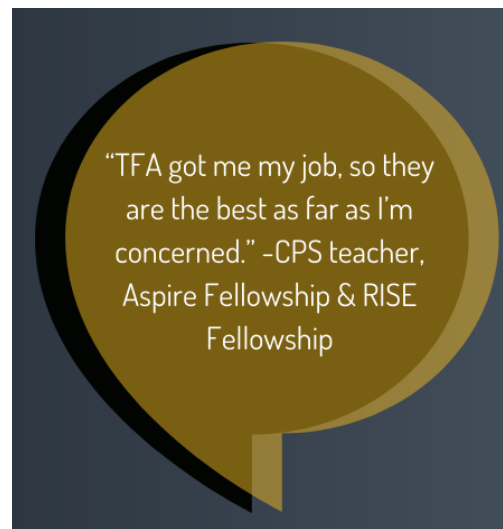


relationships with my leadership program cohort peers after the completion of the alumni program while 52% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#### INTERVIEW DATA

##### *Professional Communities*

Alumni throughout TFA-GC's leadership suite made several references to the development of deep communal ties that were built as a result of their participation in one of the programs. One main driver of this was the strong career support that they received during and after completion. A former Texas teacher now working in Chicago referred to how valuable she considers her affiliation with TFA-GC, saying, "TFA got me my job, so they are the best as far as I'm concerned." Similarly, a former Chicago Public Schools principal mentioned that she was vacillating between career options, and that when "making the really, really, tough decision to leave my school, I reconnected with TFA (Greater Chicago) for support with next steps in my career." The advice that she received assisted her in making the decision that was right for her at the time.




Several other alumni highlighted their experience with coaching and that they maintained the relationship with the mentor or coach they were paired with when completing their respective program. One inclusion teacher made specific mention of the intentionality of personalizing her mentor selection. "The leadership coaching was really aligned to my vision for myself," she said. An instructional leader similarly noted that "they were very intentional when they matched us with a mentor/coach. That matching process was really responsive to my needs, because it asked very specific questions on my end like: "How do I like to be coached?"; "What are things that I need when it comes to my own identity or the identity of the coach?"

The coaches/mentors continued to provide valuable insight to alumni as they navigated new positions as educational leaders. An administrator in Chicago Public Schools rejoiced as she spoke about her mentor stating that she “loves her; she’s my coach to this day.” One teacher made similar comments about the coach assigned to her. “I love her,” she said, noting that they only met virtually; yet, she found her coach’s insight and passion for the profession particularly helpful.

### *Participant-Prompted Relationships*

The development of deep, communal relationships to fellow participants is another significant impact the program had on many of the alumni. Alumni mentioned that their relationships with their peers included continual professional and personal ties. A former instructional coach and assistant principal spoke about her new role as an educational consultant and mentioned that a participant in her cohort “wanted to learn more about it. She was actually able to share some resources with me about some things that she was doing in her classroom that I was able to take back to some work that I’m doing with our parents.” This spirit of mutual support was also felt by a ten-year veteran teacher. She noted that she felt like she “could reach out to anyone in my core or the leadership team that I was connected to. I have that sense of if I wanted to get involved in something specific that they would be... more than willing to talk to me about it.”

Close personal relationships were also formed amongst the alumni. Several participants mentioned their ongoing contact with cohort members. Fellow members in one assistant principal’s cohort meet via Zoom to reconnect and provide each other with life updates. An eleventh year ELA teacher likened his experience with the program to that of a fraternity and stated that he thinks “about being a member of eternity.” In addition to sending each other well wishes during the holidays, alumni like one middle school associate principal casually “send text messages or WhatsApp” messages to keep in touch with one another.



“... could have had more relationship building because it was really hard to build those connections virtually” - CPS teacher, Aspire Fellowship & RISE Fellowship

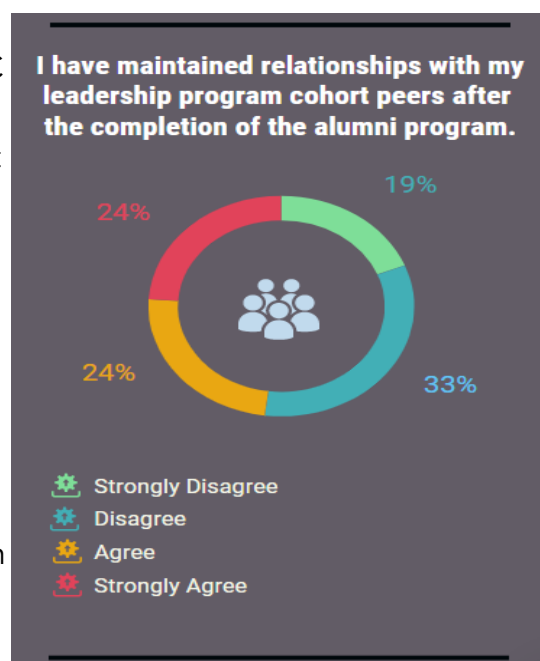
### *Program Opportunities to Forge Relationships*

While many of the alumni reported their deep appreciation for the network they built through the leadership suite, there is also a subgroup that reported their ephemeral connection to their alumni cohort members. Several alumni mentioned that they are unlikely to collaborate with their cohort members for future aspirations. One former math teacher who secured a job as a principal noted that her improbability of reaching out to cohort members was



“not because I don’t trust any of them. I just think my personal circle is where I’ve been reaching.” Other alumni had a more challenging time building lasting relationships with their cohort members, such as one former teacher who mentioned “the likelihood would be very low” in response to a potential collaboration effort, and that “I could not tell you a person’s name” from her cohort. Alumni who share this sentiment may have had their experience marred by participating in programs during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, thus having to complete their program virtually. Others may have been matched with a program that was not relevant to their needs at the time.

A handful of alumni longed to reconnect with their cohort members after the program’s completion and would have appreciated TFA-GC personnel coordinating those times. A current Chicago Public Schools teacher was a participant of multiple programs within the leadership. Speaking specifically about the Rise Fellowship, he mentioned that he wished there “could have had more relationship building” because “it was really hard to build those connections” virtually. A middle school associate principal mentioned his desire to want to connect more with his cohort members through occasional social gatherings, especially after such a rich experience in the Harvard Leadership Program.



## DISCUSSION

In response to TFA-GC’s request for assistance, we sought to understand alumni members’ perceptions of program efficacy, program impact on leadership development and the programs’ impact on the personal and professional networks of alumni members. We aimed to assist TFA-GC, and potentially similarly situated organizational programs, in the continuous improvement of their leadership pipeline and ultimately the organization’s impact on addressing educational equity.

Our analysis of the data that we collected uncovered several trends within the leadership suite. First, we observed that the work the TFA-GC leadership team put into designing programs for alumni was recognized and appreciated by the participants. The majority of the participants indicated a tight alignment between the activities they engaged in while in their respective programs and the overall goals of the program

(Gurdjian et. al., 2014). Engaging alumni in 1:1 mentoring and coaching, live seminars and classes, and targeted support within their schools had a high impact on retaining talent in the field. In a similar fashion, 1:1 mentoring or coaching had a particularly high impact on alumni deciding to pursue educational leadership (Ehrich, Hansford, and Tennet, 2004). Research affirms this phenomenon as the practice of coaching can go beyond the scope and reach of professional development (Aguilar, 2013). Beyond knowledge and practice sits underlying competing commitments that teachers and school leaders have that inform and dictate their decision-making mechanisms and actions. Coaching provides personalized conditions that tap into the intellect, behaviors, practices, beliefs, values and feelings of the practitioner (Aguilar, 2013).

Former participants in the TFA-GC leadership suite are in general proud members of this region and regard their network as highly valuable. Some alumni have maintained a consistent professional relationship with their cohort members while others have touch base occasionally to maintain personal friendships. Several alumni felt more closely connected to the individuals with whom they completed their initial two-year commitment than they did their cohort members from the leadership suite programs. Similarly, several graduates from TFA-GC's partnership program with Chicago Public Schools and Harvard's Graduate School of Education indicated that they built strong bonds with their cohort members. Future research should be conducted to explore which program elements of programs such as the two aforementioned that have a high impact on participants building lasting relationships after completion of their program.

In terms of the connections made between alumni members, it seems evident that the cohort model of learning is a solid starting point for TFA-GC's alumni strategy towards creating a deeper and lasting community culture (Leithwood et al., 1995). Unfortunately, the community built within the alumni suite programs suggests that of a professional network exclusively if alumni choose to engage with others. Our qualitative data indicates that the value of the TFA network is vast and wide. Members noted that knowing other TFA alumni allowed them to secure positions in schools that they believe they would have not otherwise sought out or secured. This finding may suggest that in general alumni members believe that their personal and professional networks could potentially be more valuable or as valuable as the content of the programs. In this sense, the connectivity heavily rests on the reputation of TFA as an organizational force in education. More subtle to understand was how alumni members perceived the educational impact of TFA on eradicating educational inequality/inequity towards a more just education for all.

On the whole, a replication of the family-like personal connectivity remains to be in the initial corps stage and not yet transferable to the alumni community. One influential factor of the programming many alumni members openly share is the

historical backdrop of recent alumni programs, the “unprecedented” times of the COVID-19 global pandemic. The pandemic’s impact on gathering in-person had a major impact on how relationships were fostered through the program. Therefore, more information is needed about the connectivity of alumni members when sessions revert to an in-person format and how the connectivity of alumni members can influence alumni members to apply for and secure school-based leadership positions (Barnett et al., 2000 & Teitel, 1997).

Some alumni members view their alumni program experience as “thought exercises” and “mindset work building activities.” The connotation in the responses signaled positive feelings towards the cognitive training they received while indicating the main domain of learning in the program. Beyond learning about leadership mentality and disposition tasks leaves room for action-oriented undertaking.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our findings, we recommend that TFA-GC consider the following:

### I. Increase the responsiveness of content and activities

Using a similar approach to planning content as is used to pair mentors and mentees could be a meaningful step to capturing the experiences/needs of the program participants. There were several glowing remarks about the tailoring of coaching/mentoring relationships collected during the interviews. The data we received, both qualitative and quantitative, suggests that alumni members found the coaching and mentoring aspect of programming as the distinctive pull factor and benefit of the alumni program. We found that this single dimension of the program was impactful across programs as we surveyed and interviewed alumni members who participated in multiple programs. Aside from the tailored and customizable nature of the coaching and mentoring practice, it is clear that alumni members greatly value the responsive aspect of their coaching and mentoring sessions. The opportunity to brainstorm and problem-solve current and relevant scenarios they were experiencing in their work communities and in the context of their role in schools was deeply meaningful. As TFA-GC works to improve their programming, it would be advantageous to find opportunities to personalize members' experiences by considering ways to tailor the content of each subsequent cohort to the specific needs of the participants.

## II. Facilitate consistent opportunities for alumni to reconnect

Several alumni mentioned their desire to maintain a close relationship with their peers, while others mentioned that they completely lost touch with their cohort members after completing their program. In efforts to foster lasting relationships among cohort members, we recommend that TFA-GC personnel organize events (i.e. happy hours; coffee shop meet ups; etc.) for participants to attend and reconnect with one another. Soliciting ideas from cohort members on how and when they prefer to reconnect would be an advantage to getting the most participation. This will be especially beneficial for alumni that completed programs virtually due restrictions related to COVID-19. Additionally, creating groups on various social media platforms and group chat applications that include all members of a cohort and using it frequently throughout the programs provides an avenue for them to stay in touch during and after their program. This also allows them the opportunity to provide each other with career updates post-completion, ask each other for career advice, and even organize their own times to reconnect in person.

## III. Reinstate a partnership with a university

The program for principals that was in partnership with Harvard University demonstrated high return on investment and was highly rated by its participants. It seems that there is more to be unlocked and discovered through university partnerships that captures and sustains the interests of teacher leaders. TFA as a well-known and established organization is seen as a pillar of knowledge and has a record of program and the university partners provide the professionalized prestige and accreditation facet that many of the alumni members desire. Together, the program through partnership can thrive.

An alternative opportunity exists in the intersection of TFA and community-based organizations. The alumni suite offers members high-quality professional development during key moments in their career as a teacher or teacher leader. There is more desire to bring the content of the programs to life through partnering with community-based organizations. Much of the research discusses the oscillation of different education reform in the educational and political landscape in public education in Chicago. Great value could be added to TFA's program alumni suite by centering community-based organizations as contextual consultants, key leaders of the work and assets to understanding the underlying interplay of educational equity in the city.

#### IV. Develop vision and indicators for educational impact (equity)

The interviewee responses conveyed immense energy behind making systemic change and continuing in the fight for equity. There was less mention of what alumni members thought were key levers of creating those shifts in education. We believe this could illuminate the need for TFA-GC to clarify and communicate the organization's beliefs about what is required of teachers, aspiring leaders and current leaders to address the issues of education equity in their school communities. Similar to the standards of learning that undergird the curricular decisions made for programmatic content, TFA-GC should include the guidelines and indicators for successful equity work in schools as a bridge from theoretical frameworks to practical application and evaluation.

#### FURTHER RESEARCH

After completing our research, we encourage further research in two key areas. First, we suggest research on the impact TFA-GC's programs have on participants securing leadership roles. Measuring the average amount of time it takes for leaders to assume leadership positions will be a helpful data point regarding the efficacy of the programs. This also allows for data collection on the diversification of leadership, the types of schools where leaders are securing positions, and their direct impact on the closure of the achievement gap.

It will also be beneficial for TFA-GC to measure the impact their alumni are having on specific indicators, such as student achievement, social-emotional learning, school culture, and teacher retention. This will provide data on the influences their programs have on various aspects of school leadership. Also, this will uncover the components of their programs that were most relevant as well as parts that are not utilized as much. Along with Gurdjian's, Halbetsen's, and Lane's (2014) advice to track the performance of leaders after completion, we suggest that this tracking happens continually and with as little lapse in time as possible.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Our work with TFA has the potential to benefit their organization in three key ways. First, the information we will present to them will enable them to make their programs more effective for future cohorts. This can have a direct effect on their recruitment efforts as they will be in a position to present prospective alumni with

satisfactory results regarding the program. Also, this study will demonstrate that TFA is committed to receiving feedback and growing in light of it, which prospective leaders will appreciate.

Strengthening alumni affinity with the organization is another goal of TFA-GC, and our work will enable us to recommend ways to bolster that. As participants share their experience in the program during our interviews, they will divulge information about their perceived connectedness to their alumni program cohort members as well as their colleagues in the Greater Chicago region. We hope to uncover several ways that TFA is fostering affinity and any practices or ideologies that militate against this goal.

Lastly, our work serves as the initial iteration of study that TFA can replicate as often as they'd like to gauge the perceptions of their participants. The Aspire program will continue to welcome additional cohorts making it important for TFA staff to have an understanding of the alumni's views pertaining to the efficacy of the program. This will coincide well with data they will soon receive regarding Aspire participants assuming principalship roles and their impact in their school buildings. Eventually, our work with TFA, while initially beginning as a qualitative study focusing on program evaluation, can transform into a mixed-methods study that consistently produces highly valuable data on the program's effectiveness, which will enable TFA to frequently improve their work through a more informed lens.

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## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL



## Teach For America - Greater Chicago/Northwest Indiana Program Evaluation: Interview Protocol

### Interview Protocol

#### Introduction

*Good morning/afternoon! My name is Lerai/Raymond. I am a student at Vanderbilt University, and I am working alongside TFA to collect data on your experience with the \_\_\_\_\_ program in their leadership suite. While the information you share with us will inform our recommendations on how to improve their programs, your personal information will certainly remain confidential.*

*Do you mind if I record the audio of our conversation today?*

*Do you have any questions before we get started?*

#### General Questions

- I. *Can you briefly share a little about yourself?*
- II. *What is your connection to TFA-GC?*
  - *When did you complete your initial two-year commitment?*
  - *At what school did you work?*
  - *How did that experience influence you to wanting to become an educational leader*
  - *In which leadership suite program did you participate and when did you finish?*

#### Leadership Suite Efficacy

- I. *When you consider the goals of the program, what components best*

*align to you achieving those goals and why? (Refer to program goals and remind interviewee of them as needed)*

- II. *Was this program relevant to your needs as an aspiring leader? Please explain.*
- III. *Were there components of the program that were practical and easy to apply? Please describe.*
- IV. *Were there components of the program that were most relevant to your current work as an educational leader? Please describe.*
- V. *Are there any components of the program that you were least satisfied with or that did not apply to your current role as an educational leader?*
- VI. *Describe your perception of how TFA currently collects and uses data to improve the efficacy of their programs.*

#### Organizational and Professional Affiliation

- I. *How valuable do you consider your TFA alumni network in comparison to your other professional networks?*
- II. *Describe how likely you are to reach out to your Teach For America alumni network for partnership, support, and collaboration.*
- III. *How easy or difficult is it for you to find and connect with fellow TFA alumni in the network?*
- IV. *Has TFA made you feel like you are a valuable part of their alumni network? Please describe.*
- V. *Have you maintained a personal and/or professional relationship with other TFA alumni (e.g. professional learning community, personal friendships, etc.)? Please describe.*

#### Alternate Questions (if time permits):

- I. *Did your experience (new learning) in the program have an impact on your future aspirations? Please describe.*
- II. *Looking at alum base (racial identity, mid-level leaders), do you think there is a narrowing of diversity as participants get closer to leadership roles? What do you theorize is the reason?*

Conclusion:

*Do you have any questions for me? Thank you so much for taking time to speak with me today. I really enjoyed our conversation. Again, the information you shared with us will be used to help TFA improve their leadership suite program. Your personal information, however, will remain confidential.*

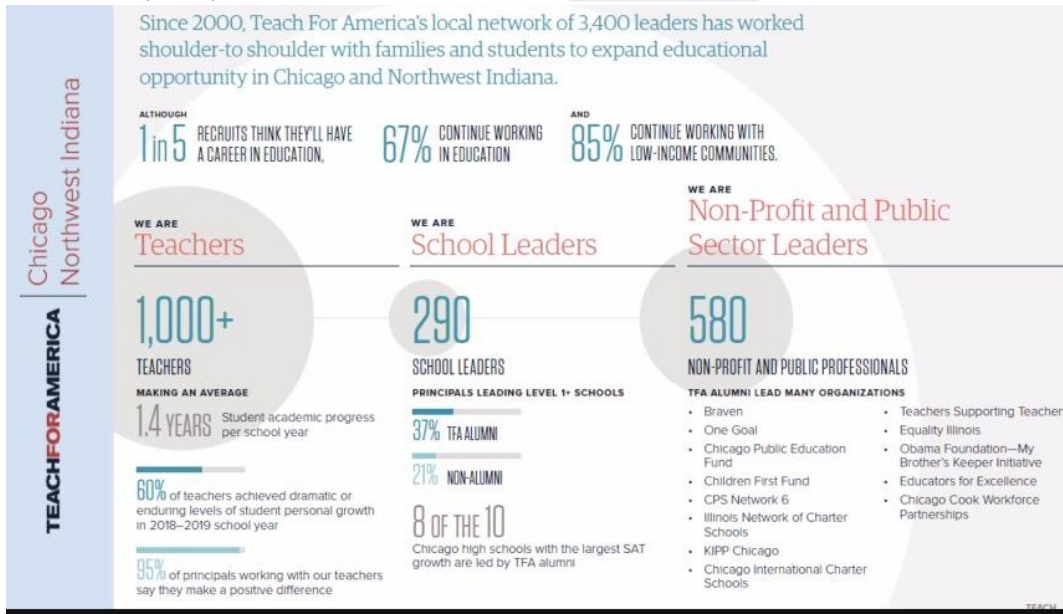
*Have a great rest of the day!*

## APPENDIX B: OBSERVATION NOTES (ASPIRE PROGRAM)

### TFA-GC Aspire Kick Off - Zoom - September 19th - 5:30-7:30pm CST

Participants: Over 30 (fellows and coaches)  
 Facilitator: Lionel Allen, Jr.  
 Purpose/Intended Outcomes of the Kick Off:

Time Stamp	Notes
6:38p*	38 participants
6:40p	Lionel Allen Jr., professor at UChicago; will be leading learning seminars for the cohort; asked the cohort to share books they've been reading <a href="mailto:LAllen5@uic.edu">LAllen5@uic.edu</a> 312-860-9324
6:42p	Dr. Lynda Williams: National Louis University
6:43p	UIC: Cynthia Barron
6:45p	Lillian Lazu: principal (profession) and one of the coaches
6:47p	Each cohort member appears to have a mentor from TFA that is in already in a leadership position
***	Cohort is a blend of teachers, academic coaches, teacher leaders,
6:58p	Facilitator makes efforts to show respect to participants (ensuring correct pronunciation of names, making personal connections)
	Demographics:

	<p>Male: 5 Female: 33</p> <p>Black White Asian Latino</p>
6:07p	<p>Overview of Program - UIC and TFA collaboration - Cohort 2 Fellowship Produce principals who improve student learning outcomes in high-need urban schools as a norm, rather than an exception</p>
6:10p	<p>Candidates of color were not being selected for leadership program because they did not have the experience; this was the impetus for Aspire</p>
6:12p	<p>Reminder: Insert screenshot of theory of action Raymond Edwards Jr and logic model Raymond Edwards Jr There's a focus on ensuring graduates know logic model Personal relationships, personal disposition, equity-focused elements Highest-impact program insert screenshot Randi Harrison</p>  <p>Chicago Northwest Indiana</p> <p>TEACHFORAMERICA</p> <p>Since 2000, Teach For America's local network of 3,400 leaders has worked shoulder-to-shoulder with families and students to expand educational opportunity in Chicago and Northwest Indiana.</p> <p>ALTHOUGH 1 in 5 RECRUITS THINK THEY'LL HAVE A CAREER IN EDUCATION, 67% CONTINUE WORKING IN EDUCATION AND 85% CONTINUE WORKING WITH LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES.</p> <p>WE ARE Teachers 1,000+ TEACHERS MAKING AN AVERAGE 1.4 YEARS Student academic progress per school year 60% of teachers achieved dramatic or enduring levels of student personal growth in 2018–2019 school year 95% of principals working with our teachers say they make a positive difference</p> <p>WE ARE School Leaders 290 SCHOOL LEADERS PRINCIPALS LEADING LEVEL 1+ SCHOOLS 37% TFA ALUMNI 21% NON-ALUMNI 8 OF THE 10 Chicago high schools with the largest SAT growth are led by TFA alumni</p> <p>WE ARE Non-Profit and Public Sector Leaders 580 NON-PROFIT AND PUBLIC PROFESSIONALS TFA ALUMNI LEAD MANY ORGANIZATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Braven</li> <li>• One Goal</li> <li>• Chicago Public Education Fund</li> <li>• Children First Fund</li> <li>• CPS Network 6</li> <li>• Illinois Network of Charter Schools</li> <li>• KIPP Chicago</li> <li>• Chicago International Charter Schools</li> <li>• Teachers Supporting Teachers</li> <li>• Equality Illinois</li> <li>• Obama Foundation—My Brother's Keeper Initiative</li> <li>• Educators for Excellence</li> <li>• Chicago Cook Workforce Partnerships</li> </ul>
6:16p	<p>3 pillars/key ingredients of the program - liberatory learning, hands-on experience, lasting relationship</p>
6:18p	<p>Cohort 1 Outcomes: Insert screenshot Raymond Edwards Jr * NPS: score related to participants recommending the program to others</p>
6:21p	<p>Featured a testimonial - asked for a volunteer to read aloud - key themes: presentation, leadership already within, development</p>

	**I didn't get the screenshot :( I got it! LOL
6:23	<p>Joined the mentor breakout room. Tips given:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Help fellows build leadership capability</li> <li>● Enable them to be competitive</li> <li>● Equip leaders of color confidence and opportunities in school leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Leaders of color don't meet the qualifications</li> <li>○ UIC program ends up not looking like the communities they serve</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Two Major Responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Triad meetings (mentor, fellow, coach) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Progress towards goals</li> <li>■ Challenges and successes</li> <li>■ Helping them think through decisions that need to be made</li> <li>■ Listen through principals talk through their decision making</li> <li>■ Teachers need to shed their teacher identity and build their leader identity</li> <li>■ Think about structures that need to be in place</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Impact Initiative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 1-page portfolio</li> <li>■ Captures leadership journey of the fellow</li> <li>■ Thinking: what needs to happen in order for schools to improve</li> <li>■ Actions: What they did to add value to a school</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
7:30	Mentors began sharing tips for coaching and self help More book recommendations were shared

## APPENDIX C: OBSERVATION NOTES - RISE FELLOWSHIP

### TFA-GC Rise Kick Off - Zoom - November 9 - 5:30-7:30pm CST

Participants: 15 participants?  
 Facilitator: Dawn Hicks (Co-Senior Director of the BES Fellowship and Founder/Executive Coach, Dawn Griffin Coaching, LLC)  
 Purpose/Intended Outcomes of the Kick Off: (1) build community, (2) explain their personal why, (3) create fellowship goals and (4) clarify culminating artifact expectations

Time Stamp	Notes
5:42pm	Shared spreadsheet - Name, role, fun fact, one hope each person has for the fellowship
5:58pm	Share out commonalities, shared interests, surprising facts
6:21pm	Rise Fellowship expectations There weren't lots of opportunities to develop teacher leadership Met with alumni and alumni educators - how to deal with systems other than instruction Looked around - there was a clear opportunity to provide this experience Worked with UCI?
6:25pm	If we are able to provide great leadership and liberatory learning, then it will help you sustain and growth leadership capacity and increases positive outcomes for students in your school
6:29pm	Sessions Start with self - Understanding Our Own Leadership Create the Condition - Building Adult Trust Partner with Others Reflect on Learning and Sustain - Build Emotional Resilience and Artifact Sharing
6:30pm	Reclaiming Time to Think - Reactions to the reading? Influence how you want to show up during the fellowship? As a leader? What needs might you have to show up the way you want?
6:48pm	Understanding Your Why
7:05pm	What's Your Calling to be in Leadership?
7:17pm	Culminating Artifact - Part 1: Personal Manifesto (bullet list, declaration,



	poem/short passage) It dictates how to show up and brings you back to your why Part 2: Project (something that will support you in advancing your teacher leadership - incorporate learnings from 3 different sessions)
7:21pm	Homework - before the next session submit the CA proposal - what is the project? Why is it important to you? How will it support your leadership growth?

## APPENDIX D: EVALUATION MATRIX

TFA - Evaluation Matrix					
<p>Deliverable 1: Analyze and create a summary of the outcomes of the aspiring principals program for school-based alumni to date toward our intended outcomes, with recommendations for the future.</p> <p>Find out:</p> <p>"Corps" from beginning or end? Do they apply? How are the opportunities extended to alumni? Are there program limits/caps? Are these programs locally run or nationally-based?</p> <p>Options: Impact Eval for Principal Prep + broad alumni engagement OR Eval + implementation + program eval (preferred)</p>					
	<b>Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>	<b>Collection Methods</b>	<b>Analysis Procedures</b>
1a	<p>To what extent have alumni maintained relationships with others in their cohort?</p> <p><i>* TFA's Theory - if alumni maintain relationships with their cohort members, they will</i></p>	<p>Define 'maintained' and 'relationships'</p> <p>Is it limited to cohort members, or does it extend to members in the organization?</p> <p>Maintained:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How frequently they communicate about education/TFA experience</li> </ul> <p>Relationships</p>	<p>Interviews with TFA alumni</p>	<p>Data Collection Procedure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Schedule interviews with 5% - 10% of the alumni</li> <li>2. Conduct interviews using Otter software</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Uncover trends in responses</li> <li>2. Overlap data with eval question #4 - is there a relationship?</li> </ol>

	<p><i>remain in education and be more likely to pursue leadership roles in comparison to alumni that don't maintain those relationships</i></p> <p>Might already have data on this?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would you describe that relationship as a 'professional' relationship, personal relationship, etc.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Transcribe interview</li> <li>4. Code interview responses</li> </ul>	
1b	<p>How has their attitude and affiliation with TFA changed over time? (<i>aspiring leaders or alumni in general?</i>)</p>	<p>Define 'affiliation'</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What part of the TFA organization do alumni seem to be affiliated most with?</li> <li>2. -percentage of alumni who include TFA on resume</li> <li>3. -percentage of alumni who self-identify as TFA alumni on job applications</li> </ol> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attending events</li> <li>2. Mentoring prospective and current corps members</li> <li>3. Active member of the alumni network</li> </ol>	Cognitive interview (think-alouds)	<p>Data Collection Procedure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Schedule interviews with 5% - 10% of the alumni</li> <li>2. Conduct interviews using Otter software</li> <li>3. Transcribe interview</li> <li>4. Code interview responses</li> </ol>	<p>* <i>If this question is specifically for alumni in the aspiring leadership program</i></p>

## APPENDIX E: ALUMNI SURVEY

*This survey is being conducted by two graduate students from Vanderbilt University, Peabody College in conjunction with TFA Chicago/Northwest Indiana. The purpose of this survey is to provide TFA with feedback on the efficacy of their Alumni Leadership Program Suite. Thank you for completing this survey. It should take approximately 5-10 minutes.*

Q7 Select leadership program you completed most recently and carefully review the program goals. These goals will be referenced throughout the survey.

- Accelerate Institute - managing a data-driven culture, internalizing patterns of success in high-performing schools, and leading effective teams and managing adults
- UOfI At Chicago's EdD Program in Urban Education - develops strong teacher leaders and candidates for the Chicago Leadership Collaborative (CLC) through which they will participate in a full-time, full-year CPS Principal Residency
- AUSL TFA Teacher Leadership Program - placed in one of the 31 CPS schools in AUSL's network and take on personalized leadership opportunities within their school. They also receive mentoring, coaching, and content-based development sessions
- TFA Teacher Sustainability Study Group (PLC/CFE) - provide affinity group focused on teacher sustainability
- Rise Teacher Leadership Fellowship (UChicago Impact) - craft and develop leadership skills, increase impact of teacher leaders, prepare teachers to take leadership roles within their schools
- Aspire Fellowship - build a pipeline of experienced teacher leadership who reflect the diversity of Chicago students, preparation to enter principal



The program's goals were reinforced throughout the duration of the program.



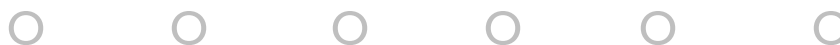
The program's activities, discussions, assignments, resources, and training tightly aligned to the goals of the program.



The assessments (e.g. performance tasks; activities) were a valid measure of the intended outcomes of the program.



The program(s) developed your educational leadership capacity (in schools, non-profit organizations, educational policy).



The fellowship cohort model promoted connectivity with alumni peers and strengthened professional relationships



The program adequately prepared me to succeed in my current role as an educational leader



Q24 Consider the impact of the program design elements as it relates to your decision

to remain in education.

	Low Impact	Moderate Impact	High Impact
Live classes/Seminars	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Forums	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pre-recorded lessons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Case Studies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Independent Exercises	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1:1 Coaching/mentoring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Impact Initiative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relationship with cohort members, mentors, and program leaders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support inside the school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q25 Consider the impact of the program design elements as it relates to your decision to pursue an educational leadership role.

	Low Impact	Moderate Impact	High Impact
Live classes/Seminars	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Forums	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pre-recorded lessons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Case Studies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Independent Exercises	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1:1 Coaching/mentoring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Impact Initiative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relationships with cohort members, mentors, and program leaders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support inside the school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q31 How would you rate the timeliness of the program within your career journey? Were the program elements (i.e. readings, trainings, experiences, mentoring, tasks, etc.) appropriately timed for you needs as an aspiring



- Appropriate
- A bit too early
- A bit too late

Q28 How likely are you to recommend TFA Alumni Suite Programming to a friend or colleague?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

Q29 How likely are you to apply/participate in another TFA Alumni Suite Program?

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Are you currently working as an educational leader?

Yes

No

Q2 What is your current role(s)? Select all that apply.

- Teacher
- Teacher Leader
- Grade Level Chair
- Department Chair
- Other

Q10 Do you aspire to be in an educational leadership role in the future?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Q20 My experience in the program encouraged me to continue in my aspirations in educational leadership.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Q12 In which of the following positions are you interested in the near future?

- Teacher leader
- Academic coach
- Counselor
- Curriculum specialist
- Dean
- Assistant principal
- Principal
- Executive director
- Other

Q11 Have you applied for your desired role in educational leadership?

- Yes
- No

Q4 In what role do you currently serve as an educational leader?

- Academic Coach

- Curriculum Specialist
- School Counselor
- Academic and/or Behavioral Dean
- Assistant Principal
- Principal
- Executive Director
- Other

Q5 How long have you been in this role?

- 1 year
- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 years
- 5+ years

Q6 How long after you completed your program were you able to secure a leadership position?

- During the program



Very well (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Extremely well (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q37 Use the slider to respond to the question below (1=strongly disagree, 10=strongly agree).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

When I have a professional challenge, I turn to my Teach For America alumni network for partnership, support, and collaboration. ()	
It is easy for me to find and connect with fellow TFA alumni in the TFA alumni network ()	
I am proud to be part of the TFA network. ()	
I consider myself a critical lover of TFA. ()	
I have maintained relationships with my leadership program cohort peers after the completion of the alumni program.	

Q38 How satisfied are you with how TFA Chicago/Northwest Indiana's has responded to previous survey and interview data?

Very Dissatisfied

Dissatisfied

Neutral

Satisfied

Very Satisfied

Q24 Would you like a \$5.00 gift card? Your responses will still remain anonymous.

Yes

No

## APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW CODING MATRIX

Index Codes	Focused Code	Illustrative Quotes
Leadership Suite Efficacy	Overall Positive Experiences	<p>A2: Yeah, I think and I was really like, the goal of the program was to prepare school leaders, right. And I think I had a lot of exposure to school leaders from different schools, which was really helpful. I think, the leadership coaching was really aligned to my vision for myself, and really personalized. And I think the program allowed me and encouraged me to build different leadership skill sets that I may not have exercised before. And and I think while I read an evaluation today, how many of the fellows were accepted for school leadership programs? And I didn't get apply for one, but it seems pretty successful for me. So maybe that's influencing my belief today, but aligned in its outcomes.</p> <p>A5: I think like, it was a lot of people with the same values and interests. So I think that was really valuable to like, meet people</p> <p>A6: But then also like, being able to get that same guidance around like now how to be an effective leader, or even just being considered for for doing for leadership opportunities, or fellowship opportunities, is a way to just, you go back, and you kind of take inventory around, like the skills that you possess, who you can be as a leader, what you see what you see in yourself as a leader.</p> <p>A8: We talked a lot about what it looks like to build trust - how you do that, how you collaborate with very different types of people with different learning styles, different coaching styles... [this] was valuable</p>



		<p>and it continues to be valuable as I work in different coaching roles or on different teams, or as the composition of my team changes.</p> <p>A9: What I find the most valuable from it is the opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals and the discourse that we participated in with one another. I found peers that have really pushed my thinking and challenged my thinking and inspired me to think about things differently and inspired me to share and take risks in other things that I do professionally.</p> <p>A10: It was a great confidence boost of really owning the leadership title. That's something that, especially as a POC woman, you're just really shy about or really humble about. I don't ever like titling myself as a leader... I think through this program, you gave me more confidence to own it.</p> <p>A19: I would not be where I'm at if it weren't for the AUSL-TFA Leadership program. That program 1. connected me with my boss, who's my boss today, and it provided me with access to texts and to conversations and to experiences that I otherwise wouldn't have had in terms of emotional intelligence.</p> <p>A25: It's the best program ever... One of the first questions that Richard Elmore asked us was, "If we could take the educational system in the United States as it exists right now and start over given everything that we know, how would you redesign and think differently about our public education systems?"</p>
	<p>Overall Negative Experiences: Relevance</p>	<p>A2: I think some components of the AUSL fellowship were more challenging, and I think it was maybe not as flexible as some of the other programs or as responsive to my experience in early childhood. And I, you know, a lot of times in early childhood, you're on an island when you're in a K to eight space. And I just felt that was true throughout the fellowship, despite trying to push for more early childhood representation</p> <p>A4: Like, I think that there was positive intent. But I don't think that they like actually considered the needs of the group. Like, I think they had like, designed this framework, which and naturally, right, you have fellowship, you have to, and I think that it definitely got better. . And again, right, like, that's like teaching, it's very hard to get every kid in a room of 30 exactly what they need, but I don't know, it didn't feel purposeful at times.</p> <p>A10: I would have liked [the PD sessions] to be a little bit more relevant to the times. I feel the person that was leading those sessions were relevant to the sessions that they have led before.</p> <p>A14: It was really hard to build those connections not to add on to the fact that we were online. So I do think there could have been more changes so that we could have had more relationship building because I didn't really see the other people [that] were part of it. (re: Aspire Fellowship)</p>

		<p>A18: I felt like I was interacting with [participants that] were just kind of starting there leadership journey in terms of education... I've been a dean for six years and before that I was the department chair... so I really appreciated hearing their experiences, But I didn't necessarily feel like it was directly geared towards me. [re: Rise Fellowship]</p> <p>A22: So I think it was like a great thought exercise, but I don't think that for myself I walked away with a ton.</p>
	<p>Applicability of the Programs</p>	<p>A1: So they're like, you know, change theory, change management, like, there's not really like a, like two sides, like everyone kind of agrees on like, how do you how you make change, everyone kind of agrees on like, how like, what are teaching best practices, like we all know, like what those are, or we should or we've been trained on some of them. So I don't think that anything is useless. I think all of it can serve a purpose, or I feel like I've used it like whether it's only a part of it.</p> <p>A2: I would say the practical pieces are the one that really sticks with me is there was a framing activity around thinking about what's in your heart and, and then what's I forget the other term that they use, but like, what do you professionally enjoy doing? And then the combination of those two being your hustle, and I think I think about that even going into my next role or go you know, I really think a lot I think that's a frame that I've continued to use around like, what do I enjoy doing professionally? How can I leverage what I'm passionate about and, and that's just something that's really stuck with me ever been? as like a practical tool that I use for reflection regularly.</p> <p>A6: I know one thing that I did early on was not share the agenda, which was like, yeah, that kind of, it's not really the best practice to have, but then understanding like some truly benefited from having to put the agenda presented, like days prior. And then thinking about what we said about you know, about pre work, like it was similar to like pre work, knowing that how the meeting was going to be driven, may be just more effective.</p> <p>A10: They were very intentional when they matched us with a mentor/coach. That matching process was really responsive to my needs, because it asked very specific questions on my end like: "How do I like to be coached?"; "What are things that I need when it comes to my own identity or the identity of the coach?"; "What are some things that are either must-haves or might-haves?"... and they delivered.</p> <p>A18: I distinctly remember being in small groups and talking to other people who do things sort of similar to what I do, which I don't have as much in my current role, just because there's only two instructional coaches on my staff.</p> <p>A25: I think it's less about like strategy and approaches and more about mindsets. I think that specific program... helped change</p>

		mindsets which I think inherently are harder to change.
	Effective Activities: Projects	<p>A4: we did this activity where we essentially like created like a portfolio of stuff and actually really liked that exercise. It had to do with like, creating agendas, which I still like pretty much use that kind of, like similar framework.</p> <p>A6: My, my project my I can't even think the name of the culminating activity because we did it like a manifesto. I felt the manifesto was the most effective, but develop. So I developed somewhat of a playbook. And I felt like that was more big vision, then where I am now, but I will say that coupled with the manifesto, like made me realize, because I was like aspiring for like school leadership positions, AP position, and I think looking at both was like, am I truly ready to implement this now, like this playbook model was like, I really so like that helped.</p> <p>A23: The artifact activity... this huge culminating artifact project that you would do every meeting. We would do whatever lessons, readings, but they would always tie is back to this artifact project... When you think about what you wanted to do this year as an artifact project, what table are you planning to sit at to make this happen this year?</p>
	Effective Activities: Selected Texts and Discussions	<p>A3: I think what I remember most is the networking with other teachers and other educators. I think talking about what was happening at our different schools was really, really helpful. And hearing like how different people are handling different situations and building. We did a lot of now I'm looking back at the resources I found my folder we use a lot of Elena Aguilar is research. You a lot of like team, general teamwork, and a lot of like self discovery, just so that we could better understand our strengths</p> <p>A6: And so, you know, we would do the readings, but I would say the bulk of the discussion and then, again, going back to the adult relationships, like the relationships with the peers, knowing that I was able to learn from these different people will be in a breakout room, you know, which was, you know, definitely wasn't the most ideal setting, but having that opportunity to, you know, get the get the information, and break it down in bite sized chunks, and be able to process that and then hear in different perspective, just made the fellowship that much more phenomenal.</p> <p>A7: The teacher, teacher liaisons, and the coaches... meet monthly (virtual) and we have... roundtable discussions [that] are basically professional developments.</p> <p>A9: The content of the readings and the things that we had discussions on were really important and all really high quality...</p>
	Effective Activities: Personalized Learning	<p>A11: The one-on-one meetings are very powerful. I do enjoy our group meetings, but the one-on-one meetings make it more personal and actually give more time for planning and feedback than I've received in the past.</p>

		<p>A21: You got to take a bunch of elective courses and whatever you want... you can really zoom in, or you can really focus in on the areas you want to grow in, or areas you want to learn more about... you got to kind of pick and choose your own adventure for the other courses, which was really awesome.</p>
	<p>Impact on Current Role in Education: Relationship Building</p>	<p>A9: Building relationships and building trust has been really really key to my MO right now. It's been a big part of what I'm spending my time and energy on and what I'm focusing on because I think without laying that foundation, it going to be difficult for me to get anything else accomplished.</p> <p>A19: I learned a lot about how to build relationships with people effectively [and] to kind of work through some of the political parts of school leadership.</p> <p>A19: AUSL has and continues to create a professional network of people that motivate me and inspire me to continue to want to do more for students... in terms of models or examples of strong leadership, AUSL has definitely provided me with that. But in terms of like actually making those connections and putting me in front of the right people, I would say TFA has done more for me on that front.</p>
	<p>Impact on Current Role in Education: Theory to Practice</p>	<p>A9: I would also say that continuing to be involved with Teach For America programming continues to encourage me to want to spend my time working in schools and districts that serve underserved populations of students and to be a part of that ongoing fight.</p> <p>A11: It pushes me to not only think and reflect on a problem that is bothering me or something I want to change, or something that I think that needs to be changed... but it actually pushes me to do something about it rather than sit and wait for something to happen. It actually gives me the support that I need in order to make that happen - the resources, the one-on-one time with our instructional personnel, and also space to talk with other educators and get their perspectives and ideas rolling...</p> <p>A17: I have used some of those tricks even now that I'm in the principal's seat - to like create a teacher action council and run things by them and get their support and help on different things... there's power in creating those spaces for our teachers to lead without having to have the leadership title.</p> <p>A23: I think the readings we did were super beneficial. Every time we did a reading on a Wednesday night, on Thursday at my ILT meeting (instructional leadership team), i would take the stuff I learned from RISE and speak on it and see how they felt about it because it would directly correlate to things that we were going though at our school.</p>
	<p>Impact on Aspirations:</p>	<p>A1: So being in Aspire now I'm talking to these people and reading these days. And I'm like, you know, maybe I could do this maybe like, this is a real career path for me. It's also introduced me to a lot of</p>

	New Revelations	<p>people, my coach, who aspire is amazing. I love her. And I've never met her in person, but I've like, met her twice. And she's, she's super helpful and passionate about the work that she does. She works off the street. She's a Latina, she, you know, similar backgrounds. So like, just meeting people who were like, yeah, like, this is great.</p> <p>A2: Yeah, I would say it's still relevant. I would say I think about it's really this role is the intersection to what I what I figured out then that I was passionate about that hustle.</p> <p>A12: Part of the reason I went into this program was because I wasn't sure what my aspirations were in particular... being able to participate in this sort of curriculum-based part of things, but then also seeing what my fellow study group member and my facilitator had done and were planning to do in the future [was] helpful for me to see what more is out there and focus in on what I think I might ultimately be interested in</p> <p>A21: It confirmed, but I think it also opened up my eyes... I aspire maybe to maybe be a superintendent or something someday. But I also think like, I can do this work outside of a traditional school environment too. So I think because I got to meet people, I got to see "oh, I can do this in edtech. I can do this in a lot of other spaces." ... I think I had thought I had to be in school.</p> <p>A23: I have had leadership roles in the past, but I was still a teacher in a class. I did not know what it actually looked like, sounded like, felt like to be in just a leadership role. RISE kind of helped me through that... The RISE fellowship pushed me to seek out leadership roles. I think that people think the degree will get them the job, but it's really the authentic experience. I say people meaning myself.</p>
	Impact on Aspirations: Preparation	<p>A6: I would definitely say like it ignited it, there was passion there. I would say like it perpetuated that like where I truly felt like, yeah, let me keep learning, let me keep growing, as an educator to grow as a leader.</p> <p>A7: They encourage you to apply for grants... If I'm applying for grants and then I have to go back and show evidence of what I did with the grant, that's something any leader is going to have to know how to do... grant writing and documentation.</p> <p>A19: As an instructional coach, I originally applied to the program because I knew I was working on my principal endorsement at the time. I knew that I wanted to start getting my foot in the door in school leadership, and so I looked to the program to kind of create that opportunity for me.</p> <p>A21: The classes and the things that I learned the most about was through like how do I manage people? How do I manage a team to share my vision and through walls to like execute it?</p>

Organizational and Professional Affiliation	Perceptions of the Alumni Network: Professional Communities	<p>A13: Um, I would say that compared to other alumni networks, TFA has been the one currently that I have been able to get the most out of, or even like, I'm on the TFA Chicago alumni, teachers Facebook page. That's like the main, really the main way that I get to know about, like, PDS and programs and grants that are really relevant to what I'm doing are really like, timely and practical to things that I would be interested in.</p> <p>A1: So that's why I went there to be part of that organization, and was actually promoted to be their director of education for a few months. And then unfortunately, the program had to pivot I was laid off. And but immediately, the TFA network like sprung into action for me almost like magically, and that within a few days, and several people. So both Kate and also Jesse, who was at the organization that I was working at, had connected me with my current principal, and then also a referral from a different principal, who's also a TFA alum. So at least three different TFA connections, set me up for this interview, in which I ended up getting the role and within a couple weeks of being laid off, and so it really just felt like magic of like feeling really supported and really valued. And I don't know, any other network that I have, that it would have happened so quickly.</p> <p>A5: Um, and like, Yeah, I think I found a job, my job, my second school through that connect TFA Connect website. And like, people on LinkedIn that are also teaching America will always like, I found really positively respond and like, have a conversation with you. So I think the network is really valuable.</p> <p>A14: TFA got me my job, so they are the best as far as I'm concerned... I talked to Kate and was like, "Hey, I hate my school." I talked to somebody else who Kate knew. I was like, "I hate my school. Please save me." Through that network, literally on the last transfer day they were like, "we're going to interview." [They] hired me on the spot, and I haven't looked back.</p> <p>A24: When I was making the really, really, tough decision to leave my school, I reconnected with TFA for support with next steps in my career. They seem to have a really stellar person in that position.</p>
	Perceptions of the Alumni Network: Personal Networks	<p>A3: Most of my friends are alum that are no fill in the classroom, or alum that are in leadership position. Most of my network are educators. But I don't know that. Even though we all share alumni have in common, we don't talk about that. It's more so we're in education</p> <p>A6: I liken it to a fraternity, you know, I think about being a member of eternity. . .there's typically some one somewhere who did TFA somewhere. And then you all, like, share different like, connections, or you share a different, like, have mutual friends, things like that. So it's like the network seems so vast and ever growing based on you know, the people that I've interacted with, in education.</p> <p>A9: Being a part of that kind of community of learning, I find this the</p>

		<p>most valuable part of that experience.</p> <p>A12: Personally, all of my friends in Chicago are TFA teachers... Personally, I'm very connected to all of them. But then professionally, I feel like I could reach out to anyone in my core or the leadership team that I was connected to... I have that sense of if I wanted to get involved in something specific that they would be willing to, more than willing to, talk to me about it... So I feel like there is that sort of level of people [who] will be willing to sit down with you and talk to you about whatever it is that they're doing.</p> <p>A19: Even just last week, I touched base with someone who I did that program with. She saw that I had moved in this consulting position. She wanted to learn more about it. She was actually able to share some resources with me about some things that she was doing in her classroom that I was able to take back to some work that I'm doing with our parents.</p> <p>A19: ... still sending each other Merry Christmas cards, Happy Father's Day/Happy Mother's Day texts; we are still in support of one another.</p> <p>A20: Very valuable. We still connect on some end. Like I know recently, I was unable to join, but they had like a zoom call just for like the updates... it was a very diverse group that like pushed my thinking from different mindset, different perspectives, so that was awesome.</p> <p>A21: That crew's still a tight knit crew. We still send text message or WhatsApp or whatever and keep in touch. I think just having that professional network is super powerful... I made friends for life.</p> <p>A25: Extraordinarily valuable. We still talk today - all the time. We do our consultancies with one another... and help each other solve problems to this day.</p>
	<p>Potential Collaboration Amongst Alumni: Unlikely</p>	<p>A17: It's unlikely, not because I don't trust any of them. I just think my personal circle is where I've been reaching... I know there's some strong leaders in that group and that's not the issue.</p> <p>A18: I don't connect very much with people.</p> <p>A22: The likelihood would be very low. I could not tell you a person's name.</p> <p>A24: I don't think they would be first. I think it would be more serendipitous [for] our paths to cross again. Like "let's reconnect; let's work on this together." But I'm pretty far removed at this point for that to be a knee-jerk reaction [and say] "let me reach out to my Harvard cohort folks.</p>

## APPENDIX G: INTERVIEWEE DESCRIPTION

Interviewee Description		
Alumni #, Program of Focus and Current Role		
A1	RISE and Aspire Fellowship	Teacher - child of parents who immigrated, graduated with business degree
A2.1	Anti-Racist Teaching Cohort (pilot program; non-leadership suite program)	4th year Teacher - inclusion setting
A2.2	Aspire Fellowship	4th year Instructional Coach and Administrator, Childhood Education
A3	Chicago Impact (Work on Purpose)	Education Non-profit supporting teachers, taught for 8 years
A4	RISE Fellowship	1st year Academic Dean, taught for 8 years
A5	RISE Fellowship	Doctoral Student (SEL), taught for 3 years
A6	RISE Fellowship	11th year Teacher (ELA), former Dean
A7	RISE Fellowship; Teachers Supporting Teachers (non-leadership suite program)	Intervention Coordinator (Middle School), taught Special Education for 9 years
A8	Aspire; RISE; Chicago Impact (Work on Purpose)	3rd year Teacher (Bilingual 2nd grade), interested in bilingual education and literacy
A9	RISE Fellowship	7th year Learning Specialist; former Peace Corps Volunteer
A10	Aspire Program	6th year Bilingual teacher & Instructional Leader



A11	Teacher Sustainability Group; Anti-Racist Teaching Cohort (pilot program; non-leadership suite program)	CPS middle school; special education teacher
A12	Chicago Impact (Work on Purpose); RISE Fellowship; Aspire Fellowship	10th year Teacher
A13	Teacher Sustainability Study Group	CPS bilingual teacher
A14	Aspire Fellowship; RISE Fellowship	Former Texas teacher, current CPS teacher
A15	RISE Fellowship	Doctoral student (Principal track) - spent 4 years teaching
A16	Work on Purpose	Teacher at a CPS charter school
A17	Chicago Public Education Fund PLC; Harvard School Leadership Program	Current Principal; Former math teacher
A18	RISE Fellowship; Chicago Public Education Fund PLC	Current middle school teacher; Former Dean of Culture
A19	AUSL - TFA Teacher Leadership Program	Full-time consultant; Former Instructional Coach and Assistant Principal
A20	Harvard School Leadership Program	Assistant Principal in Chicago suburb
A21	Harvard School Leadership Program	Middle School Associate Principal
A22	Work on Purpose	Former teacher
A23	RISE Fellowship	Dean of Instruction/Instructional Coach
A24	Harvard School Leadership Program	Former CPS Principal

A25	Harvard School Leadership Program	Elementary School Principal in Chicago
A26	Harvard School Leadership Program	Administrator in CPS