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2023-2024 TeachMichigan Recruitment and Selection Process

INTRODUCTION

The first statewide cohort of TeachMichigan began in 2023, representing a new and innovative approach to improving teaching and learning in Michigan. Ultimately partnering with 12 entities – including 8 traditional public school districts and 4 charter networks from across Michigan – TeachMichigan leaders at Teach for America-Detroit (TFA-Detroit) started early in 2023 to build those partnerships and recruit educators from each entity to apply to and begin TeachMichigan fellowships.

In this report, we recount this process – from the inception of TeachMichigan through the invitation for 175 educators to become TeachMichigan fellows in fall 2023. In particular, we closely detail the processes for recruiting fellows, the application and evaluation processes for selecting fellowship candidates, and the reflections of TeachMichigan staff on that first year of recruitment. Data used for this report include TeachMichigan's internal documents, candidate applications, and 7 interviews with individuals involved in the fellow recruitment and selection process—including 2 with senior leaders from TFA-Detroit, 2 with program leaders for TeachMichigan, 2 with TFA-Detroit staff, and 1 with an TFA alumni consultant who helped evaluate applications.

ORIGINS AND OBJECTIVES OF TEACHMICHIGAN

Origins

Prior to launching TeachMichigan, TFA-Detroit had run a multitude of educator preparation and support programs exclusively in the Detroit area since 2010. These began with the traditional Teach for American Corps Program, which grew rapidly and brought 200-300 new teachers as corps members to Detroit each year between 2012 and 2015, primarily to teach in Michigan's Educational Achievement Authority (EAA), a temporary state-run, turn-around district intended to improve Detroit's low-

performing schools. After the EAA dissolved in 2017, the TFA-Detroit corps program shrunk drastically to fewer than 20 corps members per year. In 2018, TFA-Detroit senior leaders began to rethink the organizational vision and turned their attention to supporting and investing in their large alumni base of over 800 educators in the Detroit area along with serving other Detroit educators who were seeking to positively impact their schools.

In 2019, TFA-Detroit began a fellowship for TFA alumni in Detroit who were strong teachers and wanted to pursue National Board Certification, which TFA-Detroit leaders considered the highest standard for experienced teachers. TFA-Detroit supported participants through the certification process, paid their application fees, paid them a financial incentive, offered them opportunities to gather socially and network, and made innovation funds available for teachers to create “bold new initiatives” in their schools. One senior leader of TFA-Detroit reflected that transitioning to focus more on alumni support over corps member support and doing this by partnering directly with alumni teachers instead of school districts “changed the whole positioning of the organization” and “started rapidly flipping who we were to the investor community, to the political community, and to the partners.”

In early 2020, TFA-Detroit continued creating new lines of programming with two new fellowships – an Early Career Fellowship for teachers with 3-5 years of experience and a program for aspiring leaders called Detroit Leads – both of which were open to any educator working in the city of Detroit, not only TFA alumni. In spring 2021, TFA-Detroit launched the Michigan Educator Policy Fellowship, reflecting the organization’s increasing recognition that improving education in Michigan would require active attention to education policy. As these fellowships continued with new cohorts beginning each year, TFA-Detroit also worked to increase the representation of black teachers through additional financial incentives for Black educators. With a broader focus and a variety of fellowships, the TFA-Detroit team was growing considerably and developing programming expertise in many areas, and they began to turn their attention both to using their networks to influence Michigan education policy and to working with Michigan school districts outside of Detroit.

As TFA-Detroit was expanding its programming, the COVID-19 pandemic devastated schools and communities throughout the United States, resulting in 2020 stimulus bills that included over **\$4.3 billion in emergency funding for education** in the form of Governors Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds. Michigan received **\$60 million of GEER funds** intended to support education-related entities that would provide emergency educational services to districts in which more than 50% of students were economically disadvantaged. As this money became available, senior leaders at TFA-Detroit worked to secure a portion of GEER funds. Legislators initially asked TFA-Detroit to help recruit new teachers, but TFA-Detroit senior leaders convinced the lawmakers that teacher retention was the more pressing issue. One senior TFA-Detroit leader recounted, “This teacher shortage crisis is not because we don’t have enough

new teachers. It's because we're not valuing our current teachers at the right level." TFA-Detroit senior leaders shared the programming they were doing with experienced educators in Detroit and argued "We think we can model what it looks like to invest deeply into current educators in ways that could change the context of the profession here in the state and strengthen the profession in the state." TFA-Detroit was initially awarded \$10 million in GEER funds for FY22 to develop a programmatic model for reaching this goal, with an additional \$20 million from federal funding to be allocated to TFA-Detroit in the FY23 budget if the model included plans to invest into a thousand teachers in both urban and rural communities across the state.

The resulting program was TeachMichigan. In [Public Act 133 of 2021](#), the Michigan legislature laid out the details of the funding, including the requirements that TFA-Detroit "recruit and retain high-performing educators in school-based positions... to help address educator shortages in academically at-risk school districts in the state that have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic."

TFA-Detroit senior leaders believe that several unique factors helped to make "the stars really align" and situate the organization for launching TeachMichigan in 2023. They cite a recent history of rapid improvement with the Teach for American Corps program in Detroit, a group of strategic and stable organizational leaders with a bold vision and the right political network and capital to put that vision into place, and a relatively small region in the broader TFA organization that was given a lot of autonomy from TFA national at the time. As a member of the TFA-Detroit senior leadership team commented "No one was really paying attention to us. We could do our own thing," which was to act on what another leader described as TFA's "radical responsibility to be courageous for kids and families."

Objectives for TeachMichigan Fellows

TeachMichigan includes five three-year fellowships, each with two years of professional development and its own learning objectives. The first three fellowships listed below are the initial, foundational fellowships for TeachMichigan and are based on the programming TFA-Detroit was already doing in Detroit. The need for the last two fellowships were identified once recruitment and programming began. The common goal across these fellowships is to retain what TFA-Detroit leaders deem "high-impact educators" in poverty-dense schools.

Early Career Educators (ECE) Fellowship

The Early Career Educator Fellowship is for teachers in their first four years of teaching who are, as the brochure states, "looking to commit themselves to growing their impact in their classroom through strengthening foundational teaching practices." Focal points for the ECE fellowship include adaptive coaching, culturally responsive pedagogy, diversity and equity, community building, and teacher leadership. In describing the objectives for this fellowship, TFA-Detroit leaders say they want early career educators

to understand what excellent, culturally responsive instruction looks and sounds like. The workshops and coaching for Early Career Educators are centered on helping these fellows excel in enacting fundamental components of such instruction.

National Board Certification (NBC) Fellowship

For teachers with four or more years of experience, the National Board Certification fellowship provides teachers, as the brochure states, “learning opportunities that continue to push their craft and deepen their impact as culturally relevant educators.” Fellows in this cohort spend two years pursuing National Board Certification, which one TFA-Detroit leader touts as “widely considered the most prestigious recognition in teaching.” In describing their goals for this fellowship, TFA-Detroit leaders assert that having more teachers in Michigan who are validated by this external organization “will be good for the profession” and will help experienced teachers “reflect and become better teachers.”

Aspiring Leaders (AL) Fellowship

For educators with at least five years of teaching experience and some leadership experience (e.g., being a grade-level chair or part of a school-level instructional leadership team), the Aspiring Leaders fellowship seeks to help educators become, as the brochure states, “transformational leaders at the school level by deepening their skill at leading adults.” In this fellowship, TFA-Detroit seeks to support leaders in utilizing a variety of leadership skills to influence others to create change.

Sitting Leaders Fellowship

Once recruitment for TeachMichigan began, TFA-Detroit noted a need to provide relevant opportunities for educational leaders who were not “aspiring” to leadership positions but already held them and wanted to improve their leadership practice. They developed the sitting leadership fellowship to help these leaders develop adaptive leadership skills while also running their schools.

Systems Leader Fellowship

When the TeachMichigan fellows come together for large in-person convenings, TFA-Detroit also hosts a systems leader fellowship to give superintendents and other district leaders opportunities to network and learn from one another.

RECRUITMENT OF PARTNER DISTRICTS

Once TFA-Detroit had legislative support for expanding to a statewide TeachMichigan initiative, senior leaders began to strategize about which districts to approach. They set out to identify district partners that served communities with high poverty levels and that reflected the geographic, political, cultural, and racial diversity of Michigan. They intentionally included both urban and rural districts in both strongly republican

and democratic communities, and they wanted to spread out across the landscape of Michigan. With a strong presence in southeast Michigan already in place in both traditional public and charter schools in Detroit, TFA-Detroit leaders began reaching out to districts in the Grand Rapids area and in the eastern Upper Peninsula. Senior leaders traveled to each area and met with groups of superintendents to explain the vision and objectives of TeachMichigan, often working through the Michigan Department of Education or superintendents of regional Intermediate School Districts to arrange meetings with potential district partners.

In pitching TeachMichigan to potential partner districts, TFA senior leaders focused on the issue of teacher retention and the impact of high teacher turnover on students and student achievement. One TFA senior leader used what they referred to as “the leaky bucket analogy,” explaining:

“We can talk about bringing new talent in, but it’s going to be like that leaky bucket, where you’re not going to really see the sustainable progress that your school district needs and that your students deserve unless we really retain the educators, your high-impact educators, in your district.”

They focused their teacher retention strategy on high-impact educators, which they described as “the teacher that leads the PTA meeting, that runs the building when the school leader has left, that really makes the school a home, that coaches the other teachers.” They explained how TeachMichigan focused on retaining those high-impact educators through instructional coaching, financial compensation, and connection to a broader movement around improving education in Michigan. Senior leaders felt this rationale for supporting and retaining high-impact educators resonated with district leaders who decided to partner with TeachMichigan.

The first two new statewide districts to commit to TeachMichigan were Kentwood Public Schools, just south of Grand Rapids, and Sault Ste. Marie Area Public Schools, the largest district in the eastern Upper Peninsula. TFA-Detroit leaders worked hard to recruit Saginaw Public Schools in northeast Michigan and then brought in Traverse City Area Public Schools and Benzie County Central Schools to represent rural districts in northwest Michigan. Grand Rapids Public Schools and the Lansing Public School District were the final two districts to come on board for the 2023-2024 school year. Table 1 below provides an overview of these seven districts, along with Detroit Public Schools Community District and participating charter networks in the Detroit area.

Table 1 Overview of Partner Districts and Charter Networks					
School District or Charter Network	Number of Schools in District or Network	2023-24 Number of Students	2023-24 % of Students Economically Disadvantaged	2022-23 5 th Grade MSTEP ELA % Proficient	2022-23 5 th Grade MSTEP Math % Proficient
Benzie County Central Schools	6	1,184	60.2%	37.1%	27.8%
Detroit Academy of Arts and Sciences	2	1,006	97.1%	9.0%	<5%
Detroit Public Schools Community District	110	48,476	82.5%	11.4%	4.0%
Grand Rapids Public Schools	51	13,802	80.5%	25.5%	10.1%
Jalen Rose Leadership Academy	1	421	99.8%	High School Only	
Kentwood Public Schools	16	9,430	72.3%	51.1%	36.6%
Lansing Public School District	30	10,229	88.5%	13.0%	4.4%
Saginaw Public Schools	17	5,304	85.9%	19.2%	8.6%
Sault Ste. Marie Area Schools	6	1,921	47.53%	39.4%	33.3%
Traverse City Area Public Schools	17	8,656	35.9%	53.9%	37.5%
University Preparatory Academy	4	1,848	77.3%	14.0%	5.1%
Voyageur Academy	2	1,285	98.3%	17.3%	<5%

Note: Number of schools obtained from US News and World Report. All remaining data obtained from mischooldata.org.

RECRUITMENT OF TEACHMICHIGAN FELLOWS

Within the seven new partnership districts, TFA-Detroit conducted targeted recruitment efforts to seek out qualified prospective fellows for the four fellowships. In these locations, district partners played a crucial role in fellow recruitment, as district staff collaborated with TFA-Detroit leaders to enact recruiting logistics. The first recruitment email typically came from the district superintendent who announced that the district was participating in TeachMichigan and who invited all educators to

an information session that was open to anyone in the district. Information sessions were either virtual or in-person depending on the district's preference and what worked logistically for TFA-Detroit staff for that location. The sessions lasted about an hour and included 20-30 minutes of TFA-Detroit leaders providing a broad overview of TeachMichigan and the various cohorts. The remaining time was spent in small groups focused on one of the different cohorts – Early Career, National Board, or Aspiring Leaders. Attendance at these information sessions varied from about 20 educators in Sault Ste. Marie to about 150 educators in Kentwood.

Following the information session, TFA-Detroit staff followed up with attendees to send them resources and make themselves available to answer questions. The superintendent also sent out a follow-up email with a recording of the information session and a link to the application materials. In some regions, district and school leaders also helped to identify potential candidates they believed would be successful in specific fellowships and encourage those teachers or leaders to apply to TeachMichigan. Additionally, TFA-Detroit staff visited schools in some regions and encouraged teachers in those schools to apply. Some superintendents also create press releases to announce the district's participation in TeachMichigan to the surrounding communities. Across recruitment efforts, TFA-Detroit leaders emphasized that the fellowship was open to anyone and that all educators were encouraged to apply.

Timeline for Statewide Recruitment

Statewide, the length of time between the beginning of the recruitment period and the application deadline in each region differed depending on when the partnership was established and when the recruitment announcements were made. This happened in the order in which the partnerships were solidified, as noted below:

- Sault Ste. Marie – January
- Kentwood – March
- Traverse City, Benzie County, and Saginaw – Early May
- Lansing – Late May
- Grand Rapids – Mid-June

In cases in which district partnerships with TFA-Detroit were developed late in the 2022-2023 school year, TeachMichigan applicants might only have had two weeks to compile and submit their application materials. In districts whose partnerships were established earlier, applicants had closer to two months to apply.

Focus for Statewide Recruitment

During statewide recruitment efforts, TFA-Detroit leaders attempted to emphasize the value of the fellowship and what fellows would acquire from their participation. Key points of focus included professional learning, cohort-based opportunities, and access to additional opportunities such as experiential learning visits to effective schools in low-income communities and innovation funds to support educator-developed projects that would improve their schools. Recruiters framed the \$35,000 stipend as compensation for the time fellows would invest in developing themselves as educators through rich learning and networking experiences. They tried to not emphasize the financial compensation as a reason to participate in TeachMichigan.

Detroit Recruitment

In Detroit, where TFA-Detroit had a longstanding presence and existing fellowships that merged with TeachMichigan, recruitment for the 2023-2024 cohort took more of an “ecosystem” approach, with efforts focused on informal teacher communities in the city rather than through partnerships with the charter networks or the Detroit Public Schools Community District. In this context, ongoing recruitment strategies included print and digital outreach through email and social media. In this case, TFA-Detroit staff used the \$35,000 stipend as a hook to spark the interest of prospective applicants. Also, Detroit recruiting included a third-party referral process where prior fellows or school leaders could recommend colleagues and friends.

SELECTION OF TEACHMICHIGAN FELLOWS

In this section, we draw on interview data and information from TeachMichigan's candidate tracking files to outline and describe the selection process for TeachMichigan's 2023-2024 Fellows. Figure 1 represents the stages of the selection process developed and undertaken by TFA-Detroit to identify and evaluate candidates and to select prospective fellows.

Figure 1. 2023-2024 TeachMichigan Selection Process Overview



Overview of the Selection Process

The 2023-2024 selection process for the TeachMichigan fellowship was a comprehensive multi-stage process, designed to identify educators who were, or had the potential to become, “high-impact” and who demonstrated alignment with the program’s pillars. For the Early Career Educator cohort, the selection process also sought to identify teachers who demonstrated a “desire to learn” through participation in the fellowship. This process began with candidates compiling and submitting an online application. Following evaluation of applications, some candidates were then invited to participate in an interview. At both junctures, TFA-Detroit evaluated candidates’ program fit by evaluating their application materials and responses to interview questions and interview scenarios using a rubric aligned with TeachMichigan’s four core pillars and specific pillars for each fellowship (pillars are discussed in the following section). Following interviews, the most promising candidates were invited to become fellows.

Table 2 contains an overview of the demographic characteristics of the total 2023-2024 TeachMichigan fellowship candidate pool for the Early Career Educator, National Board Certification, and Aspiring Leader cohorts. Candidate totals for the Aspiring Leader cohort includes Sitting Leaders, as this was the fellowship they originally applied to before Sitting Leaders became a separate fellowship program. The data include the most recent educator effectiveness ratings of candidates. These are relatively similar to overall ratings for educators in Michigan, where 41% are rated highly effective, 57% are rated effective, and 1% are rated minimally effective (mischooldata.org).

Table 2. 2023-2024 TeachMichigan Candidate Characteristics								
Educator Characteristic	Early Career Educator Candidates		National Board Certification Candidates		Aspiring Leader Candidates		Total Candidates	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
TOTAL CANDIDATES								
Candidates by Cohort	76	21.8%	76	21.8%	196	56.3%	348	100.0%
GENDER								
Female	56	73.7%	59	77.6	157	80.1%	272	78.2%
Male	20	26.3%	17	22.4	39	19.9%	76	21.8%
RACE								
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	1	1.3%	1	1.3%	3	1.5%	5	1.4%
Asian	3	3.9%	2	2.6%	3	1.5%	8	2.3%
Black or African American	17	22.4%	14	18.4%	76	38.8%	107	30.7%
Hispanic of Any Race	3	3.9%	1	1.3%	3	1.5%	7	2.0%
Two or More Races	5	6.6%	4	5.3%	5	2.6%	14	4.0%
White	47	61.8%	54	71.1%	106	54.1%	207	59.5%
2023 EDUCATOR EFFECTIVENESS RATING								
Highly Effective	10	14.9%	49	70.0%	73	43.7%	132	39.5%
Effective	52	77.6%	21	30.0%	93	55.7%	166	49.7%
Minimally Effective	5	7.5%	0	0.0%	1	0.6%	6	1.8%
Not Subject to Evaluation	4	N/A	1	N/A	25	N/A	30	N/A

Notes: Data includes candidates and current fellows. Number of cohort fellows obtained from TFA-Detroit. All remaining data obtained from the Michigan Education Research Institute (MERI). 14 applicants came from outside the State of Michigan and were excluded from analysis since they are not present in MERI data. If educators received different effectiveness ratings from different assignments, the higher rating was used in analysis. If exempt from evaluation resulting from previous highly effective rating, this rating retained for use in analysis. Educators new to the Michigan K-12 system in 2023 are included in all but the educator effectiveness rating analysis.

TeachMichigan Core and Cohort Specific Pillars

Throughout the selection process, TeachMichigan's core and cohort specific pillars were prominent and helped evaluators focus on specific educator characteristics.

TeachMichigan Core Program Pillars

Professional Learning Community (PLC) membership focuses on identifying an educator's ability to actively and effectively participate in collaborative learning communities. This involves contributing a balanced mix of suggestions, questions, and statements; being aware of their participation levels and allowing space for others; seeking out and including diverse perspectives; engaging through various modes of participation; managing multiple commitments and deadlines effectively; and continuously seeking opportunities for improvement and learning from others.

Authentic and impactful leadership focuses on identifying self-aware leaders who create a compelling vision embraced by students, staff, and families through trusting relationships, blending clear leadership with vulnerability, and demonstrating anti-racist leadership by critically examining their beliefs, mindsets, and biases about education and students.

Culturally relevant pedagogies and practices focuses on identifying educators who seek to build authentic relationships with students to understand them as individuals and partners in their education, incorporate students' intersecting identities into all aspects of the learning experience, and make pedagogical decisions that are grounded in academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness.

Systems impact focuses on identifying educators who understand, develop, and maintain systems and processes to support student outcomes while contextualizing the school, community, and policy environments that shape students' experiences. Additionally, this pillar looks for educators' ability to facilitate measurable positive change within educational and social systems, and work to dismantle systemic barriers to equity.

TeachMichigan Cohort Specific Pillars

High-impact teaching (for Early Career Educator fellows) focuses on identifying the early career educator's commitment to continuously develop their content knowledge and pedagogical practices to facilitate student learning. Additionally, this pillar seeks to identify an educator's belief in the potential of all students and evidence of responding to their unique learning needs, including building positive relationships with students and families, establishing a classroom culture and routines conducive to learning, and creating equitable educational opportunities both inside and outside the classroom.

Reflective practitioner (for National Board Certification fellows) focuses on identifying an experienced educator's commitment to understanding and addressing the unique needs of their students through effective pedagogical practices, deep content knowledge, responsible management of student learning, systematic

reflection on their teaching methods, and active participation in learning communities for continuous growth and improved student outcomes.

Visionary leadership (for Aspiring Leader fellows) focuses on identifying experienced educators who effectively communicate a transformational vision and demonstrate a commitment to pursuing equitable and inclusive learning environments. Additionally, this pillar seeks to identify educators work to design systems or policies to dismantle exclusionary practices, and cultivate empathetic, culturally competent, and inclusive learning environments while fostering relationships across diverse lines of difference.

Following recruitment, the selection process for TeachMichigan consisted of three key phases, with a decision-making process following both the application evaluation and candidate interview phases:

1. **Application submission:** Educators submitted comprehensive application materials including demographic information, professional experiences, essays, artifacts, and recommendations. Application materials differed slightly across cohorts, with one notable difference of national board certification candidates being required to submit specific artifacts of practice, while Early Career Educator and Aspiring Leader candidates had wider latitude in choosing artifacts to showcase their teaching or leadership skills.
2. **Application evaluation:** Applications were reviewed by trained evaluators from TFA-Detroit with external TFA affiliates tapped to participate. Evaluators performed a holistic assessment of candidates using rubrics designed to quantify alignment with the program's pillars. Additionally, qualitative data and district partner input played an influential role in candidate advancement to the interview phase.
3. **Candidate interviews:** Successful candidates advanced to interviews conducted virtually in Detroit, and in-person in statewide regions. Trained interviewers from TFA-Detroit and members of TeachMichigan's statewide expansion team evaluated candidate responses to general and cohort specific questions, group activities (Detroit only), and role plays (statewide only). Static prompts were used in interviews to maintain consistency across interviewers and reliability across evaluations. Interviewer evaluations included quantitative rubric assessments and qualitative notes on program fit based on candidate responses. District partners provided influential feedback on potential fellows and their impact within their district.

Decision-making processes: Throughout the selection process, tough decisions were made regarding candidate advancement by TFA-Detroit. The "groupthink" decision-making process described by participants brought together TFA-Detroit senior leaders, TeachMichigan program leaders, trained evaluators, trained interviewers, and district partners to ensure that all perspectives on candidates were considered. This

collaborative approach helped to ensure that the invited fellows represented a diverse group of educators highly aligned to program pillars who were poised to have a significant impact in their classrooms and broader educational systems.

Below, we delve more deeply into the specific details for each phase of this process.

Application Process Overview

The application phase of the selection process acted as the initial gateway for prospective fellows, offering them a platform to showcase their qualifications, experiences, practices, aspirations, and mindsets. One evaluator described the process as “very intentional in trying to uncover a wide variety of skills” to identify “who candidates were.” Having a diverse set of information to paint a complete picture of a candidate was important to TFA-Detroit, for as one evaluator noted, “all these things are valuable, and one is not more important than the other.”

Figure 2 represents an overview of the application process and its components, including an itemized list of information and materials candidates provided. In the following sections, we will describe each component of the application in detail.

Figure 2. Panel Two of the Selection Process Overview – Candidate Application

Candidate Submission of Application to TeachMichigan					
<i>Personal Information</i>	•	<i>Evidence of Program Fit</i>	•	<i>Practice Artifacts</i>	
Demographics	•	Short Answer/Essay Questions	•	<i>Early Career Educator and Aspiring Leader Cohort</i>	
Hometown/Current City	•	(Program and Cohort Specific)	•	Candidate Selected Artifact	
Corps Status	•	Recommendation(s)	•	Response Relating to Candidate Artifact (TFA Provided Prompts)	
Low Income Status	•	Reference – Supervisor	•		
Current School/District	•	Reference – Additional (Detroit)	•	<i>National Board Certification Cohort</i>	
Position(s) Held	•	Additional Considerations	•	Lesson Artifacts:	
Certification(s) Held	•	(Candidate Write In)	•	10-Minute Video	
Years of Experience	•	District Leader Input (Statewide)	•	5 Samples of Student Work	
Truth Certification	•	Current Fellow Referral (if applicable)	•	2 Foundational Materials	
	•		•	Reflection on the Lesson	
	•		•	(TFA Provided Prompts)	

Application Details

Demographics and Professional Backgrounds

Candidates entered the selection process by submitting their applications via a Google form, demonstrating their potential fit with the fellowship cohort to which they were applying. In the application, candidates were requested to provide a range of demographic and professional background information to highlight their experiences and aspirations, providing insight into both who they were, and their potential for the fellowship. As one evaluator put it, this information provided a “snapshot of who [candidates] are” and allowed evaluators to “meet them virtually” through an

exploration of their application materials. While not all this information was used in an evaluative context, the information provided a snapshot of a candidate's identity and qualifications, and informed TFA-Detroit leaders on the diversity within the applicant pool. The demographic and professional background information requested from candidates, and evaluative considerations of each were:

- **Contact information**
- **Race/ethnicity and low-income status (optional)** - Candidates were asked whether they identified as someone from a low-income background. Noted within the application to provide TFA-Detroit with an opportunity to understand the full background of TeachMichigan applicants, given the organization's commitment to diversity.
- **TFA Corps status** (not used in evaluation)
- **Hometown city/state** (not used in evaluation)
- **Current city and current school** - Used when considering the limited number of available placements within partner district or charter network schools.
- **Position held** – Candidates for the Aspiring Leader cohort were requested to provide their current leadership position, role, and responsibilities. If not currently holding a leadership position, candidates were prompted to report the perceived leadership role and responsibilities they would be pursuing in the 2023-2024 school year. TFA-Detroit believed that aspiring leader fellows needed to serve their schools and communities in a leadership capacity to maximize their experience in the fellowship.
- **Certification(s) held** – Educators were required to provide their current administrative or teaching certification(s). Having no certification did not automatically disqualify candidates from the selection process, an evaluator noted.
- **Years of experience** – One evaluator cited experience as helpful in determining how candidates could benefit from the fellowship and the ways they could “create impact within the cohort” that they applied to. While experience was considered, lack of experience did not automatically disqualify candidates from the selection process, this evaluator noted.
- **Additional information** – Candidates were given an opportunity to provide additional information related to their past professional experiences or engagements related to the fellowship cohort to which they applied to be used in evaluation.
- **Truth certification** - Candidates had to digitally sign a statement declaring that all information in their application was truthful, they did

not make any false claims or submit fake documents, and they created or collaborated on all document submitted.

Essay Questions

Essay questions designed to elicit meaningful responses for discerning evidence of program fit provided candidates with a platform to show who they are and what brought them to the fellowship. These questions provided evaluators with a comprehensive understanding of candidates' educational philosophy, sociocultural identity, leadership experiences, and ability to critically reflect on their professional journey. One evaluator noted that candidate responses also demonstrated their ability to understand, fulfill, and be concise in completing an assignment. Collectively, the responses gave evaluators perspective on a candidate's cultural and growth-oriented mindsets, values, interpersonal skills, and readiness to assume advanced educational roles.

Candidates were free to highlight their creativity in crafting responses, being granted the freedom to choose to respond in audio (3 minute maximum per question), video (3 minute maximum per question), or writing (500 words maximum per question). The freedom to differentiate in response type was an important component of the process. One evaluator explained by saying, "As an educator you know there are different types of learners," and the variety of response options were useful in "catering to different types of learners." However, only approximately 10 percent of candidates responded in video format, and only one or two used solely audio, one program leader noted.

One memorable submission for both an evaluator and program leader was a video tour of a candidate's community using their phone. This candidate visited three separate locations for each of their responses to the essay questions, highlighting meaningful locations, such as the school where they began their teaching career. This allowed them to provide a unique and effective perspective on their fit with the fellowship. As one program leader noted, after viewing this submission, "Everybody loved this candidate."

The essay questions, and the respective cohorts to which they apply are listed below:

- **Application essay 1:** (All cohorts) - What is your personal philosophy of education? How has your philosophy evolved over your career as an educator?
- **Application essay 2:** (All cohorts) - How has your sociocultural identity shaped your experiences in education thus far? Which sociocultural identities have had the most impact on your experience as an educator? How, if at all, has your sense of your own sociocultural identity evolved over time as you've gained experiences in education?
- **Application essay 3:** (Early Career Educator and National Board Certification only) - Describe the most challenging professional obstacle you have faced in

your role as an educational leader thus far. What was going through your mind as you approached the challenge, and what ultimately happened?

- **Application essay 3: (Aspiring Leader only)** - Describe a time when you held a leadership role. What was the experience? What goal(s) were you driving toward, and how did you move toward them? What lessons about leadership did you take away from that experience?

Artifacts

Artifacts gave candidates an opportunity to showcase their best work and professional capabilities. For Early Career Educator and Aspiring Leader candidates, requirements were left “intentionally vague” to provide “the opportunity to show what you do best, even if this is in a creative format.” This “no limit” approach gave candidates “the autonomy to determine what they thought was going to be the best version of presenting themselves,” one evaluator explained. Artifacts, all authentic work products, could include videos of teaching or leadership in action; written documents such as lesson plans, curriculum maps, and project plans; visual materials used for instruction or proposing initiatives; evidence of educational systems or programs candidates have created or helped implement; or professional development plans candidates have designed.

As an evaluator noted, artifacts served as the “personal and professional touch” that could “bring us into their space and bring us into their thought process of how they evaluate, how they effectively lead and communicate, and give us a snapshot of what they do best.” Examples of Early Career Educator artifacts cited by evaluators included photos of their classrooms, and discussions of what was on the walls, the way in which materials were arranged, and what went into that process. One memorable example of an Early Career Educator artifact cited by an evaluator was the presentation of an outside garden project, including photographs, a PowerPoint presentation, an outline of how the project was created, and documents reflecting communication sent out to students and the school. For Aspiring Leader candidates, many provided PowerPoints of professional development they had facilitated or agendas of meetings they had led. One memorable example of an Aspiring Leader cohort artifact described by a program leader was a community engagement plan a candidate designed and implemented, including reflections on events that they held, the impact they had seen (e.g., parent attendance at meetings), and the data that mapped onto the school (e.g., absenteeism rates).

National Board Certification requirements were more specific in order to assess candidates’ approach to teaching and learning. However, alternatives could be requested from program partners if candidates were unable to meet the filming requirements in the final weeks of the school year. The specifics of the artifacts National Board Certification candidates were requested to submit were:

- A ten-minute video clip of applicant leading or teaching a lesson
- Two foundational materials that accompanied the lesson (e.g., lesson plan, deliverables, student-facing materials, modifications/accommodations)
- Five samples of student work from the lesson

Artifacts for all cohorts were accompanied by responses to reflective prompts, designed to offer tangible evidence of candidates' teaching practices, accomplishments, and mindsets. Responding to these prompts allowed candidates to highlight how their submissions reflected their qualifications, competencies, and potential for success in the fellowship. These reflections enabled holistic assessment of alignment with program and cohort-specific pillars in relation to authentic work products. Reflective prompts differed between the Early Career Educator / Aspiring Leader and National Board Certification cohorts. The reflection prompts candidates addressed were:

Early Career Educator/Aspiring Leader reflective prompts:

1. Briefly describe the artifact that you have submitted, explain your role in it, and give credit to any collaborators.
2. Explain how your artifact has been used within your practice and in your classroom, school, and/or community.
3. What does this artifact say about you as an educator? How does this artifact showcase your mindset, skill set, and/or values as a teacher and leader?

National Board Certification reflective prompts:

1. Overview of the Video – Please provide an overview of the video that explains your classroom context, planning, any data involved in the creation of the lesson, and any other pertinent information.
2. Analysis and Reflection – Please share an analysis of the video (and additional artifacts, if submitted) that demonstrates ownership of student learning and communicates deep reflection of your pedagogical thinking and knowledge of students. Questions to consider in the reflection include:
 - a. What were the learning goals?
 - b. Were the learning goals met? How do you know?
 - c. How was what you planned different or similar from what instruction looked like in the video?
 - d. What were key instructional moves you made in the video? Why did you make them?

- e. What would you do differently? What impact would you hope to achieve?

Recommendations

Recommendations provided an additional lens for looking at a candidate's alignment with the program pillars. Recommenders provided contextual observations on a candidate's knowledge (e.g. pedagogical, content), teaching practices (e.g. student-centered), and equity-oriented mindset, and specific examples of "high-impact" practices employed in their current schools. Principals or direct supervisors provided required recommendations using a ten question Google form designed by TFA-Detroit. Recommendations were solicited by TFA-Detroit using contact information provided by candidates in the application. Additionally, Detroit applicants could choose to provide an additional colleague reference to supplement their applications, an option that was removed for statewide candidates because TFA-Detroit leadership "found that the data was overwhelmingly positive and did not provide significant input into the process."

A central focus of the recommendation was assessing candidates' content and pedagogical knowledge, and whether their classroom practices were culturally responsive and student-centered. Several questions probed for observations of the candidate's content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and ability to cultivate inclusive classroom environments that affirm student identities. Additional questions delved into candidates' accountability for student data and commitment to taking a whole-child approach. Recommenders were also provided a definition of a high-impact educator and asked to identify two ways in which the candidate was a high-impact educator and to identify areas in which they may require support to become one.

Additionally, recommenders evaluated a candidate's potential for impacting the schools in which they served. Specific questions addressed the candidate's openness to feedback from diverse perspectives, and willingness to work with others to positively impact school culture. Other questions focused on the leadership potential of candidates in fostering system change, including influencing peers and supporting or leading implementation of changes they recognized needed to be made within their schools.

Another key aspect addressed was the ability of candidates to balance multiple commitments and deadlines effectively. The form explicitly asked about candidates' organizational strategies, recognizing the fellowship's considerable time demands outside the classroom. These include participation in weekend workshops, job-embedded coaching, and collaborative learning opportunities.

The Evaluation Process

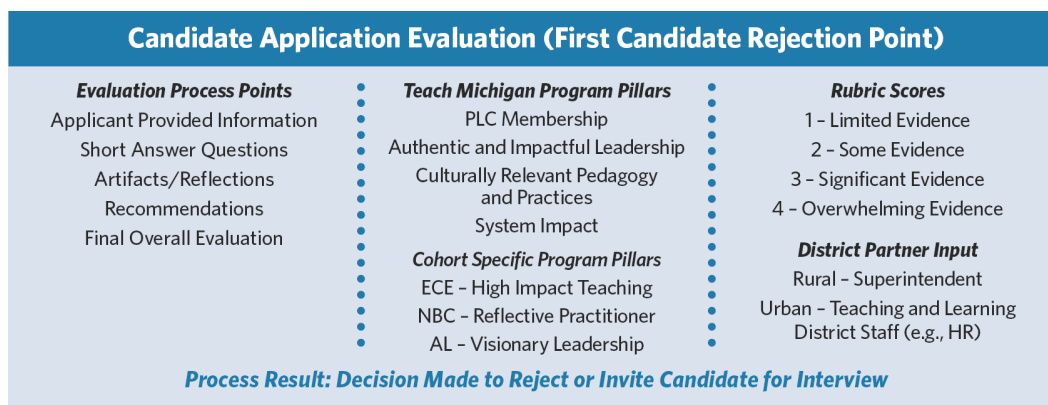
Evaluation Process Overview

The evaluation process served as the critical initial screening phase that assessed candidates' alignment with the program pillars. A team of trained and experienced evaluators meticulously analyzed each component of applications to identify promising individuals for advancing to interviews. Once the rubric scoring of all materials was complete, evaluators would make recommendations to be considered by TFA-Detroit leaders when deciding to advance candidates to interviews.

Prior to advancement, TFA-Detroit presented district partners with recommended candidates to provide contextualized input informing final decisions. However, the authority for decision making was held solely by TeachMichigan program leaders. As one program leader noted, the decision for advancement was "not quantifiable." While the rubric provided quantifiable measures, the decision involved a "combined perspective of all those pieces [of the evaluation] together," indicating a holistic approach that considered all perspectives on a candidate's fit with the fellowship.

The following graphic represents an overview of the evaluation process and its components including the evaluation process points, program and cohort specific pillars, quantitative rubric scoring system, and district partners involved in the decision-making process. In the following sections, we describe each component of the evaluative process in detail.

Figure 3. Panel Three of the Selection Process Overview – Candidate Evaluation



Who Served as an Evaluator

Evaluators involved in the application review process primarily consisted of TFA-Detroit senior leadership and program leaders, primarily those leading fellowships. One program partner estimated that approximately 90 percent of applications were reviewed by this core group. As capacity for evaluation was reached, external participants were brought into the process. One evaluator noted that the selection of

evaluators was "very intentional" in choosing educators who represented "both sides of the spectrum" having spent time as classroom teachers or school leaders.

In Detroit, a TFA alumnus was brought in to participate in the evaluation process. Statewide, National Board Certification fellowship coaches were also tapped to participate. Considerable efforts were made by senior leadership and program partners to train evaluators for application review and use of the scoring rubric. As noted by one program partner, the application evaluator's role was to gather evidence from the application, apply it to the rubric, and recommend whether the candidate should move forward to the interview phase.

The evaluation team had extensive relevant professional backgrounds, which enabled them to successfully design and implement a rigorous evaluation process. All members of the evaluation team had extensive backgrounds in education and experience evaluating candidates for teaching and leadership roles. The team collectively represented a diversity of educator perspectives, including former classroom teachers, deans of instruction and assessment, assistant principals, and principals.

Training for Evaluation

Training for evaluation was a multistage collaborative process involving senior leadership, program leaders, and evaluators. Training sessions were initially held in person, with weekly virtual check-ins taking place throughout the process. It began with program leaders simulating an evaluation highlighting the determination of evidence and non-evidence of program fit from candidate application materials from the prior year. Evaluators would then perform their own evaluation of a past candidate and meet to discuss their evidentiary findings with program leaders.

As evaluators began reviewing current applications, open lines of communication were maintained, including weekly meetings held with program leaders. This allowed evaluators to discuss specific candidates and the scoring of their application materials to improve reliability across evaluators. Evaluators could also leave notes or questions for follow-up by program leaders when facing questions or seeking additional insight. The key phases of training for evaluation were:

1. **Evaluation simulations** – Previous TeachMichigan fellowship applications were used to simulate the evaluative process in collaboration with senior or program leaders. Simulations walked through application materials, such as video submissions and artifacts to talk through the development of a mutual understanding, or determination of a "synergy" all participants had, about the potential of a candidate being a great fit with the fellowship. Program partners modeled the identification of both evidence and non-evidence of alignment with the program's pillars.

2. **Individual trial runs** – Evaluators-in-training would evaluate an application to discuss with program leaders. One evaluator described this process as looking for “what was strong about a candidate” and what were “areas of concern.” A challenge this evaluator noted was with the geographic and demographic differences candidates faced in their schools across regions, to which they were unfamiliar. This required an acute ability to “put into perspective that [candidates] are really dealing with different challenges and barriers.” As this evaluator noted, “Detroit is such a different demographic from Kentwood, which is on the west side of the state, or Sault Ste. Marie, places I’ve never visited,” and required “really finding what was the sweet spot” where they could identify evidence of program fit.

Overall, the training process sought to develop a mutual understanding among evaluators of how to identify and quantify evidence and non-evidence of program fit in alignment with the program’s pillars. One evaluator noted training involved looking for evidence that showed that candidates were “passionate about what they did [and] the students and families that they served and were really interested in trying to see how the fellowship would help them grow.” They also noted being trained to find non-evidence by identifying a lack of cultural competence, lack of student / community understanding, and lack of appreciation of diversity and inclusion within applications.

The Evaluation Process

Evaluators began by accessing a complete application packet contained within TFA-Detroit’s candidate tracking system. These packets, referred to as “profiles” by one evaluator, were organized differently statewide than in Detroit. Statewide, candidates were organized into folders labeled with the part of the state or partner district where they worked (e.g., Northwest Michigan, Lansing). In Detroit, candidates were organized into folders representing the specific cohort they applied to. Evaluators used the entirety of materials contained within the profile to gather evidence and non-evidence of the candidate’s fit with the fellowship.

Evaluation rubrics. Rubrics designed by TFA-Detroit were central to evaluation and provided a common assessment scale and mapping of a candidate’s application materials to program pillars to ensure reliability across evaluators. Each candidate had a single rubric attached to their profile. Rubrics were described by one program leader as “living, breathing documents” to be used to guide evaluators and decision makers throughout the selection process. Rubrics were accessible only to internal members of TFA-Detroit and not shared with either candidates or district partners.

The rubrics featured a quantitative scoring scale for evaluators to use in assessing the degree of evidence or non-evidence of each program pillar: 1 – Limited Evidence, 2 – Some Evidence, 3 – Significant Evidence, and 4 – Overwhelming Evidence. Specific pieces of evidence identified in application materials were copied to the evaluation rubric and placed alongside the score for each pillar to support evaluator scoring

decisions. As program leaders noted, “over 99 percent of rubrics contained evidence directly from the application” with much of evaluation consisting of “copying and pasting excerpts from the application that aligned with a given part of the rubric.” Rubrics also provided space for evaluators to record qualitative notes as additional criteria for use in considering a candidate’s potential program fit.

The rubric provided suggestions of starting points for evaluators to use in assessing and scoring application materials. These starting points mapped specific application components to the fellowship’s pillars. However, evaluators noted these points were not meant to limit their ability to assess materials across the program pillars. Instead, they were to examine application materials holistically and score according to the pillar represented in the material they were assessing.

Application selection criteria. In evaluation, one program leader cited “alignment to the pillars was the biggest thing ... it was from the lens of the pillars where we found evidence.” TFA-Detroit took an intentionally strengths-based approach, actively looking for evidence of a candidate being a good fit for the program, rather than looking for “red flags,” or non-evidence of program fit. One program leader cited modeling this approach from their training with Teach for America’s national organization, where they meticulously analyze “anything that’s provided to you” to “really look for the bright spots wherever you can find them.”

Evidence of program fit. Evidence of a candidate’s fit with the fellowship, measured by quantifying alignment of application materials to program pillars, came from a holistic evaluation of applications. As one program leader noted, “everything, everything” provided by candidates was considered in evaluation. Evaluators referred to specific attributes of application materials that aided them in identifying evidence and quantifying pillar alignment:

- **Essay questions:** Essay questions provided a lens to see how invested candidates were in the fellowship opportunity, as “sometimes they said it in their responses,” one evaluator explained. The evaluator further noted that evaluation of essay questions “wasn’t necessarily about the length so much as it was about the content of the essay itself.” Evaluators looked to whether the candidate addressed the assignment’s content, their ability to be concise and direct, and if they provided a clear answer to the question. One example of evidence provided by essay questions was described by a program leader in an example of how a candidate’s answer to the question of “Why do you want to be a part of TeachMichigan?” could provide evidence supporting the Professional Learning Community pillar in identifying candidates’ “responsiveness and follow through and commitment to [their] team.”
- **Artifacts and reflections:** Artifacts “were one of my favorite things to look at,” one TeachMichigan program leader noted. In the artifacts, this program

leader described how they could see evidence of the quality of an educator's work, the effort they put into the process, and the way a candidate would "show up for an application and an interview" they believed "might correlate to how they show up in the fellowship." Artifacts provided evidence of reflective intentionality in connection with their artifact, the work they were doing at their school, their thought process of how they evaluate, how they effectively lead and communicate, and the things that really mattered to them in their leadership. Additionally, another program leader noted the importance of artifacts created by candidates and their use of data being helpful for identifying evidence of program fit.

- Recommendations:** Recommendations provided insight on candidates from the perspective of what one evaluator cited as "someone who really knows them, who knows their work ethic, who sees them on a regular basis." Evaluators noted recommendations provided evidence of program fit, in describing the quality of their work as an educator and value to their broader school community. However, recommendations also highlighted non-evidence of program fit, including not responding well to constructive criticism or feedback. One evaluator noted when recommenders were asked the question of "do you recommend this educator or not...there were very few nos. When there were, that didn't mean we rejected an educator, it meant that we had a conversation with the district to learn more."

Recommendations were valuable for supporting evaluations, as "sometimes they were spot on with what the candidate submitted as their evidence," one evaluator explained. Recommendations could contextually support evidentiary findings in application materials. One example this same evaluator provided involved candidate responses to the question "Give us a time where something did not go the way that you planned it." Responses such as "That ownership is on me, I should have done XYZ" versus "it wasn't my fault" could be compared to the recommendation, providing contextual support for their rubric scoring.

Non-evidence of program fit. Evaluators at times encountered application materials they cited as "problematic" presenting "non-evidence" of program fit. Non-evidence was a term used by TFA-Detroit to describe evidentiary findings reflecting candidates were not in "alignment with the visions and the goals and mission of what we're trying to accomplish," one evaluator explained. Non-evidence presented itself in various forms, such as materials not reflective of candidates being a high-impact educator, or as responses, statements, or experiences cited by candidates that reflected mindsets of concern. Concerning instances of non-evidence were flagged, becoming what participants in the selection process referred to as "red flags" and placed into the evaluation rubric.

Some examples of materials not reflecting high-impact educators cited by evaluators included submitting “thrown together” materials, or premade, readily available materials not created by candidates. Other examples involved candidates answering questions in a way that did not demonstrate the educator was “highly effective” or lacked important professional experiences. More concerning non-evidence, or “red flags” reflecting candidate mindsets, surfaced during critical analysis of candidate responses to prompts and included evidence of bias, racism, prejudice, lack of support for inclusion and equal opportunity for students or the community educators serve, or presentation of a negative perception of the ideology of leadership espoused by the TeachMichigan program.

Specific cohort considerations during evaluation.

Early Career Educator (ECE): While application review scores in the rubric played an important role in the evaluation process across cohorts, program leaders highlighted that these quantitative assessments of program fit did not capture the full potential of Early Career Educator candidates. In reference to a candidate who received scores of 1 (limited evidence) across the evaluation rubric and was ultimately invited to join the Early Career Educator fellowship, one program leader noted, “Even though they scored all 1’s, we saw potential. That’s something that’s really, really important for early career educators.” As one program leader explained, those who displayed potential were moved on to the interview stages “to see whether or not that potential allows them to be able to be in a place where they could potentially be a high-impact educator one day.”

National Board Certification (NBC): Evaluation for the National Board Certification cohort focused on meeting the requirements of the fellowship. While evaluation aligned with other cohorts, one program leader noted, they were “leaning into the Five Core Propositions from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards” when assessing these candidates’ videos of teaching practice and related artifacts. While demographic information was not considered in an evaluative context, one program leader noted the challenges TFA-Detroit faced with the recruitment of black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) educators to this year’s National Board Certification cohort.

Aspiring Leader (AL): Originally part of a combined leadership cohort, this year’s process created separate cohorts for those “aspiring” to formal administrative roles and those already in such roles. One program leader explained how this was driven by the diversity of roles of candidates applying to the leadership cohort ranging “from a teacher leader who sits on the school improvement team to a sitting principal.” This involved splitting the current school leaders (e.g., principals, vice principals) into a Sitting Leaders cohort, and those seeking school leadership roles into the Aspiring Leader cohort. As a program leader explained, to be considered for this year’s Aspiring Leader cohort, “...you have to aspire to be a school leader. You have to be on that trajectory...”

Evaluation for the Aspiring Leader cohort critically analyzed the current role candidates held within their schools. As a program leader explained, within this cohort, “we did have roles to prioritize, given potential impact [of the fellow] in a school building.” Educator roles such as instructional coach, dean, or teacher leader who sat on committees or a school improvement team were prioritized during evaluation. Teachers who were not yet in any formal teacher leadership position were deprioritized.

However, the focus on solely those aspiring to school leadership positions was debated considerably within TFA-Detroit during selection and may have not been prioritized equally in all districts. As a program leader explained, there was a consideration that this focus left behind “very experienced educators” and “many teachers who are exceptional leaders who want to stay in the classroom forever.” They noted this led to a “deference to those aspiring to move into leadership” for this year’s cohort, and a plan to change the focus to “people leaders” rather than school leaders in future years.

Role of Partner Districts in Application Evaluation

While TFA-Detroit held the ultimate decision-making authority, district partners were invited to provide their contextualized perspectives on fellows that had been selected for advancing to the interview phase. As a program leader stated, “We are the deciders. That’s a very important thing for everyone in this equation to understand.” In meetings with established partners, districts would provide their input on TFA-Detroit’s selections to inform final decisions on candidate advancement to interviews.

District contacts consisted primarily of central office staff (e.g., personnel in teaching and learning, cabinet level positions, data, human resources) in larger districts, and superintendents in smaller, rural districts. In partner meetings, any candidates recommended for rejection would be presented to district partners, ensuring that there is compelling evidence that the candidate does not meet the criteria of the fellowship. As one program leader noted, “If I cannot say ‘Here is the reason we are rejecting this person based on the application’ I will not do it” as “we take rejection very seriously, especially when in district partnerships.”

District input was highly valued by TFA-Detroit and influential in the decision to advance candidates to interviews. As one program leader noted, “We work in service of districts. We work to better districts. We work to help districts figure out how to retain their best teachers, and it’s our job to really listen, to take their input” and use it to inform decision making. When district leaders shared their desire to move forward candidates that TFA-Detroit was unsure of, one program leader noted, “We moved them forward to the interview. We said we need more data. If we’re going to make the argument that this person should not be invited, we need more data to be able to say here are all the reasons why this person should not be invited.” As this program leader noted, districts had considerably more perspectives on candidates for the Aspiring Leader cohort than other cohorts.

Candidate Interviews

Interview Process Overview

The interview served as the final opportunity for prospective fellows to highlight their skills, qualifications, mindsets, and aspirations to be assessed for evidence of alignment with program pillars. Multiple selection teams of trained and experienced interviewers conducted in-person (statewide) and virtual (Detroit) interviews using a static set of questions and activities to ensure reliability and accuracy in evaluation across contexts.

Interview questions and scenarios were designed to elicit evidence of fit in alignment with program pillars. Interviewers identified and scored this evidence on the evaluation rubric. At the end of the interview stage, interviewers noted their recommendations for senior leadership and program partners to use in making final decisions on invitation. Before formal invitations were extended, district partners outside of Detroit were given the opportunity to provide feedback on selections, with decision making power residing with TFA-Detroit. This review did not happen in Detroit because the district partnership had not yet been formalized.

Figure 4 represents an overview of the interview process, including interview components (e.g., question types, activities / scenarios), question alignment to program pillars for assessment, and criteria considered in the final decision to invite candidates to join the fellowship. In the following sections we describe each component of the interview and the final decision-making process in detail.

Figure 4. Panel Four of the Selection Process Overview – Candidate Interview

Candidate Interviews (Second Candidate Rejection Point)			
Detroit – Virtual One-on-One Interviews		Statewide – In Person One-on-One Interviews	
Scripted/Follow Up Interview Questions and Related Pillars		Additional Interview Questions/ Considerations	Final Decision-Making Criteria
Authentic and Impactful Leadership – Interview Questions 1 & 2	•	Program Specific Questions	• Rubric Scores from Candidate Application Materials
Systems Impact – Interview Question 3	•	Follow Up Questions (Interviewer Selected)	• Notes from Evaluators on Candidate Application Materials
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Practices – Interview Question 4 & 5	•	Probing Questions (Targeted)	• Rubric Scores from Candidate Interview Question Responses
PLC Membership– Interview Questions 6 & 7	•	Program Design Questions (Time Dependent)	• Notes Made by Candidate Interviewers
	•	Candidate Questions Asked During Interview	• Notes from Evaluators Following Candidate Interviews
	•	Group Activity (Detroit)	• District Leader Input (Statewide)
	•	Role Play and Reflection (Statewide)	
Process Result: Decision Made to Reject or Invite Candidate to Join TeachMichigan			

Who Served as Interviewers

Interviews were conducted primarily by program leaders and current and former program staff. TFA-Detroit set an internal goal that 80 percent of interviewers would

consist of current program staff. Other interviewers included National Board Certification cohort coaches from TeachMichigan's statewide expansion team. For interviewers who had not previously served as program staff, or for program staff who had not conducted interviews in the past, efforts were made by program leaders to provide training and preparation. Additionally, TFA-Detroit paired inexperienced interviewers with those holding more experience for their first interviews.

Interviewers represented a diversity of professional experiences related to this role, which enabled TFA-Detroit to design, implement, and scale a successful interview process. Those who served as interviewers held previous leadership positions within education exposing them to numerous candidate interviews for both teaching and leadership roles as participants or decisionmakers. Notably, one interviewer had prior professional experience designing hiring processes within large school districts in multiple state contexts. Overall, the interviewer teams reflected a diversity of educational roles and responsibilities which empowered them with the tools to effectively conduct interviews and elicit evidence in assessing candidates' program fit.

Training for Interviewing

Interviewer training was held virtually in a group setting led by TFA-Detroit program leaders. One interviewer described the training as a "roundtable kind of conversation" with other TeachMichigan staff from TFA-Detroit and the statewide expansion team. A program partner described this process as "norm-setting" and developing a consensus on evidence collection and rubric scoring. Additionally, training touched on meeting candidate needs by creating a warm environment.

Given the interactive nature of interviews, training involved identifying potential "red flags" in candidate responses and directed interviewers on when to probe deeper based on the program's pillars. One interviewer noted how well prepared they felt following training, having developed an understanding of what they "were looking for in terms of a high-impact educator," by "leaning on past experiences [to identify] what I would want a really strong high-impact educator to look like in a traditional public school or a charter." Another interviewer "felt pretty well prepared" to look at applications, collect evidence, score the rubric, while expressing some questions about identifying evidence outside of these spaces.

Interview Details and Process

The interview process began with the formation and deployment of selection teams assigned to specific regions. Selection teams would come together to prepare for selection, transition to the district to hold interviews (statewide) and reconvene to make recommendations for invitation. Interviewers began by reviewing candidates' application materials and previous evaluation scores to help them understand their backgrounds. As one interviewer stated, this familiarization "helped me in the process

of asking better questions” and was important for “warming the space” for the interview to help “folks to feel comfortable in that room.”

Statewide interviews were purposefully conducted in person within districts, “because we were trying to build relationships, learn the communities, get to know those educators” and “there’s nothing better than a face-to-face relationship” one interviewer explained. Partner districts helped facilitate this by providing substitute teachers so interviewees could participate during the school day. However, this prohibited group activities as districts wanted interviews to be “one after another” to minimize substitutes needed.

This cooperative approach was not embraced in Detroit, where partnerships were not yet formalized. Educators in Detroit were forced to participate in virtual interviews “on their own time,” often in evenings or on weekends. This format allowed for a group activity, as interviews could be conducted with multiple participants at the same time.

Both approaches to selection maintained an intentionally static format designed for consistency and reliability across evaluations. Interviews consisted of:

- Seven all cohort questions
- Interviewer-chosen follow-up questions (dependent on candidate responses and cohort)
- Interviewer-chosen probing questions (dependent on candidate responses and cohort)
- One cohort specific question
- A role-play activity (statewide only)
- A group activity (Detroit only)
- One-hour time limit (small extensions were made when time was available)

Interviews were designed to elicit impromptu evidence and non-evidence of candidates’ fit with the cohort to which they were applying. Interview questions and scenarios were aligned to program pillars to prompt initial scoring of evidence of fit. Interviewers identified and scored this evidence in the candidate’s evaluation rubric, then made an overall recommendation for invitation to be used in the final decision-making process.

As one interviewer noted, rubrics were not used “by the book” as in the application evaluation stage. They explained that while “I had the rubric in my mind as I was listening to their responses...In an effort to listen to [candidates] while they were talking, and not be typing and looking all over at a rubric at the same time,” all evidentiary findings could not be recorded during the interview. Interviewers were

challenged with “remembering these things” and recording them in the rubric at the conclusion of the interview. Yet, as one program leader noted, there was “inconsistent rubric data entry post interviews.”

When interviewers were “on the fence” about a candidate, they would email program leaders for advice on their evaluation of evidence. As one interviewer explained, program leaders would assist by directing interviewers to “look for evidence in this question too” or “broaden what you’re thinking about when you look for evidence.” One interviewer explained that this feedback was valuable, as it informed both their process going forward, and retroactively in directing them back to previously interviewed candidate rubrics to “add what they might have forgotten.”

Interview questions. Interview questions explored several areas of candidate alignment with the program’s pillars. Each question contained follow-up questions designed to elicit further evidence of pillar alignment. In the interest of time, follow-up questions were selectively chosen by interviewers when they believed they were needed to elicit further evidence in relation to specific pillars. Interviewer probing questions were directed at the requirements of specific cohorts. As one interviewer explained their probing strategy directed at Aspiring Leader candidates, “if you’re going to be an aspiring leader, then I need to know how you’re thinking as a leader rather than just this is how a decision impacted me, or how I’m scaling my influence among different folks.”

Questions prompted discussion of candidates’ motivations for entering the field of education and asked them to discuss their path to this career. Candidates also had to describe a time when they led or participated in a discussion about race, class, and/or privilege, outlining the context, how the conversation went, what they learned, and what could have been improved. Questions also explored the past experiences of candidates advocating for change when recognizing inequitable practices. Other questions explored the candidates’ goals for their classroom, students, and school community during the school year. Candidates were prompted to talk through where they and their students met goals or fell short, and what they may change in hindsight.

Several questions explored the candidate’s ability to work collaboratively with others who have diverse perspectives. Candidates were prompted to reflect on a time when a group they were part of worked well together, considering what factors contributed to that success. They also had to describe resolving a situation when group members had differing opinions and how consensus was reached.

Other questions were designed to assess how the candidate receives critical feedback on areas needing improvement and the specific actions they take to address that feedback over time. The candidate was prompted to recount a situation where they received constructive criticism within the past three years and explain why they took

specific actions in response. Additionally, they were prompted to look back and reflect on the lessons learned and how they applied these lessons to other situations.

Also explored were the candidate's expectations for themselves and their cohort peers in the fellowship experience. One question prompted the candidate to think about the norms they would set, how they would engage with others in a cohort model, and examples of facilitating voluntary collaboration among peers. Also, candidates were prompted to provide examples of how they have managed competing priorities and deadlines, providing insight into their ability to manage the fellowship's expectations.

Interview scenarios. The group activity in Detroit interviews placed three to four candidates in a virtual breakout room to collaboratively devise a solution to a school problem. An interviewer would be present in the room with their camera off, taking notes on the conversation between candidates. Interviewers would follow up with candidates one-on-one at the activity's end to explore their contributions to the discussion.

In one example of a group activity for the Aspiring Leader cohort, a group of candidates were presented with a data set about a student at a high-performing school who had a considerable number of documented behavioral issues (e.g. demerits, referrals), and issues with attendance (e.g. tardies, absences). Using this data, candidates discussed assumptions they had about the student, questions they might ask, and what their strategies would be moving forward. Interviewers made note of candidate inputs on solutions, data-driven practices, and mindsets displayed during the conversation to explore deeper during their follow up conversations.

The role play activity in statewide interviews placed candidates in a scenario in which they would interact with interviewers in a one-on-one format. Candidates were given feedback from interviewers on their response to the scenario and were requested to repeat the activity incorporating it. Interviewers had three role play scenarios to choose from depending on the cohort for which the candidate was interviewing. The difference in role plays was explained by one program leader to be “adult facing” for aspiring leaders, compared to those which were “student or family facing” in other cohorts.

In one example of a role play for the Aspiring Leader fellowship, a candidate was prompted with a situation where they were co-teaching with a peer, played by the interviewer, who was responsible for planning next week's class activity. However, this co-teacher had not provided the necessary lesson materials by the end of the prior week, which was an ongoing issue. The candidate had to demonstrate how they would respond to their co-teacher about the missing materials and unmet planning responsibilities. Additionally, the scenario would be repeated after receiving feedback from interviewers on the strategies candidates employed in resolving the situation.

Interview evaluation. One TFA-Detroit program leader noted the interview evaluation sought to identify evidence of high-impact educators who “seek to develop others around them and share their learning and knowledge, ... believe deeply in the power and potential of their children, [and] hold kids to high academic and behavioral expectations.” During evaluation, interviewers relied heavily on the rubric and the pillar alignment of questions and scenarios. As one interviewer stated, “The pillars contained what evidence would look like in practice” and were used to guide identification of evidence of program fit, rather than specific educator behaviors or characteristics. Interviewers cited specific interview components that contributed to their evidentiary findings and quantifying of pillar alignment.

Interview questions: Question responses provided considerable opportunities for identifying evidence and non-evidence of candidates’ pillar alignment. Examples provided by interviewers included:

- **Professional Learning Community:** Interviewers looked for valuing diverse perspectives, seeking opportunities to continuously improve and learn from others, anticipated professional norms for themselves and others, interactions in previous professional settings, and expectations of others within their potential cohort. One interviewer looked for candidates to cite past feedback that prompted reflection and improvement. The inability to provide an example was perceived as non-evidence.
- **Systems Impact:** For initiatives candidates developed, interviewers assessed inputs they provided, outcomes, and school or system impacts. They also looked for leadership of adults for those in relevant roles. Being unable to address how school communities act as an “ecosystem” and how they provide direct feedback to their peers was perceived as non-evidence.
- **Authentic and Impactful Leadership:** Evidence included school leadership experiences demonstrating qualities of an “excellent school leader,” such as leading with a compelling vision and authentically leading others toward that vision.
- **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Practices:** Interviewers analyzed how candidates perceive their identity, how it impacts their classroom and the population they are working with, or their desire to grow in this area. Lack of depth or inability to engage in this area was perceived as non-evidence.

Group activity: The group activity elicited responses reflecting candidates’ mindsets in relation to students and their families and their skills in utilizing data to inform decision-making. As one program leader explained, they analyzed responses for an “immediate blame on a family or student” or how the “school community could wrap around this student” with supports. This program leader further stated that they were looking for whether candidates “knew how to use data correctly” and “interact with others, listen to other people’s perspectives” when collectively solving problems.

Candidate contributions to the activity provided considerable evidence of alignment with the Professional Learning Community pillar. Specific examples highlighted included listening to others, providing insights, speaking up, and asking questions relevant to the scenario. Additionally, this activity provided evidence of candidate alignment with the Culturally Responsive Pedagogies and Practices pillar. A program leader explained that they looked for candidates “seeking to get to know a student and asking more questions about them instead of making their own assumptions.” Evidence was identified in “intentional and meaningful” interventions planned to meet unique student needs.

Role play: The role plays used in statewide interviews were designed to identify evidence of fit with a particular cohort. For example, the Aspiring Leader role play was designed to assess the candidate's leadership, decision-making, and interpersonal strategies in a co-teaching situation. One program leader explained how the role plays allowed interviewers to identify evidence of alignment with the Authentic and Impactful Leadership pillar when candidates spoke of “building relationships,” or “doing the work alongside others.” An interviewer noted the importance of candidates displaying empathy, which they considered “a really big piece of evidence” for “delivering the feedback the person needs to hear in good terms.” A deficit perspective where candidates placed the blame on others (e.g. students, adults) rather than taking accountability was a “red flag” noted by a program leader as a “big look for” during interviews. Most importantly, the role play offered interviewers a view of how receptive candidates were to feedback, a “really key component especially for aspiring leaders,” one interviewer explained. The inability of candidates to incorporate interviewer feedback into the role play activity was perceived as non-evidence.

Final Decision-Making Process

The interview phase statewide concluded with a reconvening of selection team members to discuss specific candidate interviews and scores and to make a collective decision of whom to recommend for invitation to the fellowship. One program leader noted that these “post interview mini team debriefs” occurred in approximately 80-90 percent of regions. In this post-interview meeting described by an interviewer, team members would walk through their evidentiary findings within each question and look for the “key components, the key evidence” to be used in the decision to move fellows forward. The collaborative decision making was noted as a valuable part of the process, with additional perspectives on candidates providing what one interviewer cited as “balance” in helping to “guide [them] in thinking like, should I move this from an I don't know to a yes or a no?” In instances where there was a lack of consensus on a candidate, TFA-Detroit senior leadership would make the final determination.

Role of Districts in Final Decisions

At the end of the selection process, TFA-Detroit brought their selections for invitation to the district partners. District input on prospective fellows was both valued by TFA-

Detroit and influential in the decision-making process. Much of the influence in districts occurred where additional spots were available past the number of educators selected for invitation. One example provided by a program leader referenced candidates that “were on the line.” In these scenarios, where district input reflected support of a candidate, TFA-Detroit would “push them over the line” and invite them to join the fellowship.

However, not all districts had additional spots available for district input to leverage candidate invitation decisions. In an example provided by a program leader, a district that had an abundance of applications for a limited number of spots “was a place where we really were having to make some hard decisions.” District input provided an important lens for TFA-Detroit to look through in making difficult invitation decisions based on the individual needs of the district versus solely their potential identified within the selection process. Some districts suggested TFA-Detroit reconsider their recommendations based on factors such as the preferred ratio of fellows across cohorts, the roles various candidates held in the district, the level of impact different candidates had in the district, and the schools in which candidates worked. In some instances, district input resulted in TFA-Detroit inviting candidates who met district needs over selecting candidates solely on rubric scores and recommendations resulting from the selection process.

As one program leader noted, the selection process was “more of an art than a science.” This reflected the commitment of TFA-Detroit to holistically assess candidates and “not just go off numbers,” but instead to rely on the “expertise of the interviewer” to use “both the numbers and the experience in the interview to make a recommendation.” Both program leaders and interviewers noted the challenges faced in making recommendation decisions, as identifying strengths in responses was a difficult task. This program leader noted the critical role districts could play in final decisions, sharing, “We ultimately had to really bring that to the district and say, ‘Here’s what we think. Here are the things that we are sort of learning from this. Does this match your experience? Give us input to make the final decision.’” As another program partner noted on leadership cohort decisions, “Generally, I will defer to a school partner unless I feel super strongly otherwise, just because they know their work better than I do from an interview.”

Fellow Notification and Feedback

Candidates were notified by email as to whether they were invited to join the fellowship for the 2023-2024 cohort. Following invitations, program leaders met with candidates to discuss questions they had about the fellowship, regardless of the decision. For those invited, program leaders answered questions potential fellows had about the fellowship prior to joining. They also met with candidates not invited to inform them about the decision and answer any questions they may have. Candidates not invited to join the fellowship were welcome to reapply in successive years.

TEACHMICHIGAN 2023 FELLOWS

Description of the Cohort

Table 3 contains an overview of the demographic characteristics of the 2023-2024 TeachMichigan fellows for the Early Career Educator, National Board Certification, Aspiring Leader, and Sitting Leader cohorts. The data includes the most recent educator effectiveness ratings of fellows. Fellows hold more highly effective ratings in comparison to overall ratings for educators in Michigan, where 41% are rated highly effective, 57% are rated effective, and 1% are rated minimally effective (mischooldata.org)

Table 3. 2023-2024 TeachMichigan Fellow Characteristics										
Educator Characteristic	Early Career Educator Fellows		National Board Certification Fellows		Aspiring Leader Fellows		Sitting Leader Fellows		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
TOTAL FELLOWS										
Fellows by Cohort	45	26.0%	49	28.3%	51	29.5%	28	16.2%	173	100.0%
GENDER										
Female	37	17.8%	37	75.5%	43	84.3%	23	82.1%	140	80.1%
Male	8	82.2%	12	24.5%	8	15.7%	5	17.9%	33	19.9%
RACE										
American Indian / Alaskan Native	2	4.4%	0	0.0%	1	2.0%	1	3.6%	4	2.3%
Asian	2	4.4%	1	2.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	1.7%
Black or African American	8	17.8%	8	16.3%	22	43.1%	13	46.4%	51	29.5%
Hispanic of Any Race	3	6.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.6%	4	2.3%
Two or More Races	4	8.9%	3	6.1%	1	2.0%	1	3.6%	9	5.2%
White	26	57.8%	37	75.5%	27	52.9%	12	42.9%	102	58.9%
2023 EDUCATOR EFFECTIVENESS RATINGS (FELLOWS)										
Highly Effective	8	20.0%	34	73.9%	22	57.9%	10	40.0%	74	49.7%
Effective	31	77.5%	12	26.1%	16	42.1%	15	60.0%	74	49.7%
Minimally Effective	1	2.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.7%
Not Subject to Evaluation	0	N/A	1	N/A	12	N/A	2	N/A	15	N/A
FELLOWS BY DISTRICT / CHARTER NETWORK										
Benzie County Central Schools	3	6.7%	3	6.1%	3	5.9%	1	3.6%	10	5.8%
Detroit Academy of Arts and Sciences	1	2.2%	2	4.1%	1	2.0%	1	3.6%	5	2.9%
Detroit Public Schools Community District	4	8.9%	7	14.3%	5	9.8%	5	17.9%	21	12.2%
Grand Rapids Public Schools	4	8.9%	0	0.0%	1	2.0%	3	10.7%	8	4.6%

Table 3. 2023-2024 TeachMichigan Fellow Characteristics										
Educator Characteristic	Early Career Educator Fellows		National Board Certification Fellows		Aspiring Leader Fellows		Sitting Leader Fellows		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Jalen Rose Leadership Academy	3	6.7%	0	0.0%	1	2.0%	0	0.0%	4	2.3%
Kentwood Public Schools	10	22.2%	9	18.4%	10	19.6%	0	0.0%	29	16.8%
Lansing Public School District	3	6.7%	3	6.1%	5	9.8%	4	14.3%	15	8.7%
Saginaw Public Schools	5	11.1%	8	16.3%	7	13.7%	2	7.1%	22	12.7%
Sault Ste. Marie Area Schools	4	8.9%	6	12.2%	5	9.8%	4	14.3%	19	11.0%
Traverse City Area Public Schools	1	2.2%	4	8.2%	3	5.9%	2	7.1%	10	5.8%
University Preparatory Academy	5	11.1%	4	8.2%	6	11.8%	3	10.7%	18	10.4%
Voyageur Academy	1	2.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.6
Non-Partner	1	2.2%	3	6.1%	4	7.8%	3	10.7%	11	6.4%

Notes: Number of fellows obtained from TFA-Detroit. All remaining data obtained from the Michigan Education Research Institute (MERI). 2 fellows with incomplete data in TFA-Detroit files excluded from analysis since they cannot be assigned to a specific fellowship. If educators received different effectiveness ratings from different assignments, the higher rating was used in analysis. If exempt from evaluation resulting from previous highly effective rating, this rating retained for use in analysis. Educators new to the Michigan K-12 system in 2023 are included in all but the educator effectiveness rating analysis.

Fellow Invitation Rates

Table 4 displays fellow invitation rates across educator characteristics including demographics and effectiveness ratings, as well as by district. In terms of gender, a higher percentage of female candidates (51.5%) were invited compared to male candidates (43.4%). However, since many more females applied, these similar acceptance rates translate into more females being invited (140) compared to males (33). In terms of race, invitation percentages for Black or African American (47.7%) and White candidates (49.3%) the two largest racial groups, were quite similar. However, the smaller number of Black or African American candidates (107) compared to White candidates (207) resulted in only half as many Black or African American candidates being invited (51) compared to White candidates (102). Candidates from other racial groups with smaller numbers of candidates experienced markedly different invitation rates ranging from 37.5% for Asian candidates to 80% for American Indian/Alaskan Native candidates.

Educators rated highly effective in 2023 were invited at a higher rate than their effective or minimally effective rated counterparts. The higher invitation rate for highly effective rated educators (57.1%) aligns with the fellowship's focus on retention of high-impact educators. However, the high percentage of invited educators rated effective (44.6%) may reflect the commitment to the development of high-impact educators, and the design of the selection process to identify evidence of a candidate's potential to become one. Invitation rates across partner districts statewide reflect the limited number of fellowships available in each district. Districts with more candidates such as Kentwood and Detroit tended to have lower invitation rates as compared to districts with fewer candidates such as Traverse City and Sault Ste. Marie.

Table 4. TeachMichigan Fellow Invitation Percentages			
Educator Characteristic	Number of Candidates	Number of Fellows Invited	Invitation Rate (%)
GENDER			
Female	272	140	51.5%
Male	76	33	43.4%
RACE			
American Indian / Alaskan Native	5	4	80.0%
Asian	8	3	37.5%
Black or African American	107	51	47.7%
Hispanic of Any Race	7		57.1%
Two or More Races	14	9	64.3%
White	207	102	49.3%
2023 EDUCATOR EFFECTIVENESS RATING			
Highly Effective	132	74	56.1%
Effective	166	74	44.6%
Minimally Effective	6	1	16.7%
Not Subject to Evaluation	30	15	50.0%
DISTRICT / REGION			
Benzie County Central Schools	16	10	62.5%
Grand Rapids Public Schools	14	8	57.1%
Kentwood Public Schools	74	29	39.2%
Lansing Public School District	35	15	42.9%
Saginaw Public Schools	45	22	48.9%
Sault Ste. Marie Area Schools	25	19	76.0%
Traverse City Area Public Schools	15	10	66.7%
Detroit Region	136	60	44.1%

Notes: Number of candidates and cohort fellows invited obtained from TFA-Detroit. The Detroit Region is an aggregated total of all districts, charter networks, and non-partner schools in the region aligning with TFA-Detroit's organization of candidate applications in their tracking system. All remaining data obtained from the Michigan Education Research Institute (MERI). If educators received different effectiveness ratings from different assignments, the higher rating was used in analysis. If exempt from evaluation resulting from previous highly effective rating, this rating retained for use in analysis.

Educators new to the Michigan K-12 system in 2023 are included in all but the educator effectiveness rating analysis.

TFA REFLECTIONS ON 2023 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Impressions of Fellows for 2023-2024

The selection process was successful in attracting high-impact educators, and those showing the desire to learn to become one. As a senior leader explained, they currently perceive “more than half” of this year’s fellows to be high-impact educators, with the majority showing “they really want to be there, and they want to learn.” This senior leader noted, “It is ok that everyone’s not there yet. It’s part of our responsibility to help them get there.” Another senior leader noted the responsibility TFA-Detroit takes on in seeing the fellows through the program, stating, “If we accept somebody, it’s on us to get them through. That’s our responsibility then.”

Evidence already indicates the fellowship’s positive impact on the new cohort’s professional learning, networking, and community building. One senior leader stated that the feedback shows “all of the opportunities they’re being afforded are really making a difference.” Another staff member highlighted the “pride” educators exhibited in the selection process, an important characteristic aligning to the fellowship’s mission of “trying to elevate so many different things for the profession and society.”

While satisfied with the overall total number of candidates who applied for the fellowship, some regional recruitment challenges were noted. As one program leader explained, they “knocked it out of the park” in regions where their “footprint” was strong. However, other regions were viewed as “pockets of really amazing educators who do not yet have access” where they are working on “figuring out why we haven’t recruited quite enough high-impact educators.” This program leader expressed not being satisfied “until the spread is – the reach is what I think it can be in places ... as there are teachers in districts that we’re working with that are having a tremendous impact on their kids that I hope that we get to reach.”

Changes in Recruitment and Selection for 2024

In 2024, TFA-Detroit is focusing on the “continuous improvement” of its selection process, and “how it’s experienced by candidates and the staff members that are operating it.” Rather than building upon the process, one senior leader explained that their focus is on “refining, operationalizing, and scaling” to implement the process across a “much larger volume of educators.” Reflections from senior leadership and program leaders guide improvement of the process, including:

1. Efficiency of the candidate tracking system

- a. A formal learning management system (Pinpoint) has been selected for implementation to replace Google Forms and spreadsheets to support operationalization and scalability.
2. Quantitative scoring and rubric reliability
 - a. Complete quantitative scoring rubrics are now mandatory for candidate advancement in the selection process. The rubric is integrated into Pinpoint for streamlining.
 - b. Each application material and interview question is now tagged to a subcomponent of the rubric aligned with program pillars to ensure reliability. This is designed to ensure all evaluators are “looking at the exact same things” when scoring evidence. This process was informed from TFA National’s assessment model.
 - c. This approach aims to provide “a significantly more accurate picture of quantitative data.” Initially, cutoff scores are not being considered. Instead, 2024 is serving as a data collection year informing future quantitative impacts going forward.
3. Recruitment strategy and timeline
 - a. A “flywheel” approach leverages existing fellow relationships with other high-impact educators in their network to attract potential fellows, building momentum in schools and districts.
 - b. An extended recruitment period provides “more access” and opportunities for high-impact educators to apply.
4. Ensuring an equitable process
 - a. Freedom in response type to application essay questions is now limited to text to “maintain a more level playing field” and ensure an equitable evaluation process for all candidates.
5. Eligibility and certification checks
 - a. Additional “checks and balances” are being implemented for verifying role eligibility and certifications held, including collecting candidates’ Personal Identification Code (PIC) recorded in the Michigan Online Educator Certification System (MOECS).
6. Standardizing the candidate experience
 - a. All interviews are being conducted in person, with consistent components, such as role play instead of group activity.
 - b. References are being solicited only from direct supervisors, with the optional additional candidate reference in Detroit being eliminated.
7. Application evaluation and training

- a. Evaluators are being trained in implementing a multi-tiered evaluation system, including recommendations of move forward with certainty, move forward with review, do not move forward with a review, and do not move forward with certainty.
 - b. All candidate profiles are being reviewed by program leaders or program advisors, regardless of evaluator recommendations, prior to decision making on candidate advancement in the selection process.
- 8. Improved artifacts for Early Career Educator and Aspiring Leader candidates
 - a. Artifact selection prompts now align with the definitions of “high-impact teacher” (for Early Career Educator candidates) and “high-impact leader” (for Aspiring Leader candidates) on the TeachMichigan website.
 - b. Candidates must explain how their selected artifact demonstrates elements of the provided definition, aiming for better “clarity for educators and alignment.”
- 9. Realignment of Aspiring Leader definition
 - a. The Aspiring Leader fellowship has been redefined to focus on improving “people leadership skills” within diverse school roles and responsibilities. Candidates for the Aspiring Leader fellowship can now include, for example, high-impact teachers who are grade level or professional learning community leaders who “want to stay in the classroom forever but want to expand their impact.”
 - b. This definitional shift moves away from the previous focus on candidates aspiring to administrative leadership positions.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE SELECTION CYCLES

The recruitment and selection process presented here is clearly detailed and requires considerable investment of time, energy, resources, and thought, both for TFA-Detroit staff and for TeachMichigan applicants. Yet, with the program’s goal of retaining “high-impact educators” in poverty-dense schools, TeachMichigan’s impact hinges in part on the ability of TFA-Detroit staff to attract and identify those high-impact educators and bring them into the fellowship. The complex process described in this report represents a multi-faceted effort to identify indicators of high-impact teaching that can be captured in application materials and captured through the application and interview processes. Reflections from TFA-Detroit leaders indicate that they are largely satisfied with the educators they recruited and selected into this first cohort. Looking ahead, they seek to streamline or alter some elements of the selection process and

improve recruitment strategies to reach some high-impact educators in participating areas whom they did not reach previously. They continue to pursue their recruitment and selection goal to help districts serving low-income communities identify and keep their strongest and most impactful teachers and educational leaders.

Selection of High-Impact or Potential to be High-Impact

One interesting issue that TFA-Detroit grappled with during selection was whether they were looking only for educators who had *achieved* high impact or whether they should also seek educators with *potential to achieve* high impact. They decided to include educators with potential to become high-impact, particularly for the Early Career Educator Cohort, where they sought out early career teachers who wanted to learn and grow to become high impact and who demonstrated tendencies and mindsets that aligned with TFA-Detroit's vision of a high-impact educator. In this way, TFA-Detroit took a developmental stance on identifying high-impact educators. They focused not just on retaining teachers and leaders who were already skilled and valuable to their schools; they also committed to identifying and helping early career educators with the potential to be the types of educators their schools wanted to keep. As such, TFA-Detroit was focused on retention throughout the teacher pipeline, which had multiple implications for TeachMichigan.

First, wanting to include “potential high-impact educators” in TeachMichigan required TFA-Detroit to develop a selection process that used evidence to identify both educators who had achieved high impact and those with the potential to do so. This meant that application materials had to allow candidates to illustrate dispositions, not just achievements, that aligned with TeachMichigan’s values as denoted in the pillars. For example, application evaluators and interviewers sought to assess whether a candidate embodied the values of a culturally responsive educator – including wanting to develop authentic relationships with students and bring students’ identities into instruction. Because these types of characteristics represent things teachers “want” to do, evaluators looking for relevant evidence of fit could identify these interests as indicating potential for becoming high-impact under TFA-Detroit's definition. Similarly, evaluators could assess whether an educator had a mindset that favored collaborative learning or an asset-based orientation toward students and families. Candidates could convey these perspectives even if they were still early in their careers.

Second, because TFA-Detroit adopted this developmental approach to identifying high-impact educators as both those who had achieved high impact and those with potential to do so, they then took on responsibility for creating programming and support that would help educators grow into high-impact educators. Leaders within TFA-Detroit took this responsibility seriously and recognized that retaining high-impact educators through TeachMichigan required them to do considerably more than just identify strong educators; they also had to develop strong educators. As one senior leader noted:

We do have to go to scale. So we're not going to get there by lowering or raising our standards so much that we're turning everybody away to protect ourselves. We actually have to be a value-add here. Otherwise, our results are just because we selected the people who were already there.

In this way, inviting promising candidates alongside accomplished candidates required TFA-Detroit to commit to developing strategies for strengthening human capital through their programming. Through this commitment, they illustrated that the theory of action for TeachMichigan was not only recognizing talent but also developing talent, a much bigger undertaking than simply labeling high-impact educators and paying them to stay in their schools. As an organization, TFA-Detroit was well-positioned to do this since their work has traditionally focused on working with brand-new teachers with very limited, if any, formal training in education.

Distinguishing Between High-Impact and Highly Effective

Another critical issue that arose for TFA-Detroit during recruitment and selection was whether and how to distinguish their selection criteria for “high-impact” educators from the criteria for “highly effective” in Michigan’s Educator Effectiveness rating system. Senior leaders with TFA-Detroit report intentionally developing their own evaluation criteria, both to include their organizational values and to stay away from the politics of teacher evaluation. Not surprisingly then, only about 50% of fellows in the first TeachMichigan cohort received “highly effective” ratings in 2023, with most other fellows receiving “effective” ratings and one Early Career fellow even receiving a “minimally effective” rating. Among teachers in the NBC cohort, the “highly effective” rating is more prominent, with 74% of NBC fellows being deemed “highly effective” by their districts. However, even here, TFA-Detroit identified 12 fellows (26%) who were rating “effective” but that evaluators and interviewers believed had the potential to become not only high-impact educators but Nationally Board Certified. In this way, TFA-Detroit’s definition of a high-quality educator is clearly different from – and seemingly broader than – the definition for Michigan educator effectiveness.

Just the same, Michigan’s Educator Effectiveness rating provides a systematic process for assessing how effective an educator is considered by those who work closely with them and as evidenced by learning data from their students. This raises the question of whether the additional evaluation criteria included by TFA-Detroit merits the cost of such intensive application and interview processes for selecting TeachMichigan fellows. These processes require a big investment on behalf of the state to cover the personnel, technological resources, travel for TFA-Detroit staff to conduct interviews, time for teachers and leaders to apply and write recommendations for one another, and time for TFA-Detroit staff to review applications, conduct interviews, and meet with district partners to make decisions. If TeachMichigan were to continue beyond the current state funding, one potential way to cut future costs could be to streamline the review process to include “highly effective” educator effectiveness ratings as one

screening criterion, at least for NBC fellows and potentially Aspiring Leader fellows. Or, it could be that the interview process is streamlined for those who possess “highly effective” educator effectiveness ratings.

How to Frame the Stipend During Recruitment

A third critical issue relevant to recruitment and selection was how to position the \$35,000 stipend in the recruitment process. For the statewide 2023 recruitment season, TFA-Detroit leaders described how they tried to frame the stipend. Above, we note that they framed the stipend as “compensation for the time fellows would invest in developing themselves as educators through rich learning and networking experiences.” However, according to the fellowship's design, the third year of the fellowship will not require any time investment for fellows, yet they will receive the largest portion of the fellowship that year. This raises the question of whether the stipend really is to pay fellows for their time, or if TFA-Detroit theorizes a direct link between financial compensation and educator retention. If the latter is true, as the third-year absence of programming suggests, then framing the stipend as compensation for time might require additional thinking and clarification. If there is a different reasoning for the absence of programming in the third year, then TFA-Detroit might wish to make this clear during recruitment.

CONCLUSION

Across these issues and considerations, TeachMichigan staff worked hard to identify the best 2023-2024 cohort they could. As their list of changes for the 2024-2025 fellow selection process illustrates, they took a learning approach this year and identified improvements to the process moving forward. As they engage with recruiting and selecting the next round of fellows, TFA-Detroit leaders maintain their focus on identifying and retaining educators who provide evidence that they are well positioned to effectively serve the students of Michigan.