In 2012, New York City’s Department of Education chose NTC as one of two lead professional development partners in their Teacher Effectiveness Program (TEP), a pilot program designed to prepare the district for the adoption of a new teacher evaluation system. NTC has worked in New York City since 2004, providing professional development and consultation to mentor teachers, school leaders, and network and district leadership. Over the past two years, NTC partnered with schools and networks in NYC to develop school-based mentor teachers and to provide professional development for school leaders focused on teacher observation, feedback and coaching conversations. NTC’s commitment to improving student achievement by increasing teacher effectiveness, while championing teachers and their development, made us a natural partner for the Teacher Effectiveness Program.

The Teacher Effectiveness Program

The primary goal of TEP was to build the capacity of school leaders to examine, assess and develop teacher practice. Over the course of the year-long engagement, NTC provided consultation to the district and professional development to network leaders, school leaders, and teacher leaders, working with 112 schools in 6 DOE networks. The work centered on frequent classroom observations, a common framework to define effective teaching, and high-impact coaching conversations to help teachers develop their practice.
Using Multiple Datapoints to Assess Teacher Practice

Professional development built school leaders’ skills in coaching-based supervision, introduced tools for assessing teacher performance, and helped them design professional development aligned with teacher needs. A highlight was the case studies that illustrated teacher practice including a lesson plan, a video, and a sample of student work. Participants learned that more frequent observations combined with artifacts of practice provided a more complete picture of a teacher’s effectiveness.

Intentional Redundancy

Teacher leaders are a critical part of teacher effectiveness work and NTC recommended inclusion of school-based teacher leaders, mentors, and coaches in the program. The professional development focused on developing their capacity as coaches of their peers and facilitators of collaborative learning teams. Using common tools and protocols, and sharing a common philosophy about teacher development further advanced teacher effectiveness at all levels of the schools and created an intentional redundancy that allowed the Department to benefit from greater returns on their investment in professional development.

Confident Leaders

School leaders who participated in the TEP pilot conducted at least six classroom observations over the course of the year and provided feedback to teachers following each observation. In addition, they conducted mid-year and end-of-year conversations with each teacher and committed to implementing school-wide professional development plans. Participants indicated increased confidence in conducting observations and engaging in feedback conversations and a desire to continue to develop their leadership skills to better support effective teacher practice.

Expanding Program Impact

The results of the TEP partnership confirmed that teachers are key levers in influencing student achievement and that school leaders have an important role to play in supporting teachers and effective teaching. NTC will work directly with individual networks and clusters to introduce this work to a broader audience as the teacher evaluation program goes to scale.
Kizhaya Roberts is the founding principal of Bronx Career & College Preparatory High School (BCC Prep), which opened five years ago with a vision to help students enhance their strong liberal arts foundation with practical, hands on, college preparatory and work-based learning experiences.

Students at BCC Prep have the opportunity to serve as interns throughout New York City and enroll in College Now courses while still in high school. Roberts was one of the school leaders participating in the Teacher Effectiveness Program (TEP) pilot. Her school also participates in NTC-NYC’s Instructional Mentoring initiative. She spoke with us about her experience with both programs.

**New Teacher Center: Why did you decide to participate in TEP?**

**Kizhaya Roberts:** The retention rates for new teachers; especially new teachers in urban schools like ours, is poor. I saw my teachers working hard but burning out. I was desperately searching for a way to support them. TEP offered a solution for something I was already trying to address.
How useful was the professional development and coaching offered by TEP?
The coaching provided by TEP made a world of difference. Not only were sessions detailed and relevant, addressing the needs of my school, but the timing was just right. Intense full day sessions throughout the year allowed me to perfect my own ability to observe and provide feedback to teachers. Each time I walked away with resources in hand that I could use immediately and see immediate results.

Has your relationship with your teachers changed because of TEP?
I feel much more confident assessing teachers. My post conferences are focused, clear and actionable. I can better develop teachers in need of support, and I can help strong teachers maintain high quality teaching without burning out.

What is the added value of your school participating in both the Instructional Mentoring and Teacher Effectiveness Program?
Last year I had seven new teachers in my school supported by two NTC-trained mentors. My mentors’ and my involvement in these two programs helped us use a common language and approach to observing and developing teachers. With everyone on the same page, we were able to accelerate teacher practice and improve student learning.

How did TEP help the teacher leaders in your school?
The teacher leaders in my school gained a better understanding of how to articulate their own practice. Often when you ask a great teacher what makes them great, they provide responses that focus on their natural abilities. TEP and the Instructional Mentoring program helped my teacher leaders articulate the parts of their practice that could be duplicated regardless of a person’s natural abilities.

Any a-ha moments?
The a-ha moment for me was retaining 96% of my teachers from the previous year. One teacher left to pursue her educational career elsewhere. The highest retention rate I had before that was 75%.

What are the next steps for BCC Prep in terms of teacher effectiveness?
We will continue to develop teachers this coming year using the supports put in place through the Instructional Mentoring program. We are excited about focusing on student work as evidence of teacher effectiveness.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview.
And thank you for the opportunity to share how much your program has helped.