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Teaching Scholars employed as NYC Teachers (Phase 1)

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In 1998, The Discovery Institute initiated a Teaching Scholar program with funding from the National Science Foundation. Ever since then, The Discovery Institute has maintained an active Teaching Scholar program, with funding contributions from multiple sources. The Teaching Scholar program recruits high-GPA college students who are NOT education majors, i.e., students who are not considering teaching as a career. After a careful selection and training process, the students are placed in public school classrooms to assist teachers and students. The program depends critically on close co-operation between The Discovery Institute and the faculty and administration at the schools. Teaching Scholars are placed in all grades from K-12. They are paid \$10 per hour, and typically work 10-12 hours per week for 11 or 12 weeks per semester. Typically there are 160-180 in the field at any one time; over the 8 years analyzed in this report (1998-2006), almost 1200 Teaching Scholars were active.

To qualify to be a Teaching Scholar, a college student must have at least 12 college credits and a GPA > 3.00. Students can begin working as a Teaching Scholar as early as the second semester of their freshman year. Teaching Scholars can also work in the summer, at the summer courses in the public schools and at the Discovery Institute's dual-enrollment courses on the CSI campus.

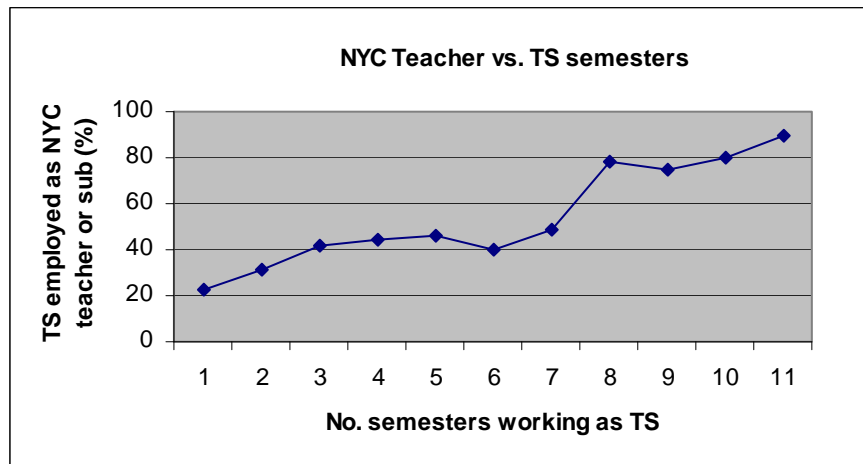
For the college student, the program provides financial support, and consequent retention in college. In the schools, the Teaching Scholar greatly extends the 'reach' of the teacher in the classroom. For the public school student, perhaps the most significant impact is the 'role model' influence of the Teaching Scholar. Many of the Teaching Scholars are from underserved populations, and many of them are returning to the same high school from which they recently graduated. In some ESL classes they can provide a desperately needed link between the student and the course material. They serve as living proof that it is possible to succeed in college. It has been said of the Teaching Scholar program that every dollar is spent at least twice, once in college and again in the public school.

In this particular study we attempt to address another outcome of the Teaching Scholar program: how many of the Teaching Scholars go on to become teachers themselves. By selection, these students were not considering teaching as a career originally. From anecdotal evidence, most of them had not settled on any particular career. They took the Teaching Scholar position because of the pay, and because it was better than working at other available jobs.

In summer 2006, The Discovery Institute compiled a database of 1193 students who had worked, or were working, as Teaching Scholars. In September 2007, NYC DOE matched the list of Teaching Scholars against its records for permanent full-time teachers

in the NYC public schools. Of the 1193, 243 were found to be permanent full-time teachers. In July 2008, NYC DOE went further, and matched the list of Teaching Scholars against the employment records for substitute teachers. (The usual path into a permanent job is to get licensed as a sub, and work until a permanent position opens up.) Of the 1193 Teaching Scholars, another 174 were listed as substitute teachers. Of the 1193 college students who worked as Teaching Scholars, 417, or 35%, went on to teach in NYC public schools, as either a full-time teacher or a substitute teacher.

The graph below displays the percentage of Teaching Scholars who became NYC teachers, versus the number of semesters that the student worked as a Teaching Scholar.



Comments on the graph

Looking at the graph, the distribution appears to have two plateaus: one along 40% and the other along 80%. Of the 427 college students with 3-7 semesters as a Teaching Scholar, 44% became NYC teachers. Of the 69 college students with 8 or more semesters as a Teaching Scholar, 84% became NYC teachers.

We speculate that the two plateaus reflect the ‘starting status’ of the Teaching Scholar. Those who started the Teaching Scholar program as a sophomore or a second-semester freshman, and stayed with the program until they graduated after the nominal four years, would typically work 7 or more semesters, assuming that they worked one or two summers. If they extended their college career another year, for whatever reason, they could work two or three more semesters. It seems plausible that these "early starters" comprise the upper plateau, with 84% going on to teach in the NYC schools. They were interested very early, and they stayed with it because they liked it.

Following this speculation, those who started in their junior year, and stayed with the program, typically worked 3-5 semesters, or possibly more if they extended their stay at college. These "late starters" were slower to consider working as a Teaching Scholar,

maybe because the program was not as immediately appealing to them, as it was to the "early starters." Thus, only half as many, 44%, went on to become teachers.

The slow slope up to the first plateau reflects the drop-out rate of students who tried the program for one or two semesters and decided that teaching was not for them. (Note that it's much better for them to find out as a student, rather than as a certified teacher.) The Teaching Scholar program does not push students to become teachers.

Of course, this speculative interpretation of the graph must allow for broad overlaps of the "early starters," the "late starters," and the drop-outs. This present work is considered Phase 1 of the study. In Phase 2 we are pursuing the issue of the 'starting status' of the Teaching Scholars. It would be of great interest to confirm directly from data, that students who start before the beginning of junior year have twice the probability of becoming teachers, as students who start after the beginning of their junior year. We have paper copies of the students' transcripts, during their years as Teaching Scholars. We are now going through the paper records to add the 'starting status' to our database of information about the Teaching Scholars.

#### Notes: Qualifications & Clarifications

- 1) We know that some Teaching Scholars have become teachers in systems other than the NYC public school system. We have anecdotal evidence of individuals employed in NYC parochial schools, and in the school systems of Long Island, Westchester County, neighboring New Jersey, and more distant locales. The actual "conversion rate," of non-Education majors into working teachers, is higher than the 35% shown here. This study is based solely on the employment records of NYC DOE.
- 2) It is very likely that some of the 1193 Teaching Scholars in the database were still in college when the NYC DOE records were checked in 2007-2008. If a Teaching Scholar was a freshman in 2006 she may be still an undergraduate. Also, some Teaching Scholars who switched to teaching as a career pursuit have to take Education courses after they graduate. The courses are required for a teaching certificate, but the students did not take them as undergraduates because they were not intending to become teachers. Any students in the 1998-2006 database who were still in college in 2007-2008 should be removed from the sample. Again, the actual "conversion rate" is higher than the 35% presented by this study.
- 3) A Teaching Scholar can work three 'semesters' per year: fall, spring, summer. A student who became a Teaching Scholar in the spring of her freshman year could work 10 semesters before graduating in the nominal four years. A student who takes five years to graduate could hypothetically work for 13 semesters as a Teaching Scholar. In addition, students who continue into Graduate School in order to take Education courses required for a Teaching Certificate, could work additional semesters as a Teaching Scholar.