



Towards A National Definition of Teacher Residencies

a report from the pathways alliance teacher
residency working group

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about this document

[The Pathways Alliance](#), a national coalition of leading organizations dedicated to supporting and implementing accessible, inclusive, quality educator preparation pathways, has developed this definition of teacher residencies to help clarify the field's use of the term. Our intention with this document is twofold: To support local partnership discussions about residency design and improvements and to provide state, regional, and federal leaders with a condensed yet thorough definition to guide policies that can support high-quality residencies to attract, prepare, and retain a robust and diverse teaching workforce.

This document is a strong start to building a shared definition of teacher residencies. At the same time, we know that localities will adapt and may improve on this definition. For that reason, we have produced this definition under a Creative Commons license (CC-BY-NC-SA).¹

The initial draft was co-constructed by a collaborative working group of Pathways Alliance members with expertise in residency development, support, and research. To inform and revise this definition, the working group sought input from other Pathways Alliance members and over 40 external groups and leaders — including districts, preparation programs, state education departments, and national professional and advocacy groups. While we could not incorporate every suggestion, their feedback greatly influenced and enhanced our efforts; we thank our colleagues for their thoughtful support.

residency definition working group

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DEFINING TEACHER RESIDENCIES

Teacher residencies—where aspiring teachers spend an entire year alongside an accomplished mentor teacher while preparing for their chosen profession—have become exemplars of how to shift the landscape of teacher education. Residency graduates typically remain in the field at much higher rates than beginning teachers, addressing problematic turnover disproportionately impacting historically underserved students.² When residencies provide living wages and design for affordability, they attract a diverse pool of teachers into the profession.³ Intentionally-designed residencies can also help meet immediate staffing and instructional needs in schools.⁴ Candidate enrollment in residencies is increasing, too—a particularly promising trend amid declining teacher education enrollments.⁵ In short, residencies offer a promising approach for recruiting, preparing, and retaining teachers, including those from underrepresented backgrounds, who help address persistent educational inequities in schools and districts across the nation.

There is no single “model” for residencies; they are partnerships between teacher preparation programs and school districts that are locally designed to meet the needs of the schools and communities they serve, including in rural, urban, and suburban areas. Residencies can be undergraduate, graduate or certification-only programs. They have been designed to serve candidates attracted to “Grow Your Own Programs,” four-year undergraduate college students, masters-level students, and career changers. Colleges, universities, districts, community colleges, educational service centers, and other providers offer residencies. The range of residency options across the country and the variety of emerging state policies around residencies raises a question for the field: What determines whether a particular pathway is a teacher residency?⁶ **This document provides one answer to that question for leading experts and practitioners.**

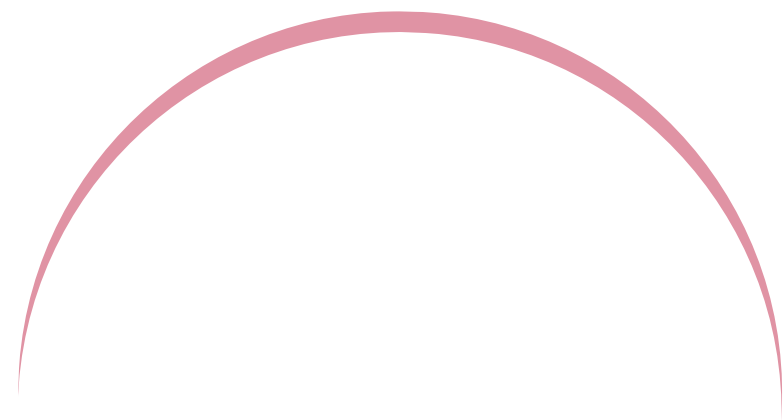


The Pathways Alliance definition of residencies is grounded in the following summary description:

Teacher residencies are preparation pathways that are anchored in partnership and reflect a program pre-service curriculum that is collaboratively designed by local education agencies and teacher preparation programs to meet the goals of 1) ensuring aspiring teachers have affordable, high-quality opportunities and supports while they learn to teach and 2) supporting the instructional and staffing needs of local schools and districts. In their yearlong pre-service clinical practice settings, residents **are not** teachers of record. They work alongside accomplished mentor teachers, experiencing the breadth of roles and responsibilities that teachers engage across the course of a year as educational professionals.

Four key components define residencies:

- Partnerships
- Pre-Service Curriculum
- Resident Experiences
- Mentor Teachers as Key Supports



KEY COMPONENTS OF TEACHER RESIDENCIES

partnership

Residency partnerships are grounded in a shared vision for quality teacher preparation co-constructed with leadership from participating preparation programs and schools or school systems, which we will refer to here as local education agencies (LEAs). Partners develop goals based on what high-quality preparation looks like, linking desired preparation program goals with the needs and priorities of LEAs and their students. Partnerships embrace the twin objectives of strengthening instruction during the residency year for P-12 students and ensuring residents are provided excellent preparation experiences so they become part of a well-prepared, stable, and diverse teacher workforce that will meet the field's future instructional and staffing needs. Partners work collaboratively to enact their shared vision by aligning key program elements and building structures for ongoing collaboration, communication, and continuous improvement. The following elements help ensure the success of residency partnerships:

- **Collaboration:** Residency partnerships regularly collaborate and communicate across key stakeholders to ensure that implementation and continuous improvement processes meet stated partnership goals.
- **Representation:** Partnership representation always includes leadership from preparation programs and LEAs. Additional stakeholders engaged in partnerships often include program faculty; mentor teachers; collective bargaining units or other teacher leadership groups; state education agency

leadership; potential, current, and graduated residents; community members; community-based organizations, and/or local non-profits.

- **Engaged Stakeholders:** Residency partnerships engage stakeholders to collaborate on key program elements such as pre-service curriculum alignment with clinical experiences, recruitment, assessment, candidate selection, and mentor selection and development. Collaborative designs of programmatic elements support both resident and P-12 student learning.
- **Clear Roles and Agreements:** Residency partnerships create clear agreements outlining the roles and responsibilities of all those supporting the residency, including articulation of shared responsibilities and information and data sharing protocols that can ensure a robust assessment of the residency's impact.
- **Program Sustainability:** Residency partnerships build toward long-term financial modeling and support so that quality program implementation is not dependent on short-term grants.
- **Resident Funding:** To ensure the program is financially attractive for a diverse pool of residents, partnerships design affordable programs and identify sustainable funding sources that provide residents with living stipends or wages. Ideally, because residents work directly in schools providing instructional support, at least some resident funding comes from LEAs, reflecting the residency's status as a stable part of LEAs' instructional and talent cultivation and development strategies. Funding models leverage the assets of both LEAs and preparation programs.
- **Ongoing Support:** When candidates are hired by the partnered LEA post-residency, they receive continued support opportunities beyond the year-long clinical placement.

pre-service curriculum

The teacher residency pre-service curriculum includes tightly integrated program coursework and clinical placement experiences and reflects the shared goals of the residency partnership. The pre-service curriculum, grounded in research, embodies the needs and priorities of the partner LEA and its students and addresses certification requirements and professional standards for teacher preparation. The following elements help ensure curricular designs maximize a residency's impact:

- **Shared Curricular Vision:** Working from the goals of the residency partnership, stakeholders collaborate to design a shared vision of candidates' development and learning outcomes within the program's scope and sequence of coursework and clinical experiences.



- **Connected Pre-Service Curriculum:** The pre-service curriculum and the clinical experiences are interdependent and complementary. Coursework sequencing provides a logical scaffold for residents' clinical experiences and aligns with work in the clinical placement. LEAs' priorities, student learning needs, P-12 pre-service curriculum and standards, and the communities and cultures where residents will be teaching influence the scope and sequence of the preparation program's residency pre-service curriculum.
- **Engaged Learning:** Residents have practice-based learning opportunities linked to coursework that address state requirements for certification, professional standards for teacher preparation, culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogies, and the established knowledge base for education, including the science of learning and development. Program pedagogies provide residents the opportunity to learn in the ways they are expected to teach. Course faculty, supervisors, and mentors ensure that the resident learning experiences and feedback are aligned and coherent across the coursework and clinical experience.
- **Integrated Assignments and Assessments:** Assignments and performance assessments for residents are applied to and/or integrated with clinical experiences, identifying and supporting resident learning and development needs.
- **Exploration and Reflection:** The residency provides opportunities to explore additional teaching spaces/learning environments to enable residents to reflect on current P-12 educational practices for both typical and exceptionally developing students, their own professional identities and roles, as well as the range of cultural and linguistic identities of their students.

resident experiences

Residents **are not** teachers of record. The residency structure involves at least a full academic year of preservice preparation while the resident works alongside an accomplished mentor teacher and takes aligned coursework. Programs are designed to give residents the necessary time and resources to engage fully and benefit from the residency experience. The following elements have proved central to effective residency experiences:

- **Clinical Expectations:** Because residents are not teachers of record, mentor teachers continue to act as teachers of record during the residency placement, serving as the lead teacher ultimately responsible for student learning within the classroom. Residents' instructional responsibilities increase over time as their skills develop through the scope and sequence of the program's



pre-service curriculum. The full complement of residency clinical placement experiences and program coursework leads to initial teacher certification upon successful completion of the program.

- **Compensated Roles:** Residents may serve in occasional or part-time paid roles that complement their residency placement (e.g., occasional substitutes, part-time paraprofessionals, tutors, after-school program staff), but those roles are designed to not detract from their primary responsibilities as residents.
- **Full-Year Placements:** Residents' clinical placements align with teachers' work weeks. At least 50% of residents' clinical placement time (using the local teacher's workweek hours as a benchmark) is alongside a mentor teacher, supporting the full arc of student development across the curriculum for the resident's content/licensure area(s) is pursuing. Ideally, residencies follow the P-12 calendar rather than the preparation program's calendar and have placements aligned with LEA partners' grade and content areas of highest need.
- **Mentorship:** Residents' primary clinical placements are with a mentor teacher who facilitates connections between clinical experiences, coursework, and resident performance assessments. Mentor teachers work closely with preparation program supervisors and other program faculty to support residents' learning.
- **Support for Residents' Learning:** Residents are supported in their development of reflective practice and other key knowledge, skills, and mindsets that impact P-12 student outcomes. Residency program faculty monitor residents' lived experiences to ensure coherence and alignment between what residents learn in their coursework and their clinical placement experiences.
- **Engagement in School Communities:** Residents are deeply integrated into their school communities, engaging in the full range of teachers' professional and community activities, such as family-teacher conferences, individualized educational program meetings, grade-level or subject area team meetings, school-wide duties, and extracurricular events.
- **Cohorts:** Wherever possible, residents learn as part of a cohort to facilitate professional collaboration in their coursework and clinical placements.
- **Residency Partnership Schools:** Designating specific schools to host cohorts of residents can ensure residents are prepared in well-aligned, supportive sites. Ideally, such partnership schools are equity-oriented and serve students from diverse backgrounds. In addition to allowing residents to experience the many facets of the school experience beyond a single classroom, partnership



schools can offer opportunities for programs and P-12 school and district staff to work together to support school improvement initiatives.

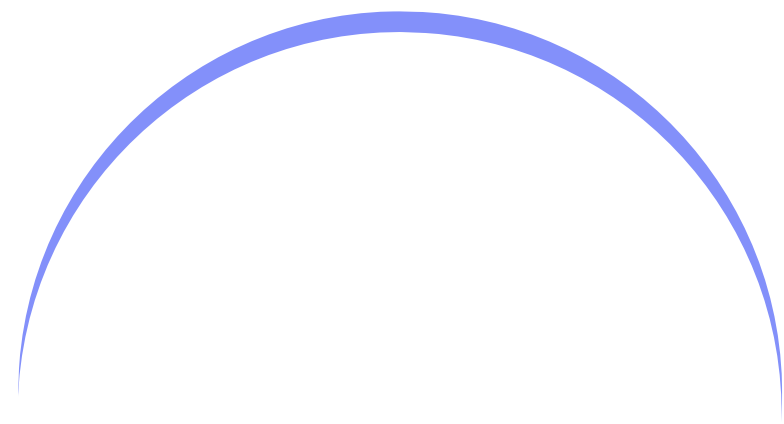
mentors

Mentor teachers are the teachers of record in residents' primary clinical placements and are foundational to residents' clinical practice experiences. Mentors are skilled P-12 teachers who can articulate their instructional practices and decisions and collaborate with, observe, evaluate, and coach residents, monitoring resident progress and providing strategic feedback for growth and development. Residents and mentors use resident performance data and guidance from program faculty to ensure residents are gradually taking on teaching responsibilities in the classroom aligned with the program's expectations for resident learning. A robust framework for mentors' roles in residencies includes the following elements:

- **Compensation:** Mentor teachers are recognized and compensated for their dual responsibilities as classroom teachers and school-based clinical educators in the residency program. Their roles are designed to ensure they have the time to engage with their residents fully. Ideally, mentor teachers' roles and compensation are integrated into districts' teacher professional development and teacher leadership frameworks.
- **Selection:** Residency programs recruit and select mentors who demonstrate student-centered instructional practices that meet the needs of all students. Mentors possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to positively impact student and resident learning and development. Mentor teachers' educational approaches align with the residency partnership's vision.
- **Professional Learning and Leadership:** Mentor teachers engage in professional learning opportunities, collaborating and reflecting with other mentor teachers to promote self-efficacy and enhance instructional coaching, leadership, adult development, and relationship-building skills. Their expertise may be recognized at the school, district, state and/or national level, for example, through National Board Certification, state mentor teacher certification and/or a teacher leadership role in the district.
- **Pre-Service Curriculum and Mentorship:** Mentor teachers receive support in understanding the teacher residency pre-service curriculum and the integration of program coursework with the clinical placement experience. They ensure residents have the time and support to learn, plan, rehearse, and enact the practices articulated in the shared vision of candidate development and learning outcomes.



- **Clinical Experience:** In the classroom, mentor teachers facilitate residents' learning and practice by making their tacit knowledge explicit through modeling, co-planning, co-teaching, and reflection. Mentors ensure residents engage in practice-based learning that focuses on P-12 student learning, prepares them to meet certification requirements, and helps them master professional standards for teacher preparation. Mentors also support residents' development of positive professional relationships and networks across the school and district.
- **Assessing Candidates:** As school-based clinical educators, mentor teachers share responsibility for assessing residents' progress, communicating regularly with program faculty, in particular with field supervisors, to provide meaningful, coordinated feedback to residents about their progress.



ABOUT THE PATHWAYS ALLIANCE

The Pathways Alliance is an uncommon coalition of leading organizations dedicated to supporting and implementing diverse and inclusive educator preparation pipelines, including teacher residency programs. More than ever, high-quality, affordable pathways for teacher candidates are essential to the future of education and our student's futures. We work collaboratively to realize our goals.

One of the initial goals of the Pathways Alliance was to develop a common definition of a teacher residency, which we are proud to meet with the release of this resource. Additional initial goals include developing a resource library and becoming a go-to source for states, programs, LEAs, and policymakers looking for guidance.

Launched in October 2021, The Pathways Alliance is co-led by InnovateEDU and The Learning Policy Institute and includes these founding partners:

American Association of
Colleges for Teacher Education

Prepared To Teach

Deans for Impact

EdPrepLab

The Learning Accelerator

Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College
of Arizona State University

National Center for Teacher Residencies

Public Impact



Institutions and Organizations interested in joining the Pathways Alliance can reach out [here](#). If you are interested in submitting resource(s) to the Alliance for review or inclusion in our developing resource collection, you can submit them [here](#).

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endnotes

- ¹ “Creative Commons — Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic — CC BY-NC-SA 2.0,” accessed July 2, 2022, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/>.
- ² Jessica Cardichon et al., “Inequitable Opportunity to Learn: Student Access to Certified and Experienced Teachers” (Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute, 2020).
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- ⁶ “50-State Comparison: Does the State Create Opportunities for Teacher Residency Programs through Statute or Regulation?,” Education Commission of the States, October 2019, <https://ecs.secure.force.com/mbdata/MBQuest2rtanw?Rep=TRR1907>.



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