Teacher Preparation and The Next Education Workforce

Implementation briefs

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Principal investigator:

    Nicole L. Thompson

Contributors:

    Carole G. Basile

    William Butler

    Kattie Dolan

    Teena Flesher

    Paul Gediman

    Edith S. Gummer

    Brent Maddin

    Robert Morse

    Kelly Owen

    Heather Villarruel

Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College
Arizona State University

education.asu.edu/workforce

Role briefs

Three key roles—the Resident, Lead Teacher and Site Lead—define the MLFTC Professional Pathways residency experience. Each is described in the sections that follow.

RESIDENT

Overview

At MLFTC, the baccalaureate (Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education) is a four-year, eight-term (i.e., semester) program. The freshmen and sophomore years (terms 1–4) contain exploratory and content-area coursework. Students formally enter the teacher preparation program in their junior year (term 5). Juniors conduct part-time professional experiences referred to as internships, and seniors conduct full-time professional experiences known as residencies.

Resident team model

Teams of 2–3 Residents and at least one Lead Teacher were collectively responsible for a larger roster of students (50–60). To become a member of a team, teacher candidates participated in a district interview and hiring processes and, if selected, became district employees while finishing their senior year of college.

To that end, they were held to different expectations than traditional Residents. Specifically, Residents hired by the district:

- followed the district calendar, reporting to work before the ASU semester started, had a much shorter winter break and continued working after ASU classes ended in the spring.

- completed standard district paperwork and trainings.

- were issued district laptops and other technology that all teachers received.

- were responsible for applying for and holding an Emergency Substitute Teaching Certificate from the Arizona State Department of Education (in one of two districts).

- were accountable for other school-based responsibilities (e.g., being on lunch duty, helping to conduct parent-teacher conferences, attending faculty meetings, etc.)

A different day one

As district employees and members of teams responsible for meeting the educational needs of 50+ learners, Residents were meaningfully responsible for working with students from day one. In the strongest implementations of the team-based model, early in the year, teams saw Lead Teachers delivering core components of lessons, and Residents worked with smaller groups of students on differentiated practice. In other cases, after the entire team co-planned a lesson, one Resident would observe the Lead Teacher delivering the lesson to half of the students. Then that Resident would deliver the same lesson to the other half of the students with the support of another Resident. These models contrast with the gradual increase in responsibilities pre-service educators experience in many residency models in which a Resident typically starts out observing a mentor teacher, begins to take on small parts of the lesson and eventually takes over the full responsibility of the classroom by the end of the year.

That said, the amount of responsibility that some Residents had early in the year was sometimes challenging, especially if they were asked to act beyond the scope of the training they had received by that point in time.

> It's probably one of the things that was most ineffective in our approach: We didn't anticipate the massive amount of responsibility that Residents would have on day one.
> - Site Lead

Not only did Residents have a different set of responsibilities, but they also built relationships with students differently. With as many as four educators on the team, many students naturally gravitated to particular individuals.

> The most important aspect is the relationship between adults and children. Providing more opportunity for more adults to be more connected to children, it's a huge win. At the end of the year, [parents] came and found me and said, "This was the best thing that's ever happened for my child. I loved it. My child loved it. He or she had more contact time with adults here. She had more connection." - Superintendent

Benefits of being on a team

Cohorting has always been an important feature of the MLFTC program. Residents placed in the same school or district would often take coursework together and could connect in informal ways during the school day. However, working on the same team, sharing the same students in the same learning space, took these peer interactions to a whole new level.

In addition to support coming from the Lead Teacher and Site Leads, Residents also reported learning from each other and found it helpful to their development. Rather than only comparing themselves to their Lead Teacher, they were able to see themselves relative to the Lead Teacher and other pre-service teachers.

Having other Residents on a team also changed the relationship between a Resident and the Lead Teacher. Campbell and Kane (1999) describe the risk of "cloning" in pairings of mentors and student teachers.[1] Although effective training helps to ameliorate the risk of the mentor expecting the novice to become like them as an educator, there is probably always some of this at least on an unconscious level. Having a team of 2–3 Residents with whom the Lead Teacher is working made cloning less likely. In these cases, Residents not only saw multiple educator styles and pedagogical approaches from others on the team but also, as a group, could more effectively interrogate and collectively process the work of the Lead Teacher.

Money matters

In the previous MLFTC residency model, it was not uncommon to hear stories of Residents who, in addition to being full-time ASU students and Residents at schools, were also working at least one other job on the weekends. This was disproportionately true for students receiving federal financial aid, which highly correlates with being a first-generation college student. Compensating candidates during the residency year is an evidence-based retention strategy (Espinoza et al., 2018; Podolsky & Kini, 2016).[2]

> Being paid was a relief to a lot of us. I know personally, all three years before I started at [School], I was having to work. Before they announced that they were having this program, I was trying to think of what job I was going to get [in order to] balance getting my full experience there and then having to do a job on top of that to live. - Resident

Key differences for Residents between the traditional and pilot models

	Traditional teacher preparation programs	Previous MLFTC residency program	MLFTC team-based residency in pilot
Length of time in K–12 classrooms	Ranges from a few weeks to a full year	Nearly a full year, following ASU's calendar	A full year, following the K–12 school's academic calendar, including teacher orientation
Support	Mentor teachers and periodic visits from university-based supervisor	Mentor teachers and periodic visits from university-based supervisor	Lead Teacher, other Residents on the team; more frequent Site Lead visits
Responsibility	Support the mentor teacher; occasional co-teaching	Gradual increase in responsibility over the year, culminating in leading full days or weeks of instruction	Small-group teaching; frequent co-teaching; and, in many cases, teaching full lessons early in the year
Compensation	None	None	Varies, but many were paid up to $12K

1 Campbell, Anne & Kane, I. (1999). School-Based Teacher Education: Telling Tales from a Fictional Primary School. London: Routledge.
2 Espinoza, D., Saunders, R., Kini, T., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2018). Taking the Long View: State Efforts to Solve Teacher Shortages by Strengthening the Profession. Learning Policy Institute.
  Podolsky, A. & Kini, T. (2016). How Effective Are Loan Forgiveness and Service Scholarships for Recruiting Teachers? Learning Policy Institute.

LEAD TEACHER

Overview
Each Lead Teacher was responsible for deploying a team of 2–3 Residents to meet the needs of a larger roster of 50+ K–12 students. In this role, the Lead Teacher was the teacher of record for all 50+ students. Together the university-based Site Lead and the Lead Teacher were responsible for the growth and development of the Residents.

A different role
There were certainly elements of the Lead Teacher role that were similar to those of a mentor teacher. They still provided modeling and coaching to develop Residents' practice-based skills such as co-planning, co-teaching and co-assessing. They also created space for the Residents to reflect on, and interrogate, their individual teaching and learning.

But there were elements of the role that went beyond the typical job of a mentor teacher. Most obviously, a Lead Teacher led and deployed a team of educators to meet the needs of 50+ learners. Lead Teachers analyzed and thought differently about data. The opportunity to better differentiate instruction was apparent and much more achievable with a team.

> We parallel taught. We team taught. It depended on which set of student teachers I had. My first set, we would parallel teach more often. We used quite a few different models. It just depended on the lesson, and it depended on the abilities. - Lead Teacher

Lead Teachers also had to manage interpersonal dynamics among teams—a job that was more difficult with three Residents instead of one.

> It was really hard for us to find common ground when it came to teaching the students, and it was just really difficult to talk to them about things that were concerning because [others on the team] were so concerned about doing everything themselves that they wouldn't let anybody else do it. - Resident

Working with a team required a different type of meeting cadence—one that demanded, even in its scheduling, more structure. In addition to the more common hallway chats with a single Resident, there was also the need to bring the whole team together on a frequent, recurring basis.

> I had a sacred hour where I'd meet with them every single week. I was much more specific and thoughtful about what I was going to bring up, and when I was going to bring it up, and why I was going to bring it up so that we could cover everything that we needed to cover. - Lead Teacher

Training and support for Lead Teachers
In retrospect, given the additional responsibilities for Lead Teachers, they should have received more up-front training. Before the school year started, district leaders met with school principals and Lead Teachers to explain the program model and expectations and to allow conversation and planning time for teams. Lead Teachers also attended an orientation session with their Residents, led by the MLFTC Site Leads. In that meeting, teams explored teaming structures and had time to plan what their first weeks of school would look like.

Ongoing support for Lead Teachers was much more robust. In addition to personal check-ins with Site Leads, Lead Teachers also attended monthly meetings and professional development throughout the school year

An opportunity for advancement

The role of Lead Teacher gave effective educators the opportunity to develop as leaders by managing teams while maintaining close ties with their own students. Research on teacher leaders supports this role's potential effectiveness as a retention strategy. As Skaalvik and Skaalvik note (2011), the decision to remain in the profession is often related to an educator's opportunities to make decisions, collaborate and feel connected to a team that is working toward a shared purpose.[3] The newly defined role of a Lead Teacher addresses these factors.

In addition to being a more complex and fulfilling job, the role of Lead Teacher also came with a stipend of $7,000–$15,000, a significant sum in a state where the average teacher salary is just under $50,000. The stipend was not simply compensation for working with more teacher candidates. It was intended to recognize the fundamentally different role these educators played compared to the previous mentor model. They were ultimately responsible for twice the number of students and, as teacher leaders, were responsible for how their teams met their students' learning needs.

Key differences between old mentor and new Lead Teacher models

	Traditional teacher preparation programs	Previous MLFTC residency program	MLFTC team-based residency in pilot
Number of pre-service teachers	One candidate to one mentor	One Resident to one mentor	Multiple (2–3) Residents to one Lead Teacher
Number of K–12 students	One class (~25 students)	One class (~25 students)	Two classes (~50 students)
Number of learning spaces in which Residents are working	One classroom	One classroom	At least two classrooms
Instructional K–12 groupings	Primarily whole-group instruction	Primarily whole-group instruction with supporting adult	Frequent combination of whole- and small-group instruction
Amount of differentiation	Some	Some	Much more
Compensation	Varies, but often modest (~$500/semester)	Opportunity to take 3 ASU credits for free + ~$500/semester	~$7K to $15K, variation by district

3 Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2011). Teacher job satisfaction and motivation to leave the teaching profession: Relations with school context, feeling of belonging, and emotional exhaustion. Teaching and Teacher Education, 27(6), 1029–1038.

SITE LEAD

Overview
Deep university-district partnerships have long been a hallmark of MLFTC programs. Site Leads have been a critical part of these relationships, with each Site Lead typically managing the partnership with a single district. As full-time university clinical faculty members, Site Leads had a primary responsibility to observe and provide feedback to Residents and to help develop Lead Teachers. Site Leads also collaborated with university faculty and district personnel to ensure Residents successfully completed program requirements.

Fewer sites means deeper understanding
In the new model, with 2–3 Residents placed on teams, Site Leads maintain the same number of candidates, but those candidates are placed in fewer learning environments. Previously, a Site Lead's case load of 24 Residents would have been distributed across 24 individual classrooms. In the team-based residency model, the same number of students were placed in as few as eight learning environments. Practically, this translated into Site Leads spending less time travelling between schools, building deeper relationships with fewer Lead Teachers and spending more time in fewer classrooms. This allowed for deeper relationships with everyone in a Resident's orbit, including school leaders, Lead Teachers and even K–8 students.

In addition to supporting Residents, MLFTC Site Leads spent substantial time working one-on-one with Lead Teachers—something that was true, but less intensive, in the previous clinical experience model. Site Leads collected data during observations, performance assessments and online surveys to drive decisions on the professional development topics they helped lead.

> The Site Lead would come in and do both formal and informal observations. She was also available if students needed assistance. If there was an issue that I needed to address, she was available for that as well. - Lead Teacher

Creating responsive field-based coursework
Site Leads were also responsible for delivering field-based coursework. Because team-based Residents were responsible for different classroom responsibilities earlier in their residency year, Site Leads made real-time adjustments to the coursework to better respond to Residents' needs. Data from classroom observations and frequently administered Resident surveys drove the adjustments. Some changes required moving parts of the curriculum much earlier in the sequence. Other changes demanded completely new content addressing such issues as how to work as a member of a collaborative team.

> In this new [Site Lead] role, it is going in, checking in with the principal, having more of a focused conversation with admin, saying, "Here is what I'm seeing. Are you seeing the same thing? Any concerns?" and spending a significant amount of time in a school. Because now I have to see both learning spaces. I have to see all Residents on that team actually do something, right? I have to be involved with the special-ed teacher. I have to talk about IEPs and case loads. The communication with the Lead Teachers increases. I observed their model for our Residents and then debriefed with them afterwards. - Site Lead

District and school readiness

Overview

Although the team-based pilots with this pair of school districts took shape during the spring of 2018, the work started well before then. The superintendents from both districts had been in conversations with MLFTC's dean as early as 2016, and both participated in a series of design sessions with MLFTC faculty and staff throughout the summer and fall of 2017. In those sessions, college, district and community leaders explored new staffing models, contemplated who might fill differently defined roles and debated what sort of preparation those educators would need. More than 15 districts and other community partners from the Phoenix metropolitan area participated in those conversations with hopes of ultimately producing outcomes that were meaningfully better for both learners and educators. While most of those districts have ultimately become partner districts where MLFTC Residents are placed on teams, the pair of districts profiled here were the first to implement new models in fall 2018.

There were several factors that enabled these districts to effectively pilot team-based residency models.

☑ Clear purpose

There was a clear and shared understanding of why Next Education Workforce models made sense given particular district priorities.

☑ Strong leadership

Innovative leaders at the district and school levels were willing to question long-held assumptions and reconsider what is "normal" in education.

☑ Deep partnership

There was a history of trust and collaboration between the districts and the university.

☑ Clear communication

Throughout the process, district and school leadership prioritized clear communication—with the community, parents, teachers, Residents and learners.

☑ Quality Lead Teachers

There were professional educators who were interested in taking on more responsibility for larger rosters of students and leading a group of adults. Many of these educators had formerly been mentor teachers.

☑ Comfort with uncertainty

Common across participants in successful teams was comfort with ambiguity and uncertainty. Many decisions were uncharted, and no clear roadmaps for implementation existed.

The importance of school-based leadership cannot be overestimated.

In schools that saw the strongest implementation of team-based models, there were committed principals who understood both the immediate and the systemic objectives of the new model. In cases where building-level principals did not fully understand or appreciate the model, paid Residents were more likely to be moved out of teams to help solve immediate, short-term staffing challenges. This is a familiar challenge faced by many residency models in which Residents are pulled mid-year from their placements and are asked to fill vacant classrooms as long-term substitutes. In the case of team-based models, reassigning Residents posed an even greater challenge because Residents not only were still in the midst of their training but also were playing critical roles on teams specifically formed to support a greater number of learners.

This suggests that success of team-based residency models is largely dependent on the preparation of school and district leaders. These leaders will think about their jobs differently, asking the right questions, embracing ambiguity and empowering teams of professional teachers to best meet the needs of their groups of learners.

Accordingly, based on the pilot experience, MLFTC has built out a self-assessment tool for districts to help gauge their readiness for Next Education Workforce Models.
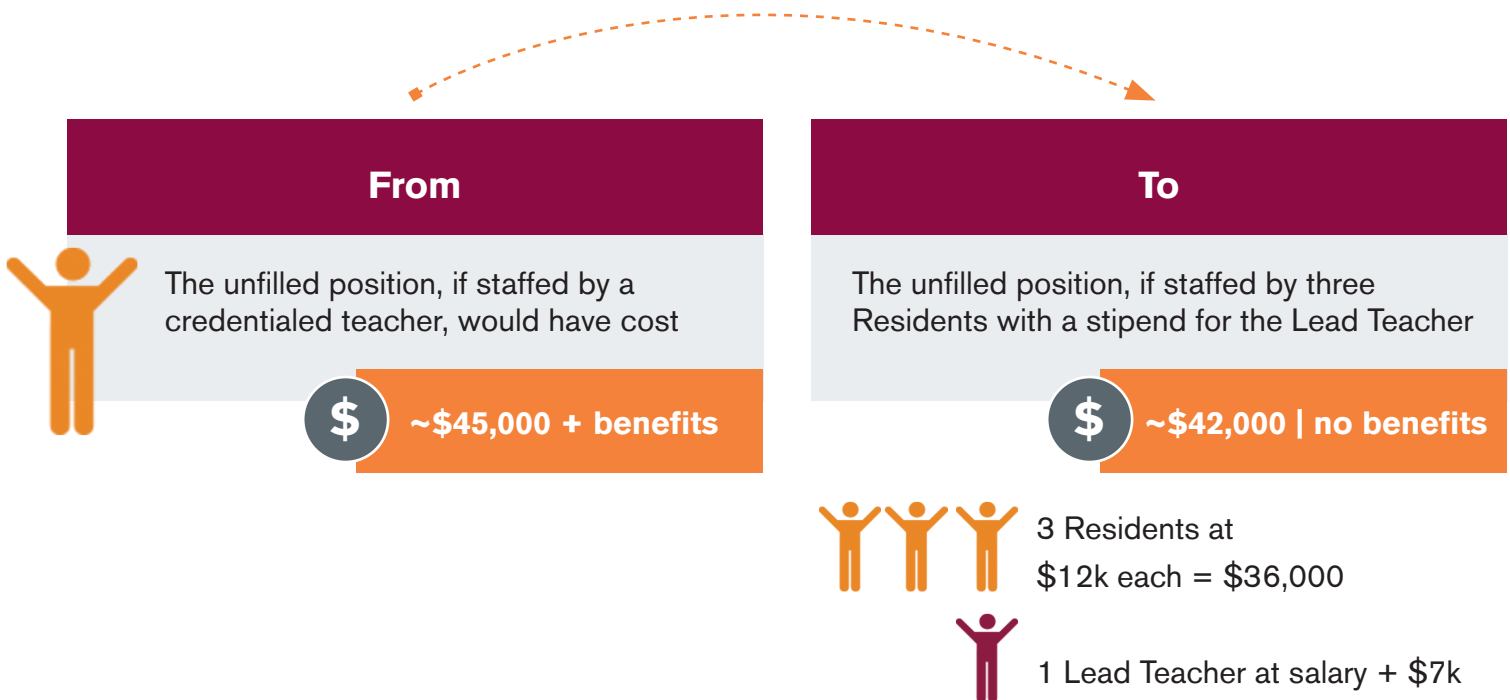
Financial components and implications

Overview

The question of how to make paid residency programs financially sustainable continually challenges champions of the model. Both districts figured out how to sustainably pay Residents by leveraging budget lines from unfilled teacher positions. MLFTC and its district partners are currently exploring other ways to sustainably pay teacher candidates without relying on unstaffed positions. It is also important to note that, while MFLTC is excited that district partners are figuring out ways to pay Residents, the core insight animating Next Education Workforce models is less about paid residencies and more about creating teams of educators who are better able to deepen and personalized learning for students while also creating jobs that are more tenable for educators, especially those new to the profession.

The basics of the paid residency model

The economics of the paid team-based residency model proved surprisingly straightforward in the two pilot districts. In short, instead of hiring a long-term substitute to fill an unfilled position, the districts hired 2–3 Residents to fill that slot. The total salary and benefits that were budgeted for that position were then redistributed to pay the Residents and provide a stipend to the Lead Teacher.

From	To
The unfilled position, if staffed by a credentialed teacher, would have cost	The unfilled position, if staffed by three Residents with a stipend for the Lead Teacher
$ ~$45,000 + benefits	**$ ~$42,000 | no benefits**

3 Residents at
$12k each = $36,000

1 Lead Teacher at salary + $7k

Implications of a paid residency, by stakeholder group

Unsurprisingly, there were a number of clear wins and guardrails associated with implementing a paid, team-based teacher residency.

Residents

Wins

Financial relief
Paying Residents makes them less likely to need to work additional jobs.

Seen as members of the faculty
Paid Residents were more fully immersed in the culture of their schools and were assigned meaningful responsibilities from the first day of the year.

Guardrails

Assignments not ideal for Residents
In one district, paid Residents were more likely than unpaid Residents to be asked to serve as substitutes.

Friction within teams
On a minority of teams, personal friction among Residents and between Residents and Lead Teachers inhibited teams.

Principals / district leaders

Wins

Attracting and retaining talent
The paid residency provided districts another way to attract candidates with the hope of hiring them the following year. It also suggested a new advancement pathway for effective in-service educators.

More support for learners
The pilot model provided clear benefits for K–8 learners, both academically and socio-emotionally.

Guardrails

Poor use of Residents
A minority of principals utilized Residents primarily as a means of filling vacancies without emphasizing the objectives of the teaming model.

New managerial challenges
Managing teams requires a different approach than managing individual teachers. That is as much an opportunity as a challenge.

Teacher preparation program

Wins

Enrollment opportunity
The paid residency model might attract students who would otherwise forgo education as a career path.

Guardrails

Ceding some control
When Residents are paid employees of districts, a college-based teacher-prep program could theoretically sacrifice some control over the daily professional experience of its students.

Teacher prep implications

Supporting Residents and their Lead Teachers differently

During the pilot, MLFTC assignments were flexibly designed to allow for better alignment with course outcomes within the varying K–8 curriculum and placement structures in partner districts. Course delivery took a variety of formats, including asynchronous online experiences and face-to-face sessions taking place in the districts two days each week. Program faculty engaged in teaming models themselves, facilitating dynamic, responsive and just-in-time approaches to instruction and engagement. District personnel joined these faculty teams, as needed, to help make the coursework better align with the districts' curricula, policies and procedures.

In addition to supporting the Residents, Site Leads also worked with Lead Teachers as they embraced the new role of leading and deploying an educator team. Some of this work was pedagogical (e.g., how to better use data to personalize instruction); some was relational (e.g., how to manage conflicts between Residents); and some was related to trying to maintain fidelity to the systemic objectives of the team-based residency (e.g., working in integrated learning spaces rather than in two separate classrooms). It quickly became clear that a more robust orientation to the team-based residency and targeted professional learning around the role of Lead Teacher were necessary. Some of that was delivered on an ad-hoc basis by the Site Leads, and this support formed the framework for what would ultimately become a week-long training provided by MLFTC for all Lead Teachers in the following summer.

Guaranteeing day-one residency readiness

As is true with almost any preparation program, Lead Teachers reported variation in the preparedness of the Residents. That likely would be true in any model. In the team-based model, in which Residents are responsible for working with students from day one, having a set of skills that Residents should possess at the beginning of the year would be invaluable. Many Residents conceptually understood what they needed to do, but may never have practiced those things with learners. Typically, those opportunities (e.g., running a guided reading group) would come in the residency year.

Changes to the junior year internship experiences and undergraduate coursework would make a guarantee of day-one residency readiness possible.

No amount of pre-residency preparation could reasonably prepare Residents to enter their senior year as fully-formed first-year teachers. For that reason, it is imperative that Residents assume roles for which they have been prepared. Guaranteeing Resident readiness is fundamentally a matter of aligning the expectations held by the teacher-prep institution, the district, Residents and Lead Teachers.