

Care for Candidates and the Curriculum

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Abstract

Supporting our teacher candidates begins with aligning the curriculum and clinical experiences for a cohesive framework structured for optimal success. Faculty completed a 15-month curriculum design program aimed at fostering research-based High Quality Instructional Materials that create instructional shifts, embed assessments for progressive monitoring, and center on equity and adaptability for all learners. This included content-based data-driven adaptive learning courses, practice-based pedagogy supporting hands-on learning, and yearlong paid teacher residencies to promote year one readiness. Cycles of coaching consisted of brief walkthroughs, extended observations, pre and post conference discussions, reinforcements and refinements, and action plans to facilitate ongoing success.

Keywords: High quality instructional materials, AVID, practice-based pedagogy, teacher residencies, co-teaching

Care for Candidates and the Curriculum

At a time when teacher shortages are abounding, particularly in rural areas, recruiting and retaining teacher candidates requires considerable care. Our College of Education faculty therefore decided to reconceptualize our educator preparation program by taking bold and strategic steps toward better equipping, encouraging, and empowering teacher candidates in their clinical experiences. Amid a pandemic, faculty met virtually during the spring of 2020 to lay the groundwork for a revolutionary approach that would transform the student teaching experience in every way. Four years forward, that decision has yielded countless benefits to our students, our faculty, and our community, including both local and

remote school districts. Strategic partnerships have served as a cornerstone to our success.

Partnerships

An important step toward transformation included joining the coalition of University to School Partnerships for the Renewal of Educator Preparation (US PREP, 2024), a national organization seeking to impact K-12 students by building teacher competency in historically underrepresented populations. Adopting the US PREP model, we discovered new pathways for giving all teacher candidates access to an exceptional clinical experience that included practice-based coursework and data-driven

programmatic enrichment. US PREP “serves as a dynamic hub of research, innovation, and best practices” and helps to push the boundaries of possibility in teacher preparation (US PREP National Center, 2024).

Progressive Plan

Extending the single semester student teaching program to a yearlong paid teacher residency was a significant advancement, including expanding the program into remote rural districts, offering stipends to selected candidates, focusing on High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM), facilitating co-teaching in the clinical classroom, embedding high rigor AVID® strategies, improving alignment with T-TESS domains and dimensions, adopting an extensive observation and feedback protocol, and structuring the residency seminar for modeling, pedagogical practice, and instructor feedback.

The biggest achievement in promoting the progressive plan was that it not only served to fortify pedagogical expertise, but it also allowed teacher candidates, in the role of teacher residents, to enter their future classrooms with the experience and confidence of second-year teachers. Via multi-district partnerships, we implemented this model throughout the Permian Basin to address issues of teacher preparation and qualification, historic teacher shortages, and to bolster Grow Your Own initiatives. This gave our teacher residents a highly competitive edge when seeking new teaching positions upon the completion of their residency.

Transformational Model

Piloting the transformational yearlong teacher residency model in the fall of 2020 was a critical first step toward ensuring incoming teacher residents, formerly known as teacher candidates, would be better equipped with the requisite skills and needed experience to transform their future classrooms for the better. This authentic residency experience filled numerous programmatic gaps. Advancements included expanding the spring clinical teaching program to a yearlong placement, adding a campus-based residency seminar with targeted work sessions aligned with the teacher resident’s clinical responsibilities, assigning both a mentor teacher and clinical site coordinator, and securing financial

compensation for teacher residents that included both a salary and benefits. In its fourth year, our yearlong paid teacher residency program equips teacher residents by affording them a classroom experience that mirrors their mentor teachers’ experience and fully prepares them for year one readiness.

Working in tandem with the mentor teacher, the teacher resident is exposed to learning procedures and students’ academic and social growth from day one. They experience both the startup and wrap up of the academic year and everything in between. Important to the success of the transformative model has been the consistent feedback from the teacher residents. End-of-year surveys consistently reveal high praise for the program, with almost 100% of respondents saying they would take the residency program again given the chance (Teacher Resident Survey, 2022). As one teacher resident shared in her anonymous survey response, “I liked experiencing a full year from start to finish and time in between to complete all the necessary student teaching components.”

Professional Development

Onboarded before the school year starts, teacher residents have the advantage of meeting and interacting with their mentor teachers during a summer orientation organized by the university site coordinator team. This two-day event allows teacher residents and mentor teachers to become acquainted and begin building relational capacity before entering the classroom together to engage students. Thus, they enter the classroom together as partners.

Through a series of structured activities, teacher residents and mentor teachers discover each other’s teaching styles, strengths, weaknesses, and they cultivate a shared vision for the classroom in which they will both teach. Prior to day one, the teacher resident and mentor teacher have already participated in shared planning and the developing of shared goals. Seen as co-teachers in the classroom, our teacher residents gain the same respect from staff and students as the teacher on record. They are treated by the administration as a team member.

Teacher residents have the added advantage of participating in all professional development initiatives arranged by their assigned campus, as well as becoming familiar with day-to-day administrative functions of that

school and the specific classroom to which they are assigned. Teacher residents also gain the opportunity to participate in their school district's new teacher orientation before the school year starts. Thus, they do not enter the classroom as strangers but as collaborators. One end-of-year survey (2024) respondent shared that the professional development helped her to "explore new strategies to improve" and "to be effective in the classroom in our planning and in how we teach."

Yearlong Residency Experience

Yearlong teacher residents gain more pre-startup experience by assisting the mentor teacher prior with setting up the classroom and preparing the learning environment. They gain keen insights into the organizing and planning that precedes a single student entering the classroom. They also experience those initial moments involving student acclimation when classroom procedures and behavioral expectations are being established.

Teacher residents further experience the transition of the fall to spring semesters and learn how to successfully navigate the two. They serve alongside the mentor teacher during every season, including the testing season, and learn what it takes to help a student progress from the beginning to the end of the academic year. They are involved in that final end-of-the-year push when some students need substantial reinforcements to cross the finish line. One teacher resident's survey response summed up the feeling of the whole: "Although this has been the most challenging year of my life, I wouldn't change a thing. I'll bring the skills and information I gained as a teacher resident into my next classroom." This same sentiment was echoed by other teacher residents in their end-of-year survey responses.

Co-Collaboration

As a co-collaborator, the teacher resident experiences all that the mentor teacher experiences and leaves the residency year with a clear understanding of what it fully means to be a teacher, well beyond the pedagogy. The teacher resident becomes an integral part of the grade level teaching team and co-plans, co-teaches, and co-assesses the assigned classroom students. Collaborative planning provides an important segue for this transitional gradual release teaching model that will allow the teacher resident to progressively assume the role of lead teacher.

The art of co-teaching yields endless benefits as the teacher resident transitions from observing, to assisting, to teaching. As the teacher resident further assists with assessing students, the value of collecting and analyzing the data to drive instruction is understood, along with the importance of differentiated instruction and scaffolding for diverse learners. Teacher residents have the advantage of seeing a full year of student growth as well as being a part of students' progress. This ensures when they eventually step into their own classroom for the first time, without a mentor teacher, they will be better equipped for success.

Expanding the Transformational Model

Having experienced solid success with this transformational approach to student teaching, our College of Education increased our care for candidates in the fall of 2023 by expanding the yearlong residency program to more remote parts of west Texas in partnership with district leaders facilitating Grow Your Own initiatives to meet local teacher shortages. This expansion helped to open doors for students in remote rural areas who might not otherwise have access to a four-year certified teaching program. Remote rural students were transitioned into the yearlong program from their local districts. Strongly supported by their district leaders, our remote rural teacher residents also have the benefit of a district-based site coordinator who mirrors the work of the faculty-based site coordinator. Dr. Michael Valencia, our first yearlong remote site coordinator serving McCamey ISD, emphasized the importance of this opportunity:

The teacher residency program has offered invaluable hands-on experience for teacher candidates. This immersive approach encourages ongoing positive and constructive feedback. Moreover, it presents a unique opportunity for the district to collaborate closely with the candidates, ensuring their efforts align with the district's vision. The overall experience has proven to be immensely successful for both the residents and the district alike.

Dr. Valencia's insights were further supported by the remote teacher resident he mentored. In her teacher survey (2024) she stated that having everything online enabled her "to work a full-time job" while still managing her "mommy duties," adding that learning on a "more flexible and personal schedule" was also a huge benefit. Indeed, the

structure of the remote teacher residency program was designed to do exactly that.

Distance Learning

Importantly, the remote residency program affords the teacher resident the same mentor teacher and classroom for the academic year. With all coursework available online, completed asynchronously, remote rural teacher residents can complete assignments from home and receive grades and feedback from their instructors via an online learning platform. The remote teacher residency seminar is also conducted online, synchronously, to ensure remote rural teacher residents receive the same tools and resources afforded teacher residents who attend on-campus seminars.

The online residency seminar is also data-driven and bridges the academic and clinical experiences with the added support of a faculty program facilitator. Although we are still collecting and analyzing year one data, feedback to date indicates the teacher residents in the remote rural program are flourishing. Thus, equipping, encouraging, and empowering teacher residents beyond boundary lines can be equally successful.

The transformational yearlong program has yielded even more care for candidates as we have expanded from elementary classrooms to preschool, middle school, high school, bilingual education, special education, and Specials classes all at the request of our school district partners. The teacher residents are practitioners in areas of need of the local school districts. Our teacher residents are assigned to all-inclusive classrooms as well classrooms focusing on ELAR, math, and history.

Communication and Feedback

Among the most important care for candidates is the continuous feedback loop that ensures teacher residents are benefactors of ongoing communication from both the mentor teacher and site coordinator to guide them in their academic and clinical journey. In collaboration, the mentor teacher and site coordinator serve as exemplars who model

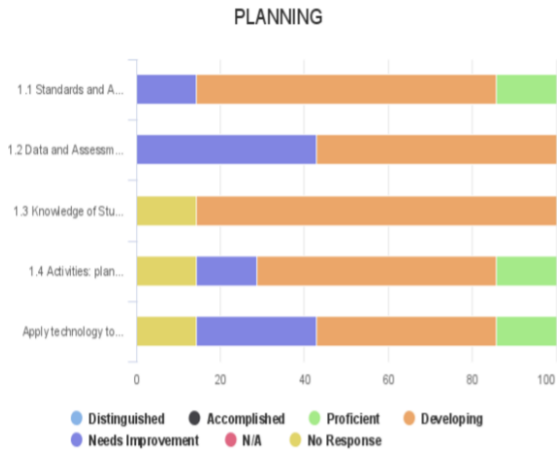
and progressively monitor the teacher resident's progression. The mentor teacher is present to provide daily and on-the-spot feedback while the site coordinator provides extensive feedback gained from walkthroughs, formal performance observations, and the residency seminar. Collected data becomes part of a data-sharing system that affords access to the teacher resident, mentor teacher, and site coordinator to facilitate joint knowledge and responsibility. This feedback supports evidence of the teacher resident's progress as well as highlighting gaps where the mentor teacher and site coordinator can work in tandem to target specific areas of growth.

Residency Seminar

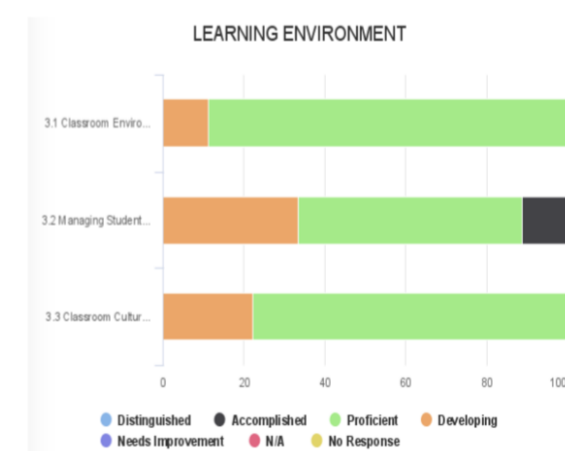
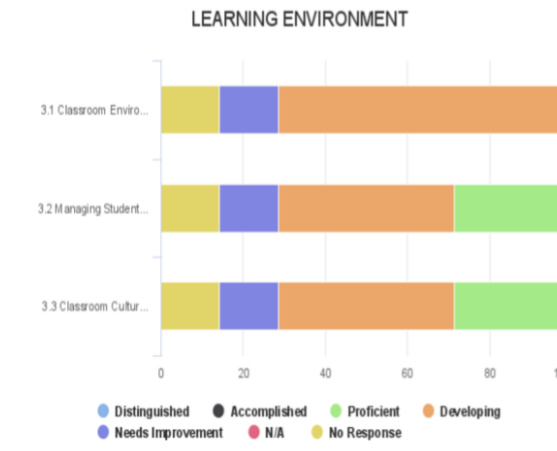
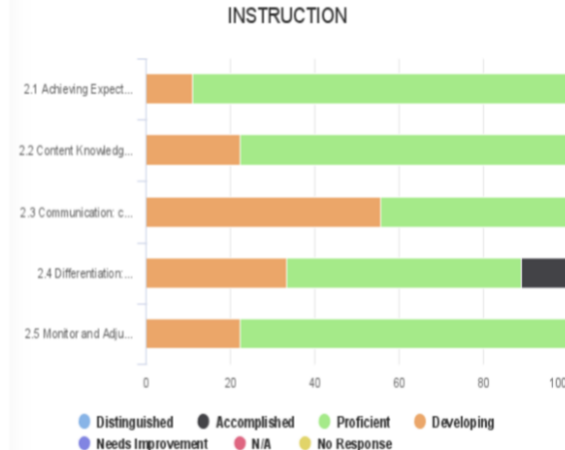
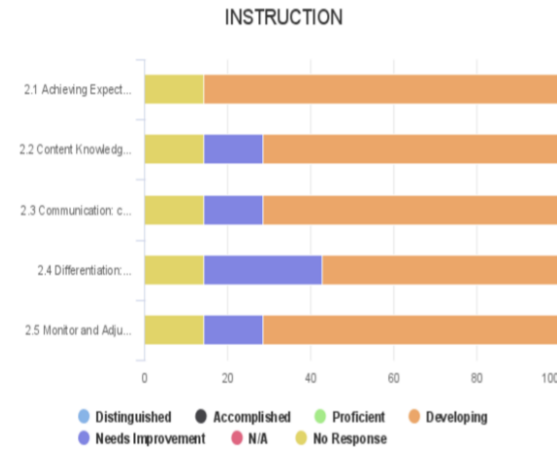
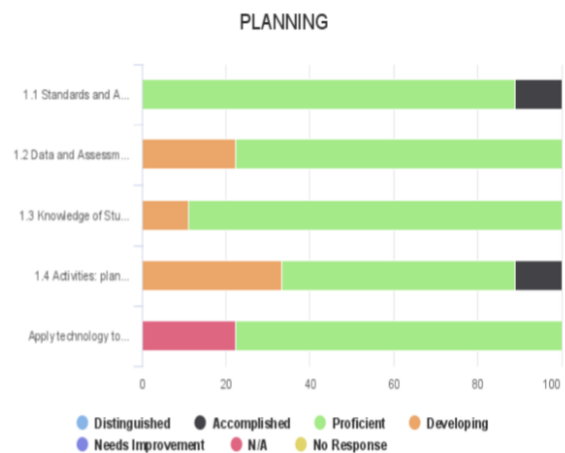
The residency seminar, co-taught by site coordinators, further supports these efforts with a gradual release structure that includes modeling, guided practice, and practice-based pedagogy that affords teacher residents opportunities to practice in a safe environment where immediate feedback is given. It further supports peer-to-peer collaboration and learning that facilitates the success of the teacher residency program across districts. The seminar thus supports the teacher residents' clinical work in every facet. This includes being skilled in the use of HQIM, the implementation of AVID strategies, and structuring successful lesson plans for optimal learning. It further supports better alignment with T-TESS domains and dimensions. Teacher residents are assessed in three domains, including planning, instruction, and classroom environment.

The results of clinical observations from fall to spring showed significant advances in all domains of the T-Tess rubric being evaluated (Texas Education Agency, 2024). This is especially important data as the teacher residents become the lead teacher during the second semester. Teacher residents performed especially well in the dimensions for data and assessment, differentiation of instruction, and classroom environment, routines, and procedures.

Fall 2023 (POP 1)



Spring 2024 (POP 4)



Clinical Observations and Data

As part of the continuous loop of data and feedback, the clinical teacher residency experience includes at least six observation times per each semester, with four unannounced walkthroughs and two formal observations. Beyond the benefits of the weekly residency seminar and work sessions, the teacher resident gains added insight from the site coordinators via these clinical observations, starting in the first 30 days of the academic year and ending in the final month of the year.

Walkthroughs

Over the course of two semesters, the teacher resident is afforded eight informal (15 to 20 minutes) walkthroughs during which the site coordinator looks for specific evidence of co-teaching strategies alongside areas of refinement and reinforcement. These brief observations provide a quick snapshot of the classroom environment and learning to give testament to the teacher resident's progress. Walkthroughs also yield observational feedback to which the teacher resident can respond with reflection and an action plan.

Performance Assessments

As the teacher resident may or may not be in the lead teaching role during these unannounced visits, the longer performance assessments offer a more complete picture of progress. The formal observations (45 to 60 minutes), referred to as POP (pre, observation, post) cycles, offer both the teacher residency and site coordinator designated times of collaboration and retrospection preceding and following scheduled observations. The transformative model used for clinically evaluating teacher residents mirrors the state-level evaluation process certified educators participate in, thereby allowing the teacher residents a real-world assessment representation.

Pre-Conferences

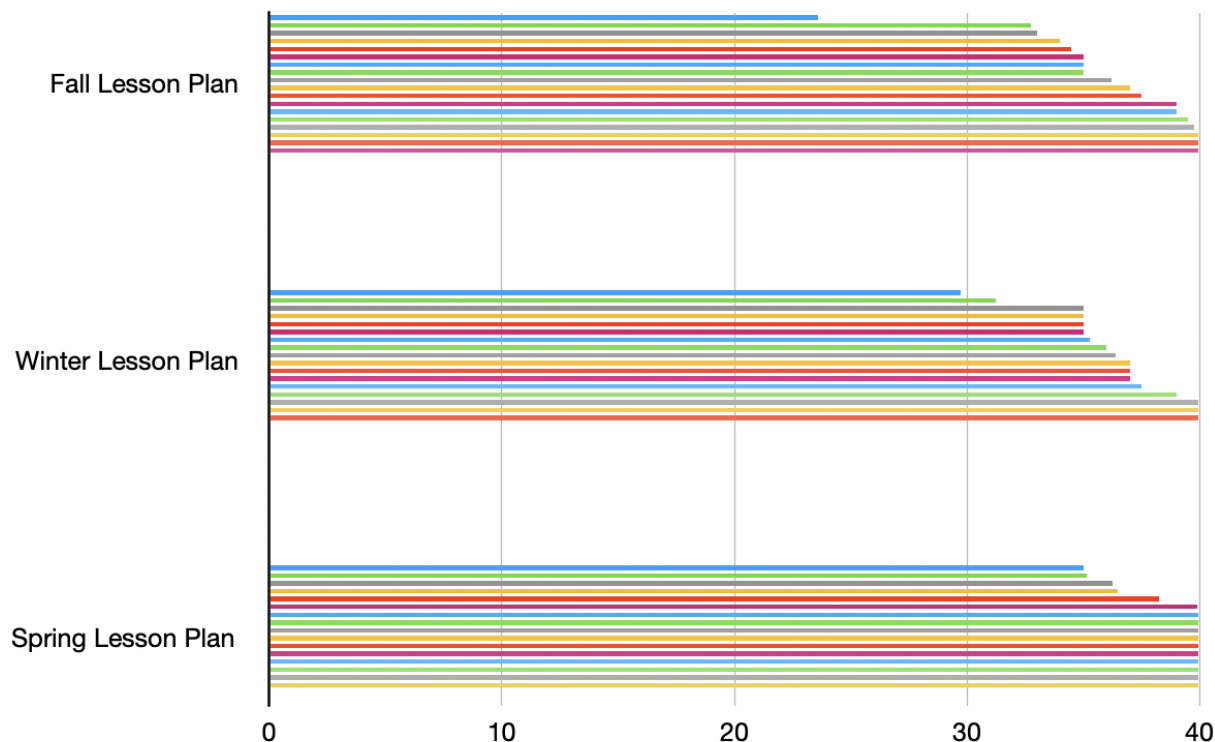
Observation pre-conferences are fully data driven and invite collaborative conversations between the teacher resident and site coordinator during which both evaluate the teacher resident's student pre-assessment scores to ensure the selected lesson plan offers the appropriate rigor, supports differentiation, and is successfully aligned with the T-TESS rubric in the areas of planning, instruction, and classroom environment. The fourth domain, professional disposition, is a part of the post-conference process. Ensuring the lesson plan has embedded AVID strategies further aids teacher residents in the instruction and classroom environment domains as they structure lessons to include collaborative strategies that foster social-emotional learning and diversity of learning in the classroom.

Post-Conferences

Observational post-conferences likewise generate valuable discussions to allow the teacher resident to reflect on what went well (reinforcements) and in which areas improvement is needed (refinements). Alongside the site coordinator, the teacher resident self-assesses the lesson after watching a video recording of the lesson taught. In conjunction, the two precipitate next steps for pedagogical proficiency. The two further explore and evaluate evidence of professionalism as it applies to the current learning period and observational process. All data collected from these processes become part of the data-sharing system, and the teacher resident is an integral part of these processes becoming empowered via student agency and growth opportunities.

The yearlong residency program allows time for the teacher residents to delve deeper into targeted areas including standards, objective and assessment, lesson introduction and closing, AVID strategy, and social emotional learning/DEIJ. Lesson planning skills are developed over a sequence of academic coursework within the College of Education programs.

Teacher Resident Lesson Plan Development



During the fall semester, the teacher residents work through a lesson planning cycle of introduction, modeling, practice, and assessment with their peers during campus-based residency seminars. In fall, scores ranged from 23.6 points to 40 points. (Any score less than 35 points must be corrected.) Teacher residents must earn 35 points on the lesson plan to teach the lesson to their students. The teacher residents also teach the mentor teacher’s lesson plans and their POP cycle lesson plans during this time. The winter lesson plans (scores ranged from 29.75 points to 40 points) and spring lesson plans (scores ranged from 35 points to 40 points) reflect the growth gained via coaching and reflective practice. By spring, 62% of the teacher residents earned a perfect score for their lesson plans, also reflected in their T-TESS domain and dimension scores.

Teaching our teacher residents how to use data for continuous improvement is a cornerstone of our transformation model. One teacher resident survey response (2024) cemented the importance of this practice: “One of the best things I learned was how to implement

expectations and build relationships with my students. I also learned how to use data to drive instruction.”

Action Research Project

An action research project, the Student Perception Survey (SPS) is designed to collect and analyze the perceptions of K-12 students utilizing direct feedback from students to improve pedagogy. Developed by the Colorado Education Initiative (2024) and adapted by US PREP (2024), it surveys student learning, a student-centered learning environment, classroom community, and classroom management to determine how student perceptions impact learning and to help educators become aware of patterns of teaching that may impact student learning. We first implemented this project in the teacher residency program in 2022 and quickly discovered the significance of the information it yields. Responses from teacher residents

I’ve come to realize that my own perception of the classroom and the learning environment may not always align with my students’ perceptions. By intentionally implementing strategies to enhance

student perceptions in key areas such as Classroom Community, Classroom Management, Student Learning, and Student-centered Environment, I can foster positive learning experiences and cultivate strong relationships with my students. (Anonymous, Teacher Resident Survey, 2024)

SPS Checklist

The project begins in the spring semester of the residency after the teacher resident has had time to build community and relationship with the students. The SPS Checklist includes five task cards covering fourteen weeks of learning (Colorado Education Initiative, 2024). Tasks advance from the perceptions surveys, data review, interventions, progress monitoring, and a post-administration survey. The teacher residents first take a self-survey to assess their own perceptions, recording what they think the students perceive about them. The survey is then administered to students. The teacher residents compare their self-perceptions to their students' perceptions. For many teacher residents this is an eye-opening experience into the impact of social emotional learning on student learning.

SPS Analysis

Next, teacher residents analyze the data to determine needed interventions for addressing students' instructional, social, and emotional needs (Colorado Education Initiative, 2024). This further affords the teacher candidate opportunities to learn about patterns in teaching and how those patterns may be impacting student learning. It also gives students a clear voice, increasing their own agency, as well as providing a clear connection to social-emotional learning.

The action research process includes administering the survey, developing an improvement plan, implementing interventions, progressive monitoring, and a post end-of-semester survey. The teacher resident is empowered with specific actionable strategies to implement with their students. During the teacher residents' spring POP cycles, they are expected to include how their survey data and intervention strategies are used to enhance their lesson plan. Teacher residents see the immediate impact of addressing their students' social emotional needs with their students' level of engagement and then the post assessment

data. This powerful feedback loop helps to inform and advance a continuous cycle of refinement and transformation

High-Quality Instructional Material

An important step toward improving the curriculum for our candidates including committing to a 15-month curriculum design program through the University of Michigan's *TeachingWorks* (2024) to ensure transformational change both clinically and academically. This effort included a significant part of our College of Education faculty so that all disciplines were represented.

Curriculum Design

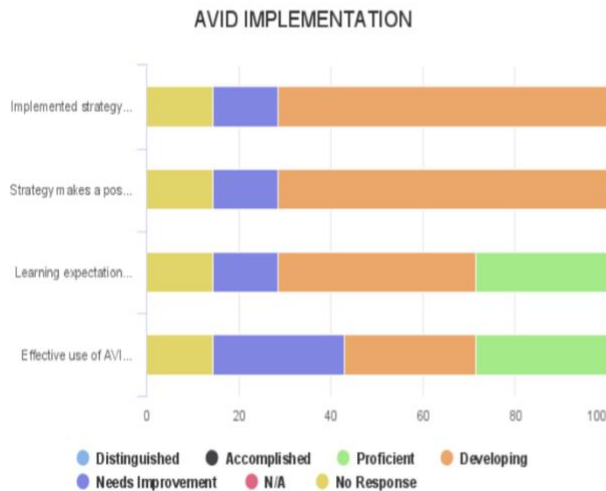
The resources and support the faculty received through *TeachingWorks* aimed at fostering research-based High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) to create instructional shifts, embed assessments for progressive monitoring, and center on equity and adaptability for all learners. Faculty were selected to represent all disciplines and included special education. Faculty gained new perceptions pertaining to the care of candidates through the curriculum and applied the newly gained knowledge, in part, by updating syllabi and courses to include pieces of the HQIM appropriate for their content areas. This shift includes content-based data-driven learning courses, practice-based pedagogy offering hands-on experiences, and yearlong teacher residencies to promote year one readiness.

HQIM Implementation

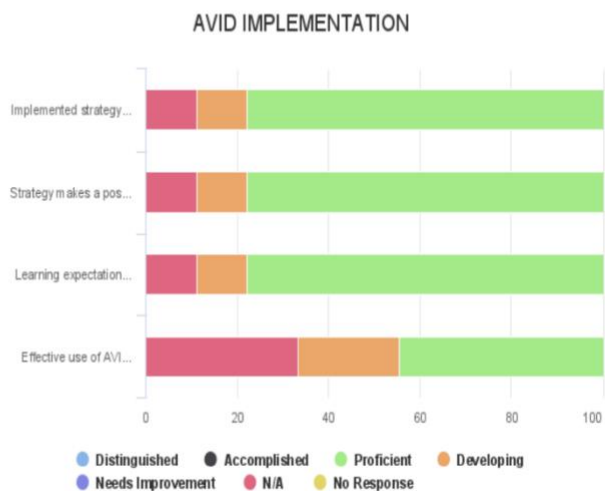
Teacher residents were empowered by completing college course assignments utilizing the HQIM to improve their understanding of the K-12 curriculum. The candidates were able to integrate the HQIM knowledge with their knowledge of AVID high impact strategies to create lesson plans supporting social emotional learning and an equitable learning experience for their students. The candidates experience AVID-infused COE classes both as a learner and as a future teacher. During the teacher residents' yearlong teacher residency, they experienced co-teaching modeled in their university seminar course as well as practiced in their public-school classrooms. Using the co-teaching model from St. Cloud State, the teacher residents are introduced to co-teaching at their teacher residency summer orientation.

AVID

Fall 2023



Spring 2024



The Texas Education Agency (2024) defines full-subject high-quality materials as “those that ensure full coverage of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), align with research-based instructional strategies in each subject area, and support all learners.” Teaching candidates how to evaluate already existing materials as well as self-created materials is an important tool for a classroom teacher. In this assignment, candidates compared a local ISD word ladder lesson, a Teacher Pay Teacher word ladder lesson and their own word ladder lesson using the Curriculum Materials Considerations for Use in Teacher Prep document (*TeachingWorks* 2024).

HQIM Analysis

The candidates’ grades were based on the scoring guide the Scarborough Reading strand (Arizona Department of Education, 2024), one appropriate ELAR TEKS, word ladder and separate answer key, and how the word ladder addresses students’ needs, T-TESS Domain 2: Instruction (Texas Education Association, 2024). The University of Michigan’s *TeachingWorks* emphasizes that, “Students must know that a material does not need to meet all of the criteria in order to be useful” (2024). The *TeachingWorks* team goes on to emphasize, “There are good reasons to use materials that do not meet all of the

criteria...consider materials that do not make clear connections to students' lives and experiences.”

The UTPB word ladder assignment prepared our teacher residents for their lesson plans and Student Perception Survey assignments during their yearlong teacher residency. The ah-ha moments were observed in their comments about connecting lives and experiences to the required academic content provided by their ISDs. Important to this study was, as Dr. Kristina Livingston and Shannah Estep discussed, “Curriculum literate teachers are prepared to see the benefits of using high-quality curriculum, they understand what makes a program high quality or not, they know the resources available for vetting curriculum, and they are a general good consumer of content so they are ready to adapt a lesson to make the appropriate changes without sacrificing what is essential.”

A Co-Teaching Approach

During the first semester of the yearlong teacher residency, teacher residents are provided a scaffolded progression with six different co-teaching models being introduced. To facilitate this progress, faculty created *the Progression of Teacher Resident Development and Release Time* document to support the teacher resident and the mentor teacher each week of the academic year. The mentor teacher and teacher resident begin in fall with One

Teach (mentor teacher), One Observe (teacher resident) or One Teach (mentor teacher), One Assist (teacher resident). They may also include Alternative Teaching. In weeks five through nine of the semester teacher residents are introduced to Station Teaching, Parallel Teaching, and Team Teaching, which become part of the daily classroom routines.

As the teacher residents progress through the diverse co-teaching strategies, they are encouraged to implement these practices into their lesson plans. Faculty assigned as site coordinators look for specific co-teaching strategies during walkthroughs and formal observations. The six co-teaching models supported in our transformational teaching program facilitate the natural progression of learning and gradual release. This recommended progression timeline provides a framework for mentor teachers to successively switch roles to allow the teacher resident to assume the greater role in teaching students.

One Teach, One Observe

This co-teaching approach allows the mentor teacher or teacher candidate to assume the primary responsibility for teaching while the other teacher circulates the classroom to gather specific data on individual students or the instructor. Early on, this approach allows the teacher candidate to learn from modeled instruction before the gradual release of responsibilities. It yields valuable perspectives that can be analyzed and applied when switching roles.

One Teach, One Assist

In this co-teaching approach, either the mentor teacher or teacher candidate assumes the primary responsibility for teaching while the other teacher assists with the lesson. This may include gathering data, monitoring classroom behaviors and assisting students with assignment tasks. This approach also supports post-learning analysis and can facilitate the transitional roles.

Station Teaching

This co-teaching method supports modified instruction in small group settings. The co-teaching pair divides the instructional content into parts to facilitate simultaneous learning. Each teacher instructs one group for

targeted learning. Students rotate spending a set time at each station. Independent practice is also supported by station teaching.

Parallel Teaching

A parallel co-teaching approach supports learning by allowing both the mentor teacher and teacher candidate to teach the same information at the same time. Each teacher instructs half the students using the same instructional material and teaching strategies.

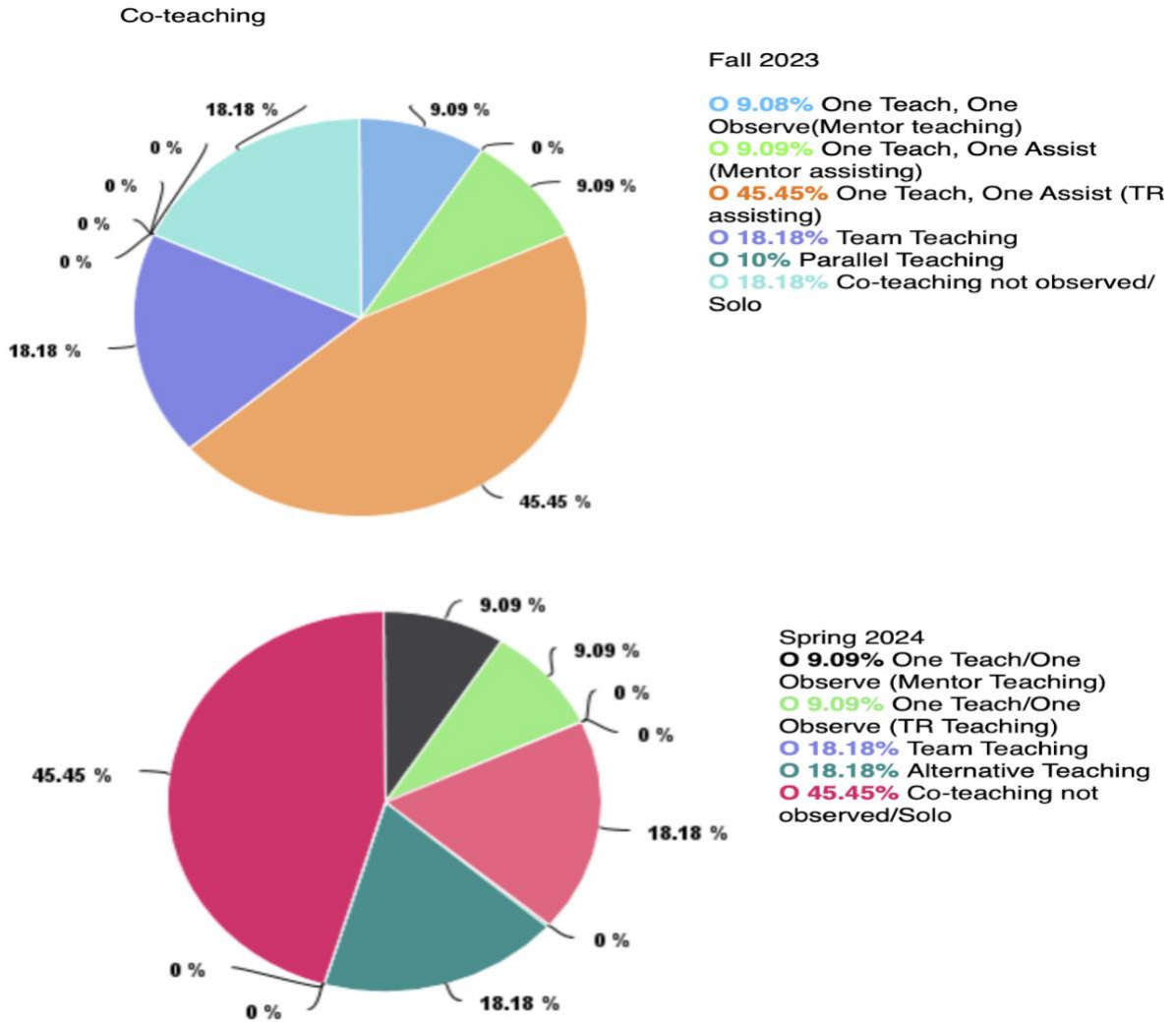
Alternative or Differentiated Teaching

This differentiated co-teaching approach supports a primary teacher in instructing the class while the other teacher provides instruction in a small group setting. Alternative teaching strategies provide two different approaches to teaching the same information. While the learning outcome is the same for all students, the avenue for getting there is different and facilitates a more targeted learning opportunity for small group instruction.

Team Teaching

This co-teaching approach yields well-planned, team-taught lessons that exhibit an invisible flow of instruction with no prescribed division of authority as both teachers' instruction students simultaneously. From a student's perspective, there is no clearly defined leader as both teachers share the instruction, freely interject information, and both are available to assist students with the assignment tasks. The process of including the teacher resident as a co-teacher and co-facilitator of learning adds to the success of the transformative model. As one teacher resident shared in her anonymous survey (2024), "I valued that I was recognized and treated as a teacher through the whole process."

A naturally progressive shifting in the co-teaching roles took place between the fall and spring semesters of the teacher residency program. Whereas the teacher resident was predominantly assisting (One Teach, One Assist) in the fall, Team Teaching and Alternative Teaching represented 36 % of the classroom instruction during the spring semester with an additional 45% of solo teaching by the teacher resident providing release/peer coaching time for the MCL to mentor grade level teachers.



Gradual Release Model

The residency seminar further empowers teacher residents to benefit from the same framework of teaching they are expected to demonstrate in their clinical settings. Teacher residents start with an observational role and gradually assume more responsibility until they become the lead teacher with the mentor in the support role. The progression of development and release schedule helps residents to navigate weekly from assuming general classroom responsibilities to leading small groups, whole groups, and eventually solo teaching.

Data-driven, the residency seminar supports adaptive learning by bringing relevant practices and

concepts into the course. Practice-based pedagogy yields hands-on experiences so that teacher residents learn by doing while simultaneously receiving feedback that offers time for reflection. Teacher residents therefore become reflective practitioners who benefit from assessing their own progress and developing student agency. One final benefit of the data-driven seminar involves the capacity to make possible group instruction for the teacher residents, then targeted breakout sessions led by assigned site coordinators can follow. This guarantees the teacher residents have both collective guidance and specific support that meets the individual needs effectively.

Stipends and Benefits

Additional care of candidates comes in the form of paid stipends that, for most teacher residents, affords them opportunities to fully focus on their residency vs. having to secure other employment. This monumental advancement is critical to our student population since most of our teacher residents are first generation college students working their way through school, many of whom have children and families to support. Thankfully, as the program has grown in real time, so has the compensation.

In the fall of 2020, when the residency program was piloted, teacher residents had the benefit of a \$24,000 annual stipend. Current teacher candidates are receiving up to \$32,000 annually with some of our rural teacher residents being compensated more than \$50,000 during their year of residency. They are further benefited with ongoing professional development days both at their site schools and via the university. Finally, our teacher residents graduate with one year of vested retirement.

The financial support of our teacher residents means all the difference for many of them. Many of our teacher residents voiced similar responses in their anonymous end-of-year surveys (2024):

The yearlong residency model's stipends and benefits improved not only my financial security and career advancement but also reduced stress levels in my life...being paid to do my residency made a huge difference because when I started the program, I was a single mom.

For many teacher residents, this means the paid residency will prevent them from having to secure other employment

options, which subsequently affords them the opportunity to more fully focus on their residency experiences.

Summary

As we continually strive to better equip, encourage, and empower our teacher residents we are fully cognizant that it is not a one stop shop effort. It requires considerable planning, shifting mindsets, and taking risks. It involves the full cooperation of all stakeholders from COE leaders, faculty, district leaders, school administrators, classroom mentors, and teacher residents. It relies on innovation and a shared vision, not to mention taking considerable risks to pilot an innovative teacher education model during a time of physical and economic uncertainty.

Overall, it means giving our teacher residents a more progressive, hands-on and equitable student teaching experience that we were afforded, ensuring their students will have opportunities to exceed beyond our own. By alleviating stressors including financial constraints, and access to assistance, teacher residents gain an array of unparalleled support and guidance, which leads to increased empowerment. That empowerment begins with one small change that makes a world of difference.

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