



US PREP
Renewing Educator Preparation

UTEP CASE STUDY:

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE TEACHER RESIDENCIES
THROUGH STRATEGIC STAFFING MODELS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	02
The UTEP Teacher Residency	03
Piloting Strategic Staffing	04
What is Strategic Staffing?	05
Socorro ISD: Residents as Long-Term Substitutes	06
Goals of Strategic Staffing	08
Enabling Conditions	09
Advice & Lessons Learned	10

Introduction

As states across the country grapple with growing teacher shortages, and seek to build a teacher workforce that is well equipped to meet the diverse learning needs of our nation's students, more and more school systems are turning to teacher residencies — yearlong clinical experiences that pair teacher candidates with highly effective mentor teachers in a K-12 classroom — as a core pillar of their talent pipeline strategy. Teacher residencies are emerging as a highly successful model of teacher preparation, developing candidates that are more diverse, more likely to stay in the classroom longer, and have a greater impact on student learning outcomes.¹

While teacher residencies are growing rapidly, most programs struggle to create a financially sustainable model that also meets the economic needs of all their candidates. Enrolling in a residency program can create significant financial hardship. Some candidates rely on outside income to help cover tuition or living expenses, yet fitting in a part-time job on top of student teaching and coursework is challenging. Recognizing the economic struggles their students are facing, residencies have begun to test drive creative solutions that meet students' financial and developmental needs, while also meeting the immediate staffing and instructional needs of schools and districts. The Miner Teacher Residency out of the University of Texas El Paso (UTEP) offers one such example. The following case study explores how UTEP, in partnership with Socorro Independent School District (SISD), is reimagining staffing models and the role of residents.

“Teacher residencies are emerging as a highly successful model of teacher preparation, developing candidates that are more diverse, more likely to stay in the classroom longer, and have a greater impact on student learning outcomes.”

CLIFTON TANABE, DEAN,
UTEP COLLEGE OF EDUCATION



1. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/teacher-residency>

The UTEP Teacher Residency

In 2019, UTEP launched the Miner Teacher Residency¹ in partnership with US PREP² and two local school districts, El Paso ISD and Socorro ISD. The inaugural cohort included 19 elementary teacher candidates placed at two elementary schools: Mesita Elementary in EPISD and Purple Heart Elementary in SISD. The program offers two pathways -- an undergraduate program for elementary, middle grades, and special education certification or secondary certification, and a post-bacc masters program for all certification areas including secondary certification.

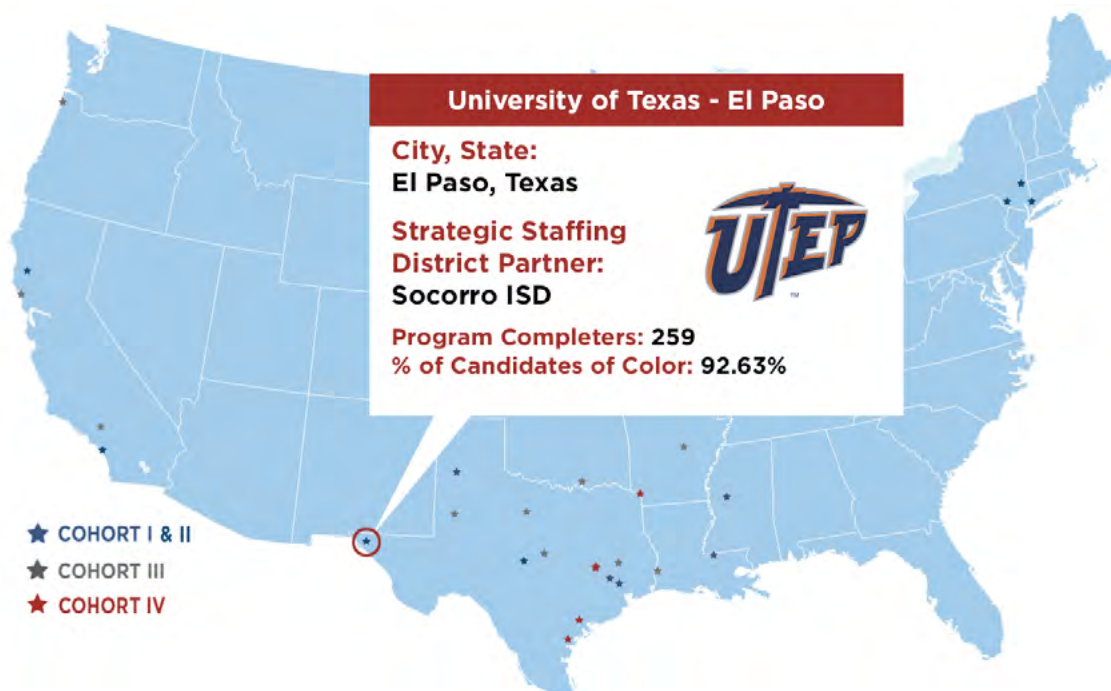
UTEP draws most of its students from the El Paso region, or the Paso del Norte region (which is more inclusive and also refers to Juarez, Mexico and far east New Mexico). More than 80% of UTEP's students are Latinx, over 70% are bilingual, and 62% are PELL grant eligible.³ Most students need to work part-

time, and some are raising children or helping care for family members. UTEP's leadership and faculty noticed that, with the transition to

a yearlong residency, students were struggling to student teach four days a week while also working part-time. "We wanted to figure out how to implement a high quality residency experience that was also

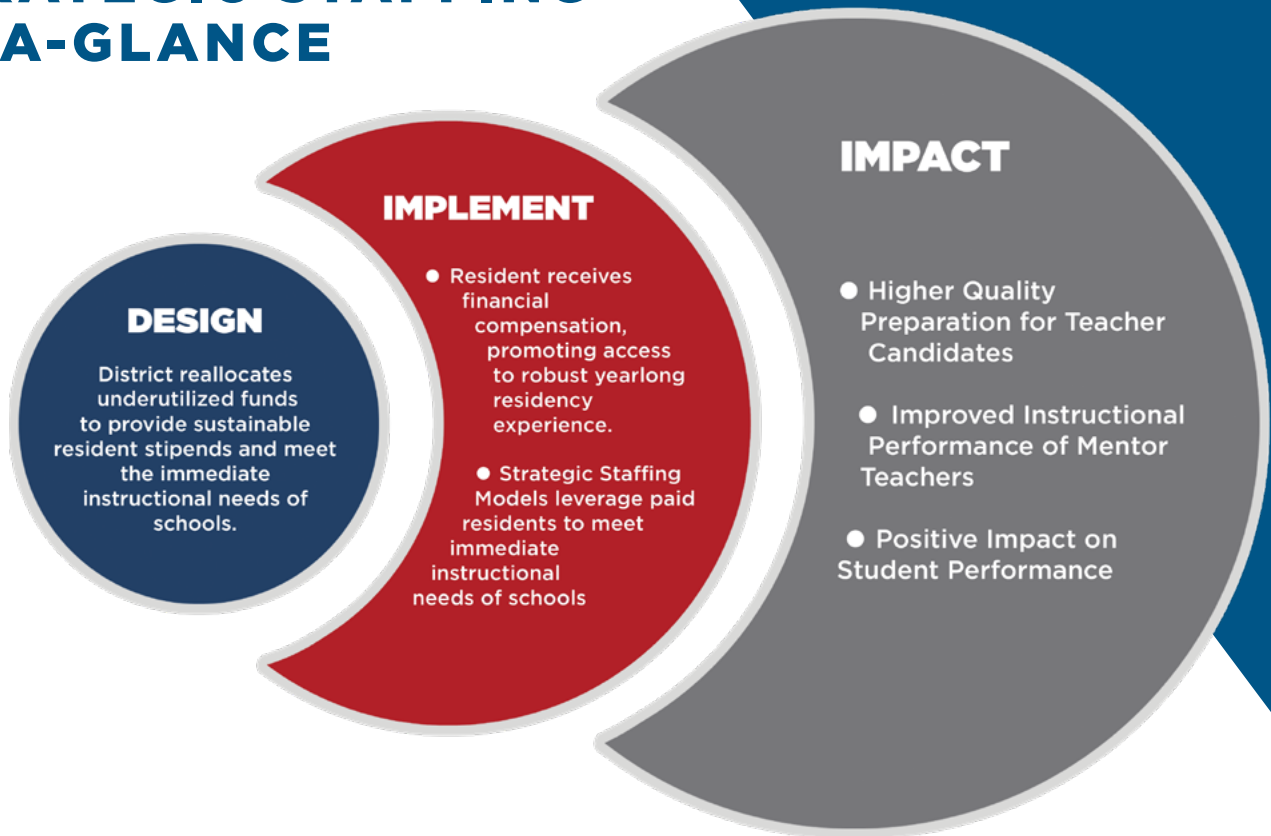


affordable for our students," says Clif Tanabe, Dean of the School of Education. This led to a series of conversations with faculty, university administrators, district partners and US PREP to explore potential ways to provide more sustainable financial support to residents without adding to operating costs.



1. <https://utep.edu/education/css/programs/undergraduate/bachelor-of-science-in-education/miner-teacher-residency.html>
 2. <https://www.usprepnationalcenter.com/>
 3. <http://www.collegeresults.org/collegeprofile.aspx?institutionid=228796>

STRATEGIC STAFFING AT-A-GLANCE



PILOTING STRATEGIC STAFFING

In the fall of 2020, the El Paso Community Foundation and CREEED, through the work of the El Paso Teacher Pipeline Community of Practice, brought together district leaders from Socorro ISD to begin thinking about innovative staffing models (also known as “strategic staffing”) that would provide sustainable financial support to residents in the form of living wage stipends by asking districts to reallocate underutilized funds to compensate residents for fulfilling instructional needs in schools as a part of their residency experience. US PREP played an instrumental role in the process, working closely with district HR and academic leaders to look at data together, discuss teacher candidate and district needs, explore where funding might be reallocated, and surface different staffing models. Socorro ISD identified a staffing model that would best meet their unique needs.

“It’s really about being responsive to district partners.”

- ERIKA MEIN, ASSISTANT DEAN,
UTEP COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

WHAT IS STRATEGIC STAFFING?

Strategic staffing reallocates underutilized district funds to provide sustainable resident stipends. In turn, residents fulfill immediate instructional needs in schools as a part of their yearlong student teaching experience.

Strategic staffing models include:

1

Residents as Substitutes:

The substitute teaching model relies on residents spending at least one day per week serving as a substitute teacher for other teachers in the school, receiving pay through dollars typically spent on substitute teachers.

2

Residents as Long-Term Substitutes:

The long-term substitute model relies on two residents splitting the role of a full-time long-term substitute, receiving pay through dollars typically spent on long-term substitute teachers.

3

Residents as Paraprofessionals:

The paraprofessional model relies on two residents splitting the role of one full-time paraprofessional (teacher assistant), redirecting funding lines that may be left unfilled without a full-time hire.

4

Residents as Tutors and Enrichment Teachers:

The tutor and enrichment model relies on residents spending at least four days before, during, or after school tutoring students, receiving pay through dollars typically spent on tutoring.

5

Residents and Mentor Teacher Teams:

In this model, schools combine two classrooms (about 40-45 students). One highly effective mentor works with three residents to co-teach and support the students in a team-based model of instruction. The ratio of teachers to students in this model is about one teacher to ten students.

Socorro ISD:

RESIDENTS AS SUBSTITUTES

Socorro ISD is the second largest district in El Paso, serving over 47,000 students. SISD is well known as a destination district for its high-quality instruction, innovative programs, and a supportive and united community. The district has a longstanding relationship with UTEP, and has been an integral partner in the residency program, with 31 residents currently student teaching across four campuses. SISD has scaled its residency sites quickly, growing from one to three elementary schools, and bringing on a high school in the 2021-22 school year.



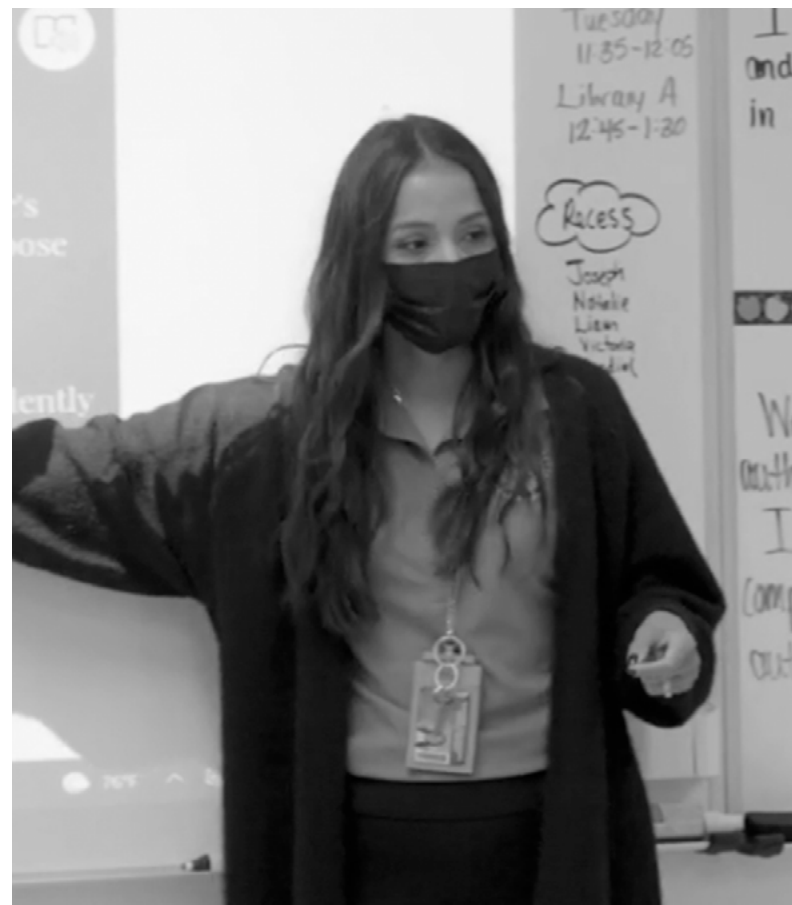
SISD recognizes the value of the residency program, and has been looking for ways to make it more accessible to prospective candidates. *"The best teachers we get come from the UTEP residency program. The residents are in an SISD classroom training under some of our best teachers for a full year. The problem is that a lot of UTEP residents cannot afford to go into a residency without some financial support,"* said Lucy Borrego, Socorro ISD's Chief Academic Officer. SISD was particularly motivated to incentivize candidates to pursue residency as an approach in ensuring the highest quality future teachers for its students.

As SISD began the design process, they asked themselves two questions --

- *How can we pay residents a meaningful stipend?*
- *What model will best meet our immediate staffing needs?*

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LUCY BORREGO
 SOCORRO ISD, CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER



As they explored the needs of their schools, they realized they had a substitute shortage. They noticed it was very hard to retain subs, which was negatively impacting school culture and student learning. They then realized they could solve both of these problems by using residents to meet the need for daily substitutes. Residents would substitute teach one day a week, starting in week 5 of the residency to ensure they are trained to fulfill the substitute role, and co-teach in their mentor teacher's classroom 3 days per week. This would then eliminate the need for external substitute teachers, allowing them to use the sub line in

the district's budget to pay resident stipends. Each long-term sub costs the district \$23,000, which covers stipends for two residents. Stipends are \$11,000 for undergraduates, and \$14,000 for post-bacc residents.

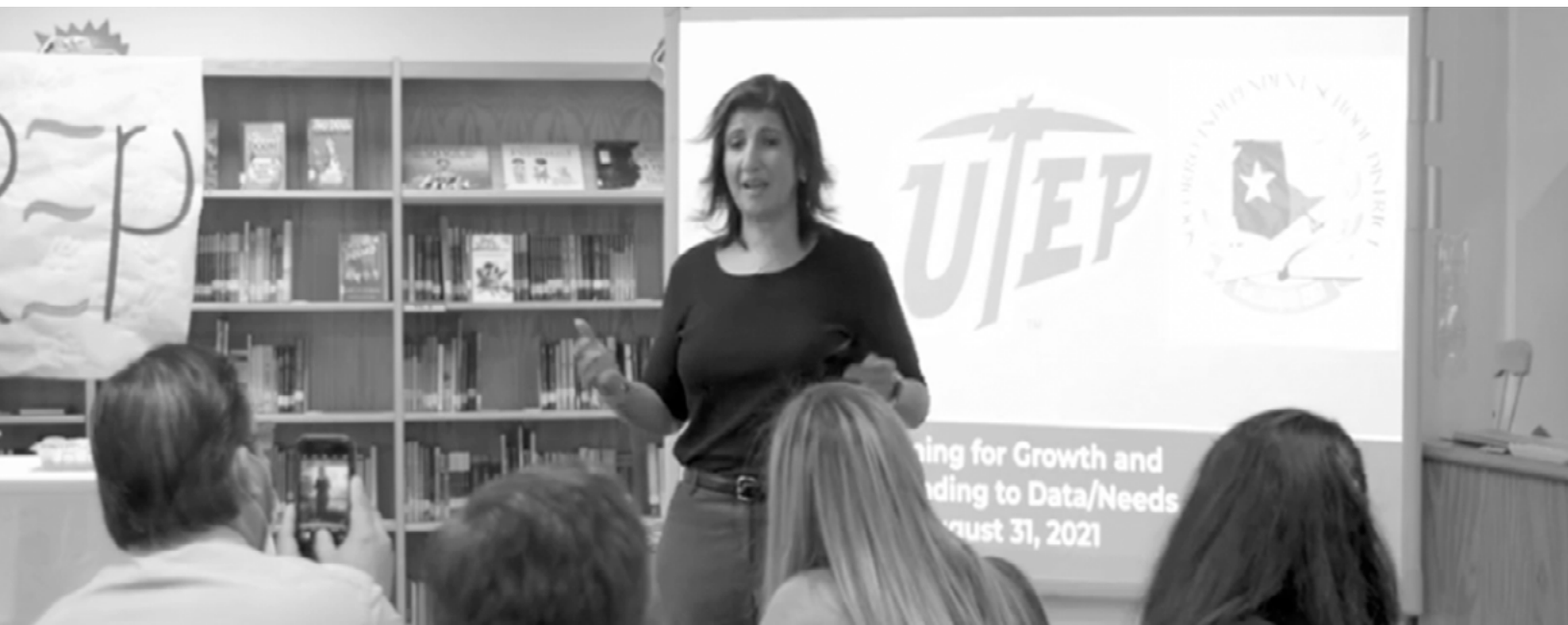
The post-bacc pathway with resident stipends is proving to be an attractive option for candidates due to both earning a living wage and more substantial developmental supports than the alternative certification pathway that expedites them into a teacher of record role.



REDEFINING ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND SUPPORT STRUCTURES

This new staffing model required SISD to redesign the job descriptions of both the resident and the mentor teacher. The design team included members from UTEP, SISD and US PREP. "We wanted to make sure the mentor knew that the residents weren't just being prepared to be day-one ready teachers but also strong substitute teachers. They might be teaching in the classroom next door," said Dr. Malissa Thibault with US PREP, who specializes in supporting coalition members to implement strategic staffing initiatives. They also needed to think through the parameters for residents in this new role. The design team explored a series of questions:

- *When do we think residents will be able to sub?*
- *What training and support will they need to be ready to sub?*
- *How can the mentor help prepare them to sub?*



A critical next step was ensuring that mentors and residents were properly trained to assume these new roles. In August 2021, US PREP hosted a two-day training for mentor teachers and their residents, with the goal of helping mentors understand the new model and their role. The training was also designed to develop mentors' capacity to support their residents. "We asked mentors to identify which co-teaching practices would be the highest leverage for residents to start subbing on their own in week 5," said Malissa. They then held a separate training just for residents to help them understand what to expect as a substitute teacher, and how to navigate scenarios they would likely face, such as: What to do if you are given a skeleton lesson plan. How to respond to students who say "that's not the way my teacher does it." "We wanted to give them an opportunity to practice what to do when they are actually in a classroom subbing," said Malissa. "Part of our work in the upcoming year will be to build capacity at UTEP and SISD so that their leaders can continue these trainings without our support."

To ensure residents have the ongoing support they need once they begin subbing in week 5, SISD has assigned a dedicated staff person to provide on-site support. This includes weekly office hours at school campuses several times a week specifically on subbing.

EVALUATING IMPACT

US PREP is working closely with the design team to develop an evaluation plan to measure the strategic staffing goals. They are in the process of figuring out what the important short-term data points are, such as how to define and measure a successful substitute teaching experience, and how to measure resident effectiveness in this role.

GOALS OF STRATEGIC STAFFING

- Residents will fulfill instructional needs of schools and impact PK-12 students who have been historically underserved.
- Increase access to residency pathways to build and sustain a strong teacher pipeline
- Recruit, prepare, and retain a more racially diverse teacher candidate pipeline.
- Intentionally plan for and scaffold the development of residents to ensure teacher effectiveness.
- Select, develop, and incentivize highly effective mentor teachers
- Reallocate existing budgets and roles to sustainably fund paid residents and mentors.

Enabling Conditions

UTEP and its district partners have invested over many years in acknowledging and creating the conditions to launch strategic staffing with fidelity. These include:

A Closed Loop Community

More than 70% of UTEP teacher candidates transfer from the local community college and an overwhelming majority of students were born and/or raised in El Paso.

Long Standing Partnerships

UTEP has a long history of working with district and community partners that has been deepened as a result of governance structures supported by the implementation of the residency model.

Shared Vision & Commitment to Quality

Stakeholders across the region have a shared vision and commitment to high quality teacher preparation being a cornerstone strategy that ensures a quality education for all students.

Understanding the “Why”

The commitment to quality teacher preparation has been built over time through intentional awareness building leveraging both regional, district, and school-specific data.

Strong Communication & Coordination

Systems and structures have been developed over time to communicate effectively and coordinate implementation of high priority initiatives across the entirety of the El Paso region.

The Right People at the Table

Socorro and UTEP are able to move quickly and reach consensus because they both ensure the most informed decision-makers are at the table, expediting decisions, resources, and adjustments as needed.



ADVICE & LESSONS LEARNED

- **Clarity of Purpose:**
Be clear about your vision and commitment to high quality preparation, and maintain focus on ensuring access for all candidates
- **Persistence and Compromise:**
Achieve collective outcomes by consistently focusing on key goals of budget reallocation and the developmental needs of candidates.
- **Institutional Commitment:**
Ensure the commitment is institutional, inclusive of all programs, faculty, and district partners.
- **Relationship-Building:**
Seek out opportunities to connect and understand the needs of both the district and preparation program.
- **Shared Governance:**
Create structures that promote data sharing and co-ownership of resident staffing and development.
- **Roles and Responsibilities:**
Identify which roles provide input, support decision-making, and take action in each collaboration.



Renewing Educator Preparation

educ.usprep@ttu.edu | 806.834.3533
Texas Tech University | 2500 Broadway, Lubbock, TX 79409

www.usprepnationalcenter.com

