NATIONAL CENTER FOR TEACHER RESIDENCIES

CASE STUDY:

How the Adaptive Teacher Residency Model Is A Pathway For Untapped Pools of Talent

How One Program in Dallas, Texas is Making Teacher Preparation More Accessible

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The National Center for Teacher Residencies (NCTR) has been helping universities, school districts, and nonprofits build and grow teacher residency programs since 2007. While there are a range of model types and sizes within the more than 100 teacher residency programs that we have helped build, the typical candidates in most models have already completed a bachelor's degree and tend to have some experience working with students, but have rarely worked a full-time, yearlong position in a school. However, teacher residency programs may be overlooking a pool of strong candidates that don't necessarily fit the traditional candidate profile, yet have the potential to make exceptional teachers. The untapped pool is composed of candidates that are already working full time in the schools that programs are hoping to help staff. Their position types typically include classroom aides, paraprofessionals, or teaching assistants, among others. Dallas College is an exemplar of building and launching a program that includes a pathway that has successfully recruited and prepared educators to teach in the same schools where they were previously employed in a different capacity.

This case study explores how Dallas College, one of the teacher residency programs that NCTR supports, implemented their Adaptive Residency program to help their local school district recruit and prepare effective, diverse, and culturally responsive educators.

Teach at Dallas College

Dallas College started offering upper-level bachelor's courses in 2021, and in the Fall of 2022, Dallas College launched Teach at Dallas College, a new and innovative model in the teacher residency world, explicit in its commitment to create the most affordable and direct pathway for teacher candidates who have not previously had access to becoming a teacher in Texas.

Teach at Dallas College (TDC) is one pathway within the School of Education at Dallas College, a public community college with seven campuses. In 2019, Dallas Community College consolidated the seven different accredited colleges within their system into one system and a

single college, making Dallas Community College (DCC) one of the largest community college systems in Texas serving 100,000 students in the Dallas region.

Recent Texas legislation allowed community colleges to offer bachelor's degrees in five underserved areas, including education/teaching; Dallas College's successful application to the The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) for a level change allowed DCC to move from offering only associate degrees to being able to offer bachelor's degrees. While this state policy was a major catalyst in creating the conditions for a residency at Dallas College, Vice Provost Rob DeHaas has said that TDC would not have been possible without the institutional support of DCC itself, whose Provost, Chancellor, and Board of Trustees all have a mission and expectation to disrupt systems that do not work.

There are 5,800 undergraduate students within the College of Education; 100 of these undergraduates were teacher residents in the first cohort of TDC which began in 2022, more than 80% of whom are aspiring students of color, multilingual, or first generation.

Untapped Talent Pools

The teacher workforce in the United States is experiencing two major challenges simultaneously—widespread teacher shortages and a demographic mismatch between teachers and students. More than 50% of the U.S. student population are students of color but only 20% of U.S. teachers identify as a person of color.[1]

TDC is looking to address both issues, seeking to open up untapped talent pools in the Dallas region; one of those pools includes current employees in the Dallas Independent School District without a college degree who are working successfully in schools and are otherwise ideally suited to be full time teachers, but lack access to a college degree and the credentials to become licensed. Teach Dallas College saw itself as an option to offer both a pathway to a bachelor's degree and a teaching credential at an affordable price.

In less than two years, the TDC has demonstrated its high appeal to a population of potential teacher candidates who otherwise may not have been able to afford a teaching credential, many of whom are aspiring teachers of color, and are also multilingual, and first-generation college students. The program touts its affordability as a major recruiting tool. The entire four-year program costs a teacher resident an average of $10,000, including textbooks. Additionally, if an interested candidate for the teacher residency is Pell Grant eligible, they can essentially complete their bachelor's degree at no cost and with no debt.

[1] National Center for Education Statistics. (2023). Racial/Ethnic Enrollment in Public Schools. *Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cge.

Affordability is a significant step toward lowering barriers for teacher candidates, and TDC offers other supportive measures for candidates, as well. Providing holistic support, TDC has taken steps to provide childcare and housing financial assistance, as well as helping teacher residents find teacher-of-record positions. Dean of Educator Pathways at TDC Sara DeLano says that while traditional higher education tends to see efforts to holistically support their students as "someone else's problem", TDC sees it as part of their responsibility—even their mission—to support and fully prepare their teacher candidates.

Adaptive Residency Model

Teach at Dallas College has two different teacher residency models, both of which culminate into a bachelor's degree and are designed as pathways for educators who demographically mirror the communities they serve. The "Paid Full-Time Residency" involves the school district interviewing and hiring the teacher resident, then pairing them with a mentor teacher. The teacher resident then completes their degree program's clinical experience requirements in the mentor's classroom. This pathway is most helpful for teacher residents who seek assistance with job placement.

By contrast, the Adaptive Residency pathway is designed for teacher candidates who are already employees of one of the area school districts and who would like to continue working in that school while they pursue their bachelor's degree and teacher certification . In some cases, the teacher candidates who have chosen this Adaptive Residency pathway have been working in the school for many years in an educator role and would like to stay at the same school. The candidates that fit this profile are established members of their school community who have built relationships with staff, students, and families and who already understand the way their school operates and functions. They bring an immeasurable amount of experiential and institutional knowledge to the role of classroom teacher. In many ways, the Adaptive Residency teacher candidates bring value far beyond that of a new-to-teaching TDC resident who has never set foot in the school or specific community they will be serving.

Employees working in the schools without certifications, such as classroom aides, paraprofessionals, or teaching assistants—those for whom the Adaptive Residency pathway is designed to support—have often been unserved (or ill served) by traditional teacher preparation programs because paying tuition and coordinating their schedules present insurmountable obstacles. As is the case with many classroom aides and paraprofessionals that work full time and have families, finding additional resources to pay tuition is challenging at best. Incurring debt to borrow money to complete a degree is also not ideal. However, these educators often share demographic identities with the students in the schools where they work, understand what the teaching profession requires, and have many of the skills needed to do the job of a classroom teacher already in place. In many ways, they are ideal candidates. Without a teacher residency program such as TDC, they are often overlooked.

Flexible Virtual Coursework

TDC's coursework for all teacher residents—those in the Adaptive residency and those in the paid-teacher residency—is intentionally flexible and skills-based. This intentional design is helpful for residents in the Adaptive Residency pathway who are able to complete their coursework while they're working full time. The supervised "residency"/clinical experience occurs during the final year (semesters seven and eight) of the degree program and is integrated into the teacher resident's full-time job through programming that is carefully coordinated with school building and district leaders. The model calls for a gradual release of responsibility for the students from the mentor teacher to the teacher resident. Coursework throughout the program, including the final residency year, can be completed by engaging in a variety of different modalities, with courses offered in person, online, or as a hybrid. An example of a yearlong course sequence for the Adaptive Residency is shown below:

Semester 1

Weeks (Cycle)	Resident Responsibilities	Suggested Co-Teaching Strategies*	Artifacts for Coursework
1-4	At a minimum, during this period, resident assumes partial responsibility for: • establishing the classroom culture/environment • leading classroom routines (attendance, breakfast/lunch, bell work, restroom, dismissal, etc.) • co-planning with mentor teacher. By the end of this period, resident takes lead in: • General classroom routines and procedures	• One Teach, One Observe • One Teach, One Assist	**Building Positive Relationships with Students** • Intro Letter to Students/Family • Video of Whole-class Relationship Building Activity • Positive Interactions Tracker • Advanced Relationship Building Strategy & Reflection **Supporting Students to Meet Classroom Expectations** • Lesson Plan for Engaging Instruction • Video of Expectation Setting for a Lesson • Troubleshooting Strategy & Reflection **Evaluating Assessments for Quality** • Summative Assessment Evaluation • Formative Assessment Analysis • Post-Summative Reflection **Deepening Understanding Through Probing Questions** • Video: Questions for Formative Assessment • Video: Questions to Scaffold Learning • Questions to Clarify Student Thinking (Annotated Student Work) **Integrating Technology to Enhance Learning** • Technology-enhanced Lesson Plan • Student Work Sample **Prenatal and Infant Development** • Prenatal & Newborn Case Study • Young Infant Development Analysis • Older Infant Development Analysis
5-8	During this period, resident takes on an increased role in planning and facilitating instruction with a focus on Math. By the end of this period, resident takes lead in: • Small group planning and facilitation • Math	All the above and add: • Station Teaching • Alternative/Differentiated Teaching	
9-12	During this period, resident continues to take an increased role in planning and facilitating instruction with a focus on Math. By the end of this period, resident takes lead in: • Whole group planning and facilitation • Math	All the above and add: • Parallel Teaching • Team Teaching	
13-16	During this period, resident continues to take an active role in Math instruction and adds the following by the end of this period: • Whole group planning and facilitation • Science		
17+	During this period, resident takes on any related unreleased duties.		

A significant portion of the coursework learning is virtual and asynchronous. Teacher residents work their way through online modules that prompt them to engage in learning experiences that are amenable to that platform. One example of such is the assignment to introduce yourself to the caregivers of the students through a letter, email, webpage, or video after having assessed the typical channels of communication used by the mentor teacher.

The format of the coursework in the final year of the bachelor's degree takes place in the platform Bloomboard; TDC worked with Bloomboard to develop and facilitate the coursework

for the residency year. By moving some of the content from synchronous, in-person class time to an asynchronous virtual platform, the scope of content for which faculty are responsible narrows somewhat, creating space in their schedules to also serve as a "supervisor," observing and coaching them as they develop their pedagogical skills. Having DCC faculty work with the same teacher residents in the college (coursework) space as well as the clinical (school) space reduces teacher resident confusion, which in turn, increases opportunities for learning. At TDC, teacher residents are also assigned a "Senior Success Coach" who provides personalized academic coaching and support to ensure successful program completion.

District and Higher Education Alignment

TDC's residency coursework is anchored by a set of key teaching skills—they refer to them as "competencies"—that teacher residents learn and practice across the residency year. These skills are aligned to the teaching skills named by the Texas Education Agency, called "Research Based Instructional Strategies" (RBIS), as essential for the profession. Involving both the college and school district in the co-construction of teacher-candidate learning targets is a core element of NCTR's teacher residency model, and recommended for all teacher residencies. Opportunities to practice these skills and develop these specific competencies should occur frequently. NCTR calls these key skills "High Priority Resident Practices (HPRPs)," and in the case of TDC, these are the specific skills that their teacher residents will be expected to enact the following year when they are teachers of record.

The design of a residency year curriculum also requires a logical progression for the skill-building that details when, how often, and with whom practice opportunities are to be experienced. TDC has developed a "Progression of Responsibilities" (see figure below) showing each semester's intended experiences within four-week cycles, each focused on an HPRP. Teacher residents use a tool to track their progress, while their mentor teachers also use the tool for suggestions of co-teaching strategies they may use to support resident learning.

PROGRESSION OF ADAPTIVE RESIDENT RESPONSIBILITIES- EXHIBIT C Prior to week 1, adaptive residents actively engage in all campus and district professional development and other faculty activities as directed by campus and district leadership. **Throughout the school year**, adaptive resident will shadow their mentor teacher on all professional development days and required faculty activities (e.g., open house, meet-the-teacher, team planning, parent-teacher conference days, etc.) taking place outside of the weekly cohort professional development.

	Semester 1			Semester 2	
Weeks (Cycle)	**Adaptive Resident Responsibilities**	**Prioritized Skills & Program Competencies**	**Weeks (Cycle)**	**Adaptive Resident Responsibilities**	**Prioritized Skills & Program Competencies**
1-4 (1)	At a minimum, during this period, adaptive resident assumes partial responsibility for: - establishing the classroom culture/environment - leading classroom routines (attendance, breakfast/lunch, bell work, restroom, dismissal, etc.) co-planning with mentor teacher By the end of this period, adaptive resident takes lead in: - General classroom routines and procedures	-Knowledge of Self -Knowledge of Students -Professionalism	1-4 (5)	During this semester, the adaptive resident continues to take an active role in Math/Science while taking on an increasing role in ELAR instruction. By the end of this period, resident takes lead in: -Small group planning and facilitation -ELAR	-Knowledge of Self -Knowledge of Students -Eliciting and interpreting student thinking -Differentiating instruction -Professionalism
5-8 (2)	During this period, the adaptive resident takes on an increased role in planning and facilitating instruction with a focus on Math. By the end of this period, adaptive resident takes lead in: - Small group planning and facilitation - Math	-Knowledge of Students -Eliciting and interpreting student thinking -Differentiating -Instruction -Professionalism	5-8 (6)	During this period, the adaptive resident continues to take an increased role in planning and facilitating instruction with a focus on ELAR. By the end of this period, resident takes lead in: -Whole group planning and facilitation -ELAR	-Eliciting and interpreting student thinking -Differentiating instruction -Professionalism
9-12 (3)	During this period, adaptive residents continue to take an increased role in planning and facilitating instruction with a focus on Math. By the end of this period, adaptive resident takes lead in: - Whole group planning and facilitation - Math	-Eliciting and interpreting student thinking -Differentiating instruction -Professionalism	9-12 (7)	During this period, resident continues to take an active role in ELAR planning and instruction and adds the following by the end of this period: -Whole group planning and facilitation -Social Studies	-Eliciting and interpreting student thinking -Differentiating instruction -Professionalism

Another way that TDC aligns with their partner districts, including Dallas Independent School District (ISD) and districts in North Texas, is the content selection of their methods courses. At the college, teacher residents are introduced to the preK-12 curriculum being taught in schools; in their clinical experience classrooms, they practice the curriculum every day. Dallas ISD classrooms use a uniform set of high-quality instructional materials (HQIMs that were developed by the Texas Education Association (TEA) using Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding. The platforms Dallas classrooms use to teach students are Eureka for mathematics and Amplify for English language arts; which in turn, becomes the content taught to teacher residents in TDC. This alignment supports TDC residents toward familiarity with the actual curriculum they'll be teaching the following year and supports them toward personalizing these pre-established frameworks to enable them to teach to their strengths while meeting the needs of their students.

Cohorts

A number of teacher residency programs in NCTR's Network create cohorts of teacher residents who share coursework together and follow similar schedules across the year. This collaborative and communal experience can be extremely valuable to residents working to become full-time teachers. One of the potential shortcomings to a model like TDC's Adaptive Residency, where

teacher residents remain predominantly in their school community, is the possibility that teacher residents miss out on opportunities to regularly collaborate with the other teacher candidates in their program. TDC recognized this risk and took significant and intentional steps to prioritize the cohort model as best they could.

One solution was to arrange the residents into small consistent groups for a weekly residency class with one faculty member who remains with the group all year. During the weekly residency class, the TDC faculty member facilitates opportunities for their small group of residents to work on coursework assignments, prepare for teacher licensure exams, and participate in faculty-led cohort activities. In addition, Dallas College established a system where teacher residents are paired up and form accountability partnerships within the cohort.

However geography and other factors can make it difficult for those cohorts to meet in person. TDC has been able to arrange with some of their partner school districts to give residents release time to participate in the weekly class in person during the day close to their residency placement. However, other districts—including where many of the teacher residents in the adaptive residency work (Dallas ISD and other partners)---have not agreed to this release time. This means many of the Adaptive residency students take the teacher residency class at night.

Conclusion

The Adaptive Residency at TDC provides the field with a robust example of how a university can create an affordable pathway to becoming a licensed teacher for an untapped pool of candidates already living in the community and working in local schools. NCTR is engaged with prospective teacher residency partnerships who are interested or have begun to build our models that take the best aspects of the traditional post-graduate residency program model and make it work within an undergraduate program. This case study, and TDC's model more broadly, are an important blueprint in helping grow this model in other spaces. A teacher education field that can embrace an adaptive residency structure to their existing offerings will broaden the candidate pool to include more candidates with practical and important experience while also diversifying the racial and socioeconomic identities of classroom teachers across the U.S.