

Teacher Residencies in Arkansas

Early Lessons From Pioneering Universities



Julie Fitz, Jennifer Robinson, and Jennifer Bland

Summary

In Arkansas, new state policies require all educator preparation programs (EPPs) to prepare candidates through a teacher residency by Spring 2027. To inform this statewide rollout, this brief examines the residency implementation experiences of two EPPs that undertook early, grant-funded residency redesign. We describe effective practices and challenges encountered across five areas: program curriculum, clinical supervision, district partnerships, full-year clinical placements, and mentor teacher development. Findings offer actionable lessons for other Arkansas EPPs and for state policymakers working to expand high-quality residency preparation.

Introduction

Aiming to address persistent teacher workforce challenges, the Arkansas Department of Education has mandated that, by Spring 2027, educator preparation programs (EPPs) statewide ensure that all first-time teacher licensure candidates complete a one-year supervised teaching residency (See [What Is a Teacher Residency?](#)). This new policy has prompted large-scale program redesign among Arkansas EPPs as programs have worked to demonstrate alignment with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)'s [teacher residency requirements](#) through applications for residency program approval. These requirements were developed to clarify expectations and create consistency across statewide residency implementation.

This brief shares findings from case studies of the EPPs at the University of Arkansas, Little Rock (UA Little Rock) and Southern Arkansas University (SAU). Both universities received grants and technical assistance to implement research-aligned teacher residency models for a portion of their candidates before the state requirement took effect. We reviewed program documents and conducted interviews and focus groups with over 70 people associated with the programs, including faculty, leaders and staff from partnering districts, mentor teachers, current residents and alumni, and supporting nonprofit and technical assistance providers. Drawing on these data sources, we share lessons about effective practices and challenges encountered during program transformation. These early case studies offer a valuable window into authentic implementation experiences and can inform how other Arkansas EPPs design their programs and help state policymakers identify opportunities to support high-quality residency implementation.

What Is a Teacher Residency?

A teacher residency is a model of educator preparation that, like a medical residency, emphasizes clinically based gradual-release preparation. Residencies differ from traditional pathways in several ways. They typically feature a strong, collaborative partnership between a district and EPP that enables selective recruitment of candidates whose credential pathways match hiring needs. Residents complete a full-year clinical placement, coteaching alongside a mentor teacher and gradually assuming greater responsibility for classroom instruction and management. Simultaneously, they complete tightly integrated university coursework that scaffolds and reinforces clinical learning and prepares candidates for initial licensure.

Research has shown that well-designed residencies in other states have prepared effective teachers, addressed shortages in high-need schools and subjects, attracted more diverse candidates, and increased retention. These outcomes have driven growing interest in residencies as a pathway to a more stable, effective teacher workforce. However, residency programs vary widely in implementation, with implications for the quality of outcomes they produce.

Source: Saunders, R., Fitz, J., DiNapoli, M. A., Jr., & Kini, T. (2024). *Teacher residencies: State and federal policy to support comprehensive teacher preparation*. Learning Policy Institute & EdPrepLab.

Residency Implementation at UA Little Rock and SAU

Prior to the 2023 establishment of the statewide residency requirement, both UA Little Rock and SAU had received grant funding from Forward Arkansas¹ to develop and implement teacher residency programs. Each EPP received a \$100,000 planning grant in 2021 and a 3-year implementation grant in 2022. The implementation grants—approximately \$1.9 million for SAU and \$1.6 million for UA Little Rock—funded faculty buy-outs for curriculum redesign; initial hiring and salary for the site coordinator role (see [Clinical Supervision](#)); and technical assistance, initially through Forward Arkansas’s EPP Design Collaborative and later through individualized supports.² Individualized technical assistance came from multiple sources. Teacher Prep Inspection-US conducted a comprehensive program evaluation to identify program growth areas, and 2Revolutions, a nonprofit, supported institutional change management. US PREP, whose residency model provided the foundations that EPPs adapted to build their programs, offered ongoing design and implementation support.

This brief focuses on the programs developed through these grants: UA Little Rock’s Trojan Residency and SAU’s Rider Residency. Both launched their first cohort in 2023 (SAU in spring, UA Little Rock in fall) with two paid partnership districts that had agreed to provide residents a salary or stipend during their yearlong clinical placement. By 2025–26, SAU had scaled to seven paid partnership districts, while UA Little Rock continued to partner with their original two.

Of note, these paid residency programs serve only a subset of each EPP’s undergraduate candidates completing clinical placements—17% (10 of 59) at UA Little Rock and 36% (38 of 106) at SAU in fall 2026. All other candidates also completed a yearlong residency, but either in an unpaid capacity (i.e., in a district without a paid residency partnership), as a paid teacher of record with a provisional license, or in a paid paraprofessional pathway.

The sections that follow summarize notable changes, successes, and challenges across the areas addressed in DESE’s teacher residency requirements: program curriculum, clinical supervision, district partnerships, full-year clinical placements, and experienced mentor teachers.

Program Curriculum

As part of their residency application, EPPs were required to align their curriculum with the state’s [High-Quality Materials Teacher Competencies](#) and [Ethical Competencies for Arkansas Educators](#). Both UA Little Rock and SAU took this opportunity to also improve alignment with other existing frameworks—including the [Arkansas Educator Competencies and Teaching Standards](#) and [Teacher Excellence and Support System](#) (TESS)—and to engage in more substantive curriculum revision to improve candidates’ residency- and career-readiness. EPPs reported the following outcomes from their process of curriculum redesign.

Emphasizing practical skills in early coursework prepared candidates for their residencies. Faculty shifted preclinical coursework toward the instructional skills candidates would need as teachers of record. For example, both programs added content preparing candidates to engage with high-quality instructional materials (e.g., checking standards alignment, annotating and modifying lesson plans in response to student data, and internalizing lessons for delivery). Both also re-sequenced coursework to introduce, reinforce, and practice key concepts and skills before candidates entered the residency classroom. Both programs continued to refine courses based on different sources of data. At UA Little Rock, faculty used residency performance data to identify areas where candidates would benefit from greater support in their coursework and updated classes accordingly. SAU, relying on district feedback, added a course focused on collaborative practice that would prepare candidates to participate in professional learning communities and team meetings. They also streamlined coursework to embed content necessary for endorsements in Special Education and English as a Second Language—areas of high demand—into elementary and middle school degree plans.

Redesigning preresidency field experiences more systematically scaffolded candidates’ preparation for the residency. Previously disconnected from other coursework, the programs revised preresidency field experiences to give candidates targeted opportunities to apply course-based skills and knowledge in school settings. SAU eliminated stand-alone field experience courses, instead embedding field experiences directly into content courses to foster greater alignment between course topics and field activities and assignments. This change generated positive feedback from candidates, who reported that field experiences have become more meaningful and impactful for their learning.

UA Little Rock maintained separate field experience courses and created assignments designed to prepare candidates for their residency placement. For example, candidates completed a field experience “TESS awareness assignment,” which develops their understanding of state teacher performance expectations and the evidence they will need to achieve specific scores in each TESS domain. This latter component prepared candidates to interpret the feedback they will receive during their residency, since all EPPs are required to evaluate candidates using the Aspiring Teacher Rubric (a version of TESS adapted for preservice teachers).

Securing faculty buy-in for large-scale curricular change presented challenges, but targeted technical assistance helped EPPs build consensus and manage the process. At UA Little Rock, preexisting departmental tensions made it difficult to align faculty around the need for curricular revision. The

School of Education director credited 2Revolutions’s change management assistance with helping her navigate these tensions. Together they developed a unifying vision to motivate change and implemented collaborative structures that allowed faculty input and discussion throughout the process.

Clinical Supervision

Informed by the US PREP model, both EPPs adopted a new approach to clinical supervision by hiring site coordinators—clinical faculty members responsible for conducting walk-throughs and formal observations, coaching residents, and teaching the residency seminar. Site coordinators also plan and facilitate mentor trainings and district governance meetings, making them the primary point of contact for all aspects of the residents’ clinical experience. Forward Arkansas grants funded the creation of these positions on the condition that EPPs would gradually take on full financial responsibility. EPPs met this condition by eliminating prior clinical placement coordination roles and redirecting funds previously spent on adjunct supervisors.

Concentrating clinical supervision in the site coordinator role enabled more intensive and structured clinical support. Both EPPs adopted US PREP’s preconference, observation, and postconference (POP) cycle model of clinical evaluation, with site coordinators conducting two cycles per semester. EPP staff noted approvingly that the POP cycle reframed clinical evaluation as developmental coaching rather than high-stakes evaluation. Each cycle follows a consistent structure. First, at the preconference, the resident and site coordinator review student preassessment data and discuss the resident’s lesson plan. Next, during the observation—conducted in person or via shared recording—the site coordinator collects evidence aligned to the Aspiring Teacher TESS rubric. Finally, at the postconference, the pair discusses the resident’s reflections alongside the site coordinator’s ratings and evidence from the lesson. Site coordinators also conducted unannounced walkthroughs (two per semester at UA Little Rock and four per semester at SAU).

Both EPPs used a residency seminar to provide just-in-time professional learning, although it could be challenging to meet all candidates’ needs when licensure areas were combined in a single seminar. Site coordinators taught weekly or biweekly in-person residency seminars, bringing together residents from one or two partnership districts for ongoing learning during the clinical year. Site coordinators drew on POP cycle data and mentor feedback to understand common resident areas for growth, which they then addressed in the course. They also brought in other topics relevant to residents’ future teaching roles, including district priorities (e.g., science of reading), state licensure exams, and recent trends such as AI use in the classroom.

While district-specific seminar sections allowed site coordinators to tailor content to residents’ placement context, meeting the needs of residents across licensure areas and grade levels proved challenging. For example, a middle school–based resident placed in a predominantly elementary seminar—led by a site coordinator with an elementary background—found that examples and advice often did not apply to their context. Several EPP staff identified improving seminar relevance across licensure areas as a priority. UA Little Rock pursued a different model for unpaid candidates, operating a seminar section specifically for unpaid residents in its middle school licensure program. This design offered more grade-level tailoring, with the tradeoff of less district-specific customization.

Providing high-touch clinical support to residents across multiple districts proved challenging. Site coordinators at both EPPs initially supported only paid residents, who were clustered in nearby paid partnership districts. EPPs have since extended site coordinator support to all residents, with some

necessary modifications. Because both EPPs operate online degree programs, many unpaid residents complete placements far from campus, making physical walk-throughs unfeasible. Both programs developed virtual walkthrough protocols, though site coordinators regretted losing the impromptu conversations with school staff that in-person visits afforded. The number and variability of placement districts also made it difficult to build the collaborative partnerships that enable tailored support, and capacity constraints prevented EPPs from hosting regular professional learning meetings for mentors in those districts. Achieving parity between supports for nearby and distant residents was a stated priority, and both EPPs have continued adapting supervision structures in alignment with this goal.

District Partnerships

Both EPPs operated their paid residency pathways in partnership with a set of nearby districts where all paid residents completed their clinical placements. (See [Table 1.](#)) Partner districts served anywhere from 500 to 21,000 students and spanned rural, suburban, and urban contexts. All were located within a reasonable commute from their partner EPP's campus.

Table 1. Paid Partnership Districts

EPP	District	Residency launch	Paid residents, 2025–26
University of Arkansas at Little Rock	Jacksonville North Pulaski School District ^a	August 2023	5
	Little Rock School District ^a	August 2023	4
Southern Arkansas University	Ashdown School District	August 2023	4
	Camden Fairview School District	January 2024	4
	El Dorado School District ^a	January 2023	15
	Hampton School District	August 2025	3
	Hope School District	August 2023	6
	Magnolia School District ^a	August 2023	11
	Texarkana School District	January 2023	6

^a District staff and site principals from these districts participated in interviews for the present study.

Sources: Interviews conducted by Learning Policy Institute. (2026); Personal communication with Lynze Greathouse, Assistant Professor at Southern Arkansas University. (2026, July 21).

Residency preparation was strengthened by close partnerships between EPPs and districts. While most partner districts had previously hosted EPP candidates for student teaching, the residency model required considerably more substantial district involvement. Partner districts committed to providing a stipend or salary for residents (and for mentors at SAU partner districts) during their placement year, attending regular governance meetings, sharing data to support resident development, improving mentor selection and placement processes, and requiring mentors to attend EPP trainings—all features of the US PREP residency model.

Leaders in these partner districts recognized the hiring pipeline potential afforded by hosting residents and spoke to the benefit of having future hires complete clinical training in their district. [Early outcomes](#) appear promising: In 2024–25, 77% of SAU’s Rider Residents were hired to teach in their clinical placement schools—up from an estimated 20% of student teachers. As one UA Little Rock partner superintendent noted, residency-trained new hires did not need the typical “transitional time period of getting acclimated to the [district] environment because they had a whole year previously to do that.”

Regular, data-focused meetings between EPPs and partner districts enabled ongoing program adjustments and helped build trust. Both EPPs held quarterly governance meetings with each paid partnership district, bringing together key personnel to discuss resident progress, address concerns, and plan ahead. A central activity at these meetings was reflecting on data from walkthroughs, POP cycles, and mentor teacher progress reports, with EPP staff facilitating conversations about how both partners could better support resident development. These meetings also gave districts a venue to raise opportunities and concerns about resident preparation. Both EPPs modified program components in response to such conversations—for example, by adjusting scheduling or incorporating district priorities into coursework or seminars. This ongoing communication fostered relationships that felt collaborative rather than transactional. As one UA Little Rock partner district leader summarized, “I feel like [UA Little Rock is] invested in our district.”

Partnering districts played a critical role by providing residents a salary or stipend during their yearlong clinical placement. While Arkansas does not require paid residencies, multiple residents shared that a full-year placement would not have been feasible without a stipend, and several had previously delayed their clinical placement because they could not afford to take time off work. For candidates outside the paid residency program, faculty at both EPPs described routinely steering those who could not afford an unpaid placement into a non-licensure degree so that they could graduate, obtain a provisional license, and complete their residency as a paid teacher of record supervised by a mentor teacher from another classroom.

Districts paid residents a \$10,000 to \$20,000 salary or stipend for the year. In exchange, residents typically took on additional instructional responsibilities such as substituting or tutoring for set hours each week (a practice called [strategic staffing](#)). Districts used varied funding sources, including general operating funds, substitute funds, and grants. Some hired residents as employees; others paid them as vendors or through staffing providers. UA Little Rock partner district personnel highly valued US PREP’s financial planning assistance, particularly their ability to share funding models successfully used by paid residency districts in other states.

Strong superintendent advocacy was critical to securing and maintaining funding, as committed superintendents could reallocate resources and sustain support year over year. Funding stability was nonetheless a challenge in some districts; superintendent turnover, enrollment shifts, unrenewed grants, and unexpected federal funding freezes all posed risks.

Allowing partner districts to interview and select their own residents helped districts meet their staffing needs. Both EPPs hosted candidate interview days during which district staff could meet, evaluate, and select candidates interested in completing the residency in their district. District leaders greatly appreciated this opportunity, particularly given their financial investment and intent to hire these candidates upon program completion. Unlike traditional placement models—which give districts little voice in candidate selection—this process allowed districts to prioritize residents who seemed skilled or teachable, whose credentials aligned with district staffing needs, and who were likely to accept and remain in a district teaching position.

Both EPPs faced challenges scaling paid residencies to more partners but expanded some practices to partner districts hosting unpaid residents. Both EPPs continue to place many candidates in unpaid residencies each year. SAU found that word-of-mouth about partnership successes could attract new paid partners, but capacity constraints at both EPPs made it difficult to conduct outreach and help prospective districts develop residency funding structures. Even in the absence of paid partnerships, EPPs worked to scale several effective practices that they developed with paid district partners to other districts hosting unpaid residents. For example, they encouraged these districts to interview unpaid residents, and they invited district leaders to attend a modified version of the governance meetings they hosted with paid districts.

Full-Year Clinical Placements

Residents at both EPPs completed two consecutive semesters of residency placement and followed their placement district's academic calendar, which included joining their mentor teacher for professional learning days before and during the school year.

Residency start dates had downstream effects on candidate hiring timelines. UA Little Rock operated a single fall-start cohort, while SAU offered both fall and spring starts to provide flexibility for candidates who became eligible midyear. Spring-start residents finished their programs midyear and could not always be hired immediately as a teacher of record unless a vacancy existed. Districts often addressed this by hiring midyear finishers into support roles for the remainder of the year before bringing them on as teachers of record the following fall.

Districts typically sought to maximize residents' time in their placements, both to support residents' clinical learning and to fill support roles. EPPs developed weekly schedules in consultation with districts that often exceeded state minimum residency hours. At SAU, nearly all partner districts had residents attend placement 5 days per week in both semesters—with time carved out for residency seminar and other coursework as needed—because districts valued the mentored coteaching experience this provided. Additional clinical time also allowed residents to fulfill their stipend requirements by spending part of each week as substitute teachers or tutors.

EPPs faced challenges accommodating candidates caught mid-transition from one- to two-semester placements. Previously, all SAU credentialing programs and UA Little Rock’s secondary and K–12 programs required only a single-semester placement. Switching to two semesters required degree plan revisions that created complications for candidates who had planned for one semester and thus still had coursework to complete when they entered the residency. EPPs responded by moving affected courses online or adjusting their scheduling to make it easier for residents to attend. When that was not possible—for example, when courses were offered by other departments—EPP staff worked with partner districts to build flexibility into residents’ clinical schedules so they could attend required classes.

Experienced Mentor Teachers

Arkansas requires all residents to be paired with a mentor teacher who has at least 3 years of experience, an “effective” rating on their Teacher Summative Evaluation, and—beginning in 2026–27—completed DESE-recognized coaching training. SAU partner districts contribute a \$1,500 per semester mentor stipend, and UA Little Rock pays all mentors \$200 per semester.

Partner districts fostered successful placements through careful mentor selection and matching. After candidate interviews, site principals identified mentors in appropriate licensure areas whose qualifications met state requirements and program-specific criteria (e.g., UA Little Rock requested supportive and enthusiastic mentors who hold high expectations for their students, particularly those from diverse backgrounds). Some districts also advised principals on desired mentor traits, such as strong classroom management skills and professionalism. When making matches, district staff prioritized personality compatibility between residents and the qualified mentor teacher they selected, given the closeness of the working relationship. Once placements began, EPP and district staff monitored relationships and intervened early when needed, sometimes by rematching residents with a new mentor.

EPPs established clear expectations for mentor teachers’ roles to ensure residents would be active participants in their clinical experience. Role descriptions and trainings set firm expectations that mentors would coplan and coteach with residents, sharing instructional responsibilities and gradually releasing greater responsibility to the resident over the course of the year. This expectation prevented residents from being sidelined as observers or assistants, or left to run the classroom unsupervised. One mentor teacher, reflecting on her own student-teaching experience of mostly observing and running copies, described her resident’s experience in contrast: “[She’s] already taught her first full phonics lesson. She’s in on the planning, she comes to [team meetings] and all the other things that happen behind the scenes.”

In addition to helping residents develop their teaching practice, early data from SAU indicate that resident-mentor coteaching may also benefit students academically. [An El Dorado School District analysis](#) found that student performance outcomes for two thirds of resident-mentor pairs exceeded district and statewide averages on the ACT Aspire and ATLAS assessments, although the analysis did not control for other factors that might have influenced student outcomes.

EPPs provided initial and ongoing professional learning to build mentors’ capacity to support residents, recognizing that effective mentoring improved residents’ preparation. Both EPPs required full-day mentor training at the start of the residency and additional training at regular intervals. During trainings, they shared and reviewed important program frameworks, discussed effective coaching practices, checked

in on resident progress, and gave mentors space to connect with colleagues and discuss common challenges. Between scheduled meetings, site coordinators supported mentors informally through regular check-ins and served as point of contact for any issues.

Considerations for Policy and Practice

Insights from UA Little Rock and SAU's early implementation of a teacher residency model can inform how other Arkansas EPPs design their programs and how state policymakers can support effective implementation of high-quality teacher preparation.

Pursue Quality in Residency Design and Implementation

Grant funding and technical assistance allowed UA Little Rock and SAU to build residencies with research-aligned features, including integrated coursework and clinical experiences, high-touch clinical supports, strong collaborative partnerships, and residency year funding for candidate stipends. These features matter: They distinguish high-quality residencies from extended student teaching and drive the outcomes that make residencies an especially promising preparation pathway. As residencies expand statewide, EPPs and policymakers must prioritize these quality elements, recognizing that residencies implemented without sufficient attention to these features are unlikely to deliver on the model's promise. To do so, **EPPs** might focus on the following key areas:

- Revise coursework and preresidency field experiences to emphasize practical skills, scaffold readiness for the residency, and provide just-in-time professional learning as candidates apply their learning during the residency year.
- Facilitate more intensive clinical support by concentrating supervision within dedicated roles (e.g., site coordinators) who are on site and able to devote all of their attention to supporting clinical practice overall and for individual residents. Adopt developmentally oriented evaluation procedures such as the POP cycle.
- Encourage districts to develop paid residencies by emphasizing their function as a teacher hiring pipeline and helping districts identify funding streams, including through strategic staffing, that could be used for stipends.
- Host regular meetings with partner districts to coplan, reflect on data, and improve and align program practices to better meet the needs of residents and the district.

State policymakers can consider developing grant programs that provide EPPs and districts access to technical assistance and fund high-quality residency implementation. Other states, most notably [California](#) and [Texas](#),³ have funded residency development in this manner and offer potential models for grant structures. State policymakers might focus on the following key areas:

- Empower EPPs to continuously improve by subsidizing access to change management technical assistance and/or funding course buyouts that give faculty dedicated time to align coursework and clinical experiences. [California](#)'s residency capacity-building grants, which include faculty release time as an eligible expense, offer a possible model.

- Fund site coordinator positions through a grant program modeled on Forward Arkansas’s or other states’ approaches. For example, [New Mexico’s Teacher Residency Initiative](#) provides \$50,000 per year for residency coordinators. Texas’s [House Bill 2](#) will provide per-candidate “success-based funding” to EPPs tied to graduates’ retention in their teaching positions, which EPPs anticipate will help cover site coordinator costs.
- Support adoption of paid residency models through technical assistance that helps districts design sustainable local funding models, for instance through strategic staffing.⁴
- Fund a baseline residency stipend to help candidates across districts afford living expenses during the residency year. For example, [Louisiana](#), which also requires all teacher candidates to complete a supervised yearlong residency, allocates hosting districts \$3,300 per resident annually to help pay for resident stipends.⁵

Support Well-Trained Mentor Teachers

Residents consistently identify their mentor teacher as one of their most critical sources of support. Mentors shape resident development by modeling effective practice, scaffolding gradual assumption of classroom responsibilities, and providing formative feedback. They themselves benefit from the opportunity to reflect on, share, and update their own practices when working with a resident. To foster positive mentoring experiences, EPPs can work with districts to develop selection and matching procedures that place residents with effective, developmentally supportive mentors and to establish compensation for mentor teachers’ service. EPPs can also set clear expectations around sharing instructional responsibilities with residents and provide training that builds mentor teachers’ capacity as clinical educators.

To promote mentor quality, Arkansas has established qualifications for mentor teachers, including a requirement that mentors complete DESE-approved coaching training. The EPP and district staff interviewed for this study anticipated that finding qualified mentor teachers would become more difficult once the new requirement took effect. Principals noted the financial burden of covering both training costs and classroom coverage while teachers attend. Limited mentor compensation compounded the challenge, making it harder to find teachers willing to undertake the training. This is a tension worth weighing carefully.

Since EPPs are already required to provide training to their mentor teachers, one option for state policymakers is to clarify how EPPs can incorporate the coaching training requirements into their own training and seek DESE approval of it. Doing so could reduce costs for districts and streamline training for mentor teachers. Another option is to publicize an available no-cost approved training through [ArkansasIDEAS](#) and/or provide funding to schools to pay for in-person coaching training and coverage for their employees. It will be incumbent on state agency leadership to make sure that training is both accessible and worthwhile. Policymakers can also encourage participation by communicating that mentor teachers—including those, for the time being, without Lead or Master Professional Educator designations⁶—are eligible for [Merit Teacher Incentive funds](#).

Collect Data to Monitor Program Implementation and Outcomes

UA Little Rock and SAU illustrate that candidate experiences can vary widely even within a single EPP, and variation will likely be greater across EPPs statewide. Both EPPs and policymakers should track this variation systematically. EPPs should monitor internal data to identify preparation inequities, scale promising practices, and document successes. State policymakers should track completion rates and postgraduation retention rates—linking data systems as needed—and update completer and employer surveys to compare outcomes for paid versus unpaid residents and preservice mentored coteaching versus teacher-of-record pathways. Given research linking licensure preparation while candidates are teachers of record to weaker retention and student outcomes, these comparisons can directly inform policy refinements.

Create Opportunities for Shared Learning

This study found that EPPs continue to learn and revise programming as they implement residencies. As EPPs statewide establish new programs, structured opportunities to learn from peers will be valuable. State policymakers could support this by sustaining the EPP Design Collaborative, which has convened EPPs statewide and regionally to learn and share residency implementation strategies. Developing an analogous space for districts or for districts and EPPs—through regional education service cooperatives or existing convenings like the ADE Summit—can enable the sharing of strategies around paid residency models and effective partnership. Particularly when informed by outcome data, such structures can empower EPPs and districts to address shared challenges and continuously improve teacher preparation statewide.

Conclusion

UA Little Rock's and SAU's experiences illustrate both the promise and the complexity of transforming teacher preparation at scale. These examples not only show that transformation is achievable, but also that it requires resources, ongoing collaboration between EPPs and partner districts, and a shared mindset of continuous improvement. As Arkansas moves toward universal residency preparation, targeted state investment can support robust implementation statewide.

Endnotes

1. Forward Arkansas is a nonprofit focused on improving college and career readiness in Arkansas by “advancing public policy, accelerating progress and providing innovative solutions that can potentially be replicated statewide.” Forward Arkansas. (n.d.). *Who we are*. <https://forwardarkansas.org/about/> (accessed 02/19/2026).
2. UA Little Rock also used grant funds to cover resident stipends for the first year of residency implementation in one of their partnering districts, after superintendent turnover disrupted plans to use district funds.
3. For examples from other states, see Saunders, R., Fitz, J., DiNapoli, M. A., Jr., & Kini, T. (2024). *Teacher residencies: State and federal policy to support comprehensive teacher preparation*. Learning Policy Institute & EdPrepLab. <https://doi.org/10.54300/358.825>
4. See, for example, Wojcikiewicz, S. K. (2025). *Developing sustainable teacher residencies in Texas* [Brief]. Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/texas-developing-sustainable-teacher-residencies-brief>
5. Louisiana Department of Education. (2025, August 21). *Resident teacher and mentor teacher compensation process* [PowerPoint]. https://doe.louisiana.gov/docs/default-source/professional-development/2025-2026-resident-teacher-and-mentor-teacher-compensation-process.pdf?sfvrsn=ab37283a_3
6. Personal communication with Matthew Sutherlin, Director of Licensure and Educator Preparation at the Arkansas Department of Education. (2026, April 7).

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