

**TARLETON STATE UNIVERSITY**

# **CASE STUDY:**

**ACCELERATING INTO SCALED YEARLONG  
RESIDENCIES FOR ALL CANDIDATES**



Renewing Educator Preparation

# WORKING WITH US PREP

Tarleton State University is one of a growing number of universities partnered with University-School Partnerships for the Renewal of Educator Preparation<sup>2</sup> (US PREP), a national coalition of teacher preparation institutions. US PREP's mission is to attract, train and retain high-quality, racially diverse teachers for communities that have been underserved across the country and ensure they are ready to teach effectively on day one. These preparation programs are transforming their approaches to ensure teacher candidates meet ALL students where they are and advance their learning by giving them what they need — especially students who have been historically underserved.

Essential elements include:

- Strong district partnerships that include shared decision-making, aligned expectations for candidate preparation, regular sharing of data, coordinated recruitment, placement, and hiring processes that reflect the needs of the district;
- site coordinators that help bridge the university (faculty/instructor coursework) and the district (selecting/coaching mentors, selecting sites, and placing teacher candidates);
- A yearlong clinical teaching experience that allows teacher candidates to experience a complete school year, including strong supervision, regular feedback from trained mentor teachers, coaching, and professional development;
- Practice-based coursework aligned to clinical fieldwork;
- Consistent use of teacher candidate evaluation instruments to measure teacher candidates' competencies and implementation of standards-aligned instruction; and
- Commitment to using data for continuous improvement.

2. <https://www.usprepnationalcenter.com>

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# Background

Founded in 1899, Texas-based Tarleton State University, a founding member of the Texas A&M System, has been and continues to be a critical preparer of teachers for central and north Texas. With campuses in Stephenville, Waco, and Fort Worth, the College of Education produces approximately 230 newly certified teachers each year.

During the Fall of 2019, Tarleton State University brought on a brand new team to lead the College of Education. They hired a new Dean, Dr. Kim Rynearson, and a new Assistant Dean, Dr. Christopher Sloan. They also added a new Department Head and new Director of Educator Preparation Services. From the very beginning, this team brought a desire for change and a commitment to bringing faculty together around a shared purpose and vision for the College of Education. To gain a better understanding of the Teacher Preparation Program's strengths and areas for improvement, they enlisted TPI-US to review the program, looking at everything from how candidates are selected, to the quality of coursework, clinical placements and district partnerships. When the findings came back, it was a wake-up call. "We did miserably in every category," said Dr. Sloan. The results were surprising. They had always received good feedback from local schools saying they prepared strong candidates and candidates liked their program. The TPI-US inspection revealed what they didn't know were areas of improvement for their program. "I was initially defensive, but also realized we needed to do some things differently", said Dr. Sloan. And with a new leadership team in place, there was a unique opportunity to fundamentally rethink what was possible. "We felt like we would try anything."

The leadership team learned about University-School Partnerships for the Renewal of Educator Preparation (US PREP) and the transformation work they were doing with other Teacher Preparation Programs across the country. They participated in a US PREP Learning Tour, where they observed how other teacher preparation programs had transformed their preparation models. This was a pivotal experience that helped them see the potential of how, in partnership with US PREP, they could transform their program. Dr. Sloan was initially hesitant about partnering with US PREP, but quickly realized it was the right decision. "I was the biggest skeptic. Now I'm the biggest champion." Tarleton State dove in with both feet to begin an ambitious redesign effort, with the goal of shifting to a yearlong residency at all three of their campuses over two years.

*With a new leadership team in place, there was a unique opportunity to fundamentally rethink what was possible.*



# The Redesign Process:

## IMPLEMENTING THE RESIDENCY MODEL

In spring 2020, they began preparing for a fall pilot. That following semester (fall 2020), they enrolled 24 students and brought on 2 district partners (Granbury ISD and Huckabay ISD) for the first residency cohort. Residents were placed in Pre-Kindergarten through sixth grade classrooms at Acton, Oakwoods, and Huckabay Elementary, co-teaching all subjects throughout the entire year. When asked about the best part of the yearlong residency mid-way through the first semester, one of the teacher residents in the pilot stated *"I feel like I could get my own classroom right now and be ready. I love seeing my students everyday, and building relationships with them since the first day of school."* The pilot provided a lot of crucial learning about what worked – and what didn't. *"We made a lot of changes in that first year,"* said Dr. Sloan. One of the biggest learnings – many candidates were struggling to pass certification exams. First time passing rate percentages were in the low 80s, placing Tarleton State toward the bottom of all teacher preparation programs in the state, based on the Texas Education Agency's Data Dashboard. Students need a passing score before completing the first semester of their residency (in the senior year). Low pass rates meant that many students would not be able to complete the residency on time, delaying their path to teaching. To address this issue, they instituted a number of changes the following year, including building in a weekly study day and boot camps to help students struggling with licensure exams, and adjusting the timeline of when testing gateways needed to be passed. In partnership with districts, they moved candidates' initial attempt of licensure exams prior to the start of the clinical experience, adjusted courses, and enhanced their overall performance gateways to include measures of candidate readiness to teach in all aspects of the program and in teaching. These changes resulted in a 13% increase in one year.

***"I feel like I could get my own classroom right now and be ready. I love seeing my students everyday, and building relationships with them since the first day of school."***

***- Tarleton Teacher Resident***

## WHAT IS A SITE COORDINATOR?

The traditional student teacher supervisor roles are replaced with highly specialized “site coordinators” who are full-time faculty. The site coordinator is the linchpin of the transformed teacher preparation model. He or she is:

- A member of the university faculty who evaluates residents and teaches courses (student teaching seminars & methods)
- Conducts walkthrough observations, formal observations, and coaching of residents
- Trained and calibrated on the resident evaluation tool
- Have demonstrated proficient coaching practices
- Facilitates observation tool norming
- Embedded within the district (with relationships with administration and mentor teachers)
- Plans/facilitates data-driven, quarterly mentor trainings and ongoing mentor meetings and support
- Plans/facilitates data-driven, quarterly governance meetings
- Attends university meetings and programs, including faculty meetings and professional development, as appropriate

# Redesigning the Role of the Site Coordinator

The Dean of the College of Education, Dr. Kim Rynearson, and Dr. Sloan understood that site coordinators were at the core of a successful residency, and needed to figure out how to design this role with scale and sustainability in mind. With three campuses, they needed a position that would work to ensure quality with all site coordinators at all locations. They also knew they couldn't pay for the number of site coordinators needed to perform all aspects of the role. To solve for these issues, they created two separate positions - a site coordinator Lead and a site coordinator.

## Site Coordinator Leads

Site coordinator leads (SCLs) are full-time employees (and part-time faculty) who are responsible for facilitating governance meetings, training cooperating teachers, communicating with and observing residents, and meeting with site principals and clinical teachers. They also teach one seminar course per semester using data from the field to inform real-time topics for residents, such as implementing organizational routines, setting up and managing small group work, and checking for student understanding. In addition, they provide training and support for all site coordinators, ensuring that there is consistency in the coaching provided across all three campuses.

## Site Coordinators

Site coordinators (SCs) are responsible for conducting walk-throughs and “POP” (pre-conference, observation, and post conference) cycles, providing frequent and actionable feedback to cooperating teachers and residents. They also engage in training and calibration provided by the SCLs and support cooperating teacher trainings and Governance meetings led by the SCLs. Site coordinators are paid per resident and have the flexibility to take on as many residents as they want as long as quality coaching expectations are met.

Unlike most of the universities in the US PREP Coalition, who typically hire current faculty members into these roles, most of Tarleton State's



site coordinator leads and site coordinators are sourced from a variety of PK-12 backgrounds, including former Principals, Superintendents, teachers and instructional leaders. While recruitment is an ongoing challenge, particularly given the relatively modest compensation (\$45,000 for SCLs and \$500 per resident for SCs), Tarleton has been able to leverage its strong community ties and reputation to attract strong, mission-aligned candidates into these roles. “[Site coordinators understand how transformative the residency model is and want to be part of preparing better teachers. They want great teachers to stay in the field and feel like this is a way they can contribute towards that goal.](#)” shared Dr. Sloan. Tarleton has also been very intentional about ensuring site coordinator leads and site coordinators feel valued and have a respected voice at the table. SCLs meet regularly with the Dean and leadership team to provide feedback on the quality of the Resident experience and to identify areas for improvement. SCs receive ongoing training from SCLs and play an active role in cooperating teacher trainings and Governance meetings.

## Building Engagement

With senior leadership on board, the next step was to bring faculty along. Dr. Sloan and his team knew that the best way to get faculty on board with the residency model was by seeing residents in action. “[Once you start seeing the residents in the classroom, you can’t compare it to the old model. It’s exponentially better,](#)” said Dr. Sloan. During a learning walk at Gilbert Intermediate in Stephenville ISD, district and university leaders commented that they couldn’t tell who was the teacher and who was the teacher Resident in the room. Both were working with students and using high leverage practices in ways that demonstrated similar skill.

## Scaling the Residency

Tarleton was committed to shifting the entire program to a yearlong residency quickly. By fall of 2021 they had 100% of “fall start” students participating in the residency, and had fully transitioned all candidates by spring 2022. They now have 102 students enrolled in the residency across 10 districts. Tarleton has been very thoughtful about its district partnerships, prioritizing quality over quantity. When selecting district partners they look at academic standing, and the percentage of historically underserved students. They also take their commitment to building mutually beneficial partnerships seriously. Tarleton is very transparent up front about expectations of district partners. A commitment to ensuring cooperating teacher quality is non-negotiable. Districts must commit to the training of their cooperating teachers through the residency model practices in order to be brought on, or retained, as a district partner.

One of the first districts to join was Huckabay ISD, a one-school district serving 315 Pre-K-12th Grade students located just north of Stephenville. Huckabay’s Superintendent, Wes Corzine, was already a big fan of the residency model and saw it as a great way to prepare and hire new teachers. He approached Dr. Julie Howell, former Director of Educator Preparation Services, and said “[We want to do more. Huckabay is a great place to learn how to teach. We want to be part of helping to grow](#)

and develop new teachers." The district took on 10 residents the first year, fully embracing them as part of the staff and exposing them to all aspects of the school. In addition to co-teaching in their cooperating teacher's classroom, residents served as substitute teachers in different grade levels, participated in teacher professional development, and engaged with families from the beginning of the year to the very end. "They need to see all these areas. We wanted to give them the full experience of what it's like to be a teacher," said Corzine. Flexibility and resourcefulness are among the most important skills Corzine wants new teachers to develop. "Residents need to know how to plan a lesson and also understand that the lesson you plan isn't always going to work. You're going to have different types of learners, different behaviors. You're going to have to make it work for

your kids." Corzine knows that spending a full year in the classroom with the same group of kids and getting to experience different learning styles and behaviors on a daily basis makes a huge difference. "Until you get in there and live it and learn it, you can't really understand what it is to teach."

Corzine is already seeing the benefits of the partnership with Tarleton. He hired 2 residents from the first cohort and hired 3 more this year as full-time teachers. "As a small, rural school where it can be difficult to hire teachers, the residency has been a great hiring pipeline for us." This is true for all of the districts who have participated. According to Dr. Sloan, "All of our districts have hired our teacher residents. They have a vested interest in hiring strong teachers who will stay."

### Exhibit 1: Scaling the Residency

Timeline	Participating District Partners*	# of Yearlong Residency Completers
Fall 2020	Granbury, Huckabay	24
Fall 2021	Granbury, Huckabay, Fort Worth, Waco, La Vega, Stephenville	80
Spring 2022**	Stephenville, <b>Glen Rose***</b>	24
Fall 2022	Granbury, Huckabay, Fort Worth, Waco, La Vega, Stephenville, <b>UpLift</b>	78
Spring 2023	Granbury, Huckabay, Fort Worth, Waco, La Vega, Stephenville, Glen Rose, UpLift, <b>Alvarado, Azel</b>	59
<b>Total</b>	<b>10 District Partners</b>	<b>265</b>

\*Tarleton has capped the number of districts where they place residents to ensure the quality of the program.

\*\*First Pilot semester for a Spring start. \*\*\*Districts listed in **Blue** indicate a new partner district.

## Paid Residencies Sustained Over Time

As the residency continues to grow, a critical question Tarleton and its district partners are grappling with is how to remove financial barriers for teacher candidates who commit to the yearlong residency. During the pilot, Tarleton recognized that asking Teacher Candidates to work four days a week in a school for a full academic year can be a financial hardship. Because candidates are taking classes during this time, it can be challenging to work

outside of the school. Starting this year (2022), most of Tarleton's district partners are paying residents around a \$20,000 stipend, covered by the state's TCLAS Grants (short-term funding to support teacher recruitment and retention efforts, including Residencies). Districts want to continue to provide financial support to future residents beyond the life of the grant, and are at various stages of designing strategic staffing models that leverage residents to



fulfill the immediate instructional duties of schools using underleveraged funds (e.g. FTE vacancies, unfilled substitute roles, tutoring funds, etc.). Fort Worth, for example, has adopted the US PREP Strategic Staffing Substitute Model, where residents spend 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.

Texas is also providing support to help districts figure out how to sustain Residencies over time. Texas COVID Learning Acceleration Supports (TCLAS) grants include funding for Resident stipends, along with in-kind technical assistance from one of three pre-approved providers (US PREP, Public Impact and regional Education Service Centers) to help districts design and implement innovative staffing models and plan for long-term sustainability. Granbury ISD is one of several districts working with one of the state's regional Education Service Centers to develop strategic staffing models and a long-term sustainability plan to fund residency stipends. Granbury has been awarded 60, \$20,000 stipends over three years starting in the 2021-22 school year. They have begun working with Danny Knowles, the strategic staffing technical assistance provider for Region 11, on a plan for strategic staffing and sustainability. The state has built in a lot of flexibility for districts to figure out what works best for their particular context. "Districts get to decide based on their needs how they want to sustain [the residency]. They also have latitude around how they structure the role of residents. For example, they could hire residents as paraprofessionals or employ them as after school tutors," explains Knowles. This year is a design year and implementation of the strategic staffing models will begin in the 2023-24 school year.

# Redesigning Coursework

Tarleton has been deeply engaged in redesigning coursework to better align with the residency experience. Several faculty have been part of US PREP's Curriculum Redesign Process. English as a Second Language, social studies, literacy, special education, math and student teaching faculty have participated in a series of curriculum design retreats to create practice-based, standards-aligned, coursework. "It's been really powerful. The process has informed a lot of the changes we've made to the curriculum," said Dr. Crystal Rose, Assistant Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction who has been integrally involved in the coursework design process. Changes have included moving courses earlier in the program to create a more balanced workload during the residency year.

For example, based on feedback from residents in the pilot year, Tarleton moved the reading assessment course (one of the most challenging courses in the program) from the fall semester of senior year to spring semester of junior year, allowing teacher candidates more time to focus on the residency experience. Other changes included ensuring course assignments were aligned to candidates' clinical experiences. Faculty reviewed current assignments and revised them to ensure strong connections between coursework and clinical placements throughout the program. Another significant change occurred in the residency seminar course, in which data from observation cycles is now leveraged to inform course topics and areas of focus based on trends observed in the field. To ensure alignment in the teaching of the residency Seminar across all three campuses, faculty teaching the course collaborate and share data regularly.



# DEI and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

As Tarleton's leadership and faculty began to delve more deeply into program quality (Domain 1 of US PREP's Developmental Framework), they realized that principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice were glaringly absent. Their program was not effectively preparing novice teachers to work with all students, especially students who have been historically underserved. As they explored research on the achievement gap and culturally responsive pedagogy, it became clear that "Tarleton had to hold high expectations for teacher candidates to be proficient in culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies," explained Dr. Rose. This awareness set them on a path of self-reflection and professional development. Over the past year and a half, Tarleton faculty have begun exploring Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) through a self study exploring teacher educator beliefs and practices around culturally responsive teaching. As a part of the self-study, faculty took a self-assessment on culturally responsive teaching practices. They were asked to rate their own practice on questions such as: "I am able to greet English Language Learners with a phrase in their native language," and "I am able to identify the ways that students communicate at home may differ from the school norms." Other questions focused on identifying how school culture may differ from home culture, and obtaining information about the students prior knowledge, home life, and cultural background.

Faculty say that the DEI work has impacted their beliefs about culturally responsive pedagogy. As one faculty member shared, "Prior to US PREP and working with the Charles Butt Foundation (formerly known as Raise Your Hand Texas), I felt that, as an educator, I should treat all students the same regardless of color, gender, etc. Now, I realize that although I preferred color blindness in my classroom, that it was not realistic once students left my classroom. I feel that US PREP has actually helped make me more aware of realities and how I can incorporate more culturally responsive teaching into my course." In addition to a shift in beliefs around culturally responsive pedagogy, faculty are making shifts in practice as well. They're having teacher candidates include culturally responsive competencies in lesson planning, and introducing them to culturally diverse children's literature and instructional approaches. Faculty are also leaning into courageous conversations with teacher candidates around examining their own biases and creating safe spaces in which they can share those biases and start to resolve them.

At the leadership level, Tarleton is also thinking about how to create a more diverse faculty and student body. Early steps include developing a diversity matrix to inform futuring hiring decisions, offering scholarships, and partnering with local community colleges to attract more socioeconomically diverse students.

## IMPACT

While the Tarleton State's residency program is still in the early stages, there are signs of success. principals and district leaders say that residents are entering the classroom much better prepared than traditional candidates. 89% of residents say they were well prepared, and 98% say they feel confident to teach. Cooperating teachers agree.

95% of cooperating teachers surveyed said their Resident is effective in instructional planning,

holding high expectations for all learners, and providing high quality academic feedback.

Demand from districts for residents is also growing exponentially. "We are turning down districts all the time that want to partner. We have turned down over 30 districts because we don't have the capacity to expand while maintaining the quality of our programming and partnerships," said Dr. Sloan.

# NEXT STEPS

## YEARLONG RESIDENCY FOR ALL CANDIDATES

Tarleton is committed not only to the quantity (100% of Teacher Candidates in the college of education are in the residency model), but to the quality of the development and experience for candidates and district stakeholders alike

Using the systems they created in the pilot and scaling years, Tarleton continues to enhance their approach to leveraging data for improved decision-making and continuous improvement

## CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

## DESIGNING A PRINCIPAL RESIDENCY

Leveraging the practices and approaches learned from implementing the yearlong teacher residency, Tarleton desires to work with US PREP to create a yearlong residency for its principal candidates

Tarleton is building its own data system that is able to collect, move, visualize, and analyze meaningful resident data that can be leveraged by all stakeholders, including faculty and districts, to improve the quality of its program and decision-making at all levels

## BUILDING A DATA SYSTEM

## STRATEGIC STAFFING

Tarleton's districts are working in partnership with US PREP and other technical assistance providers to design strategic staffing models that enable all residents to access a paid teacher residency using underleveraged district funds, while also helping fulfill the immediate instructional needs of schools and districts





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