

FROM THE FIELD

Perspectives on Launching a New Residency

A School District's Perspective On Launching a Residency

By Adela Madrigal Jones

Superintendent of Sanger Unified School District

When we were first approached by Fresno State about a potential partnership to launch a teacher residency program, my first thought was, “We already partner with you by having student teachers in our district. Why would we need to do anything different?” But as we began to discuss the residency model, I quickly realized a residency would set our district up to hire, for years to come, well-prepared teachers who embody our goals, beliefs, and culture.

We take great pride in hiring the best people to put in front of our students because we know the teacher is the most important in-school factor for student success. The residency model ensures that they are supported and mentored, not just in the initial phase of a classroom placement, but continued through their years of working in our district.

The National Center for Teacher Residencies supported our efforts with examples and templates we used in our planning discussions. We were able to adapt these flexible resources to our district's needs. We also visited a district that has successfully launched a residency and met with other residency partnerships in California. This support ensured that we incorporated best practices into our program design and allowed us to ask the right questions along the way.

Our district's vision of providing options and opportunities for all students requires hiring collaborative, innovative teachers who believe that all students can and must learn. We invest a lot of our resources in supporting our teachers with embedded coaching and opportunities for co-planning and co-teaching. When we interview new teachers, principals always look for the knowledge, strategies, and core beliefs that we value at Sanger Unified. The residency model

of preparing our future teachers with these “look-fors” will ensure our teachers understand the work and our priorities, and that they develop achievable goals while moving the needle on student growth.

The teacher residency model provides us the opportunity to work closely with the university in developing course-work and syllabuses for our teacher candidates. We also are embedding time with district leaders to speak to teacher candidates during the preparation, which enables our leaders to interact with future teachers in our district.

Launching a Residency at California State University, Fresno

By Paul Beare, PhD

Dean, Fresno State Kremen School of Education & Human Development

At Fresno State, we believe that we must work in partnership with school districts in order to understand and be responsive to their specific community contexts. Fresno State's teacher education programs have been partnership-based for over 10 years. Over the last decade, we have built partnerships with multiple school districts across the region. Our partner school districts range from one-school rural communities to giant urban districts; our partner Fresno Unified is the fourth largest district in the state. We feel that it is especially important for us to partner with those smaller, rural communities, which may not always have the resources or capital to fully serve their students and support their classroom teachers.

Our relationships with partner districts change over time based on the individual needs of each district. Currently, the massive teacher shortage in our region has made the need for university-school district partnerships even more crucial. We are especially excited about the work that Cathy Yun and Lisa

Bennett are doing to enhance our commitment to serving our districts by building on our previous partnership and residency work. They have successfully applied the lessons we have learned over the past 10 years to enhancing each of our new residencies. They have been the driving force in taking our partnership programs to the next level.

By Cathy Yun, PhD

Assistant Professor, Coordinator of Early Childhood Education Programs, Early Childhood Education and Development

Teacher educators have an obligation to help develop reflective practitioners who effectively serve the needs of all students. Yet, as university faculty, we are several degrees removed from directly impacting student outcomes. Through partnerships with districts and schools, we can increase the teacher educator presence on school campuses and provide additional resources. These relationships allow and empower teacher educators to not just loosely partner with schools and districts, but to collaborate on substantive issues such as teacher preparation curriculum, clinical experiences, and professional development for residents. Through such collaborative planning, university and district stakeholders can combine resources to address specific, contextualized challenges, gaps, and needs. For example, at Fresno State, we are augmenting the residency model by applying evidence-based practices from research on the Professional Development School model. Through the application of these effective practices, we hope to help increase teacher leader capacity in our partner districts and schools. In our model, we collaborate with district leaders to co-plan and implement district-aligned professional development for both residents and their mentor teachers, as well as university faculty and school and district administrators. Through this collaborative approach to professional development, university faculty can benefit from school district innovations, district teachers and admin-

istrators can benefit from exposure to current research and evidence-based practices, and residents can benefit from both.

By Lisa Bennett, PhD

Assistant Professor, Coordinator of Multiple Subject Credential Program, Literacy and Practitioner Inquiry

Fresno State serves a region that spans five counties and hundreds of miles, many of them rural, agricultural communities with large migrant populations. While it would be easy to focus our work on the largest and most proximal urban districts, we realized that we would be failing to truly serve our community's needs if we limited our assistance only to these sites. For us, this is an issue of equity, access, and our personal commitments to social justice. As a result, we have committed to creating three new residencies in three different districts in our work with the National Center for Teacher Residencies.

This decision has enabled us to build pipelines into teaching that are context specific and ensure that graduates from our program are more evenly distributed across districts. In addition, when we offer our teacher candidates multiple pathways, we find that they are eager to return to their home communities and "give back." If we only offered one district for our residency pathway, students would have to choose between returning to their home communities and a truly immersive teacher preparation experience.

When we decided on this approach to residency development, we knew that each residency would take on a unique character and would reflect the vision and strengths of the context. For that reason, we have embarked on three separate journeys into residency design and implementation, using the NCTR institutes and materials to scaffold our work. Yes, this is more work than housing all of our residency cohorts in one district would be, but the results of this effort are essential to the well-being of our greater region.