



# Montana Teacher Residency Program Handbook 2024-2025





# Residency Handbook

## Program Overview

Founded in 2022, the Montana Teacher Residency Program is a year-long student teaching opportunity for higher-education students in Montana seeking teacher licensure. The Teacher Residency provides students with a monthly stipend of \$1,400, last-dollar tuition grant, and guaranteed housing assistance. In exchange for these benefits, students in the Teacher Residency agree to teach in a Montana public school for 3 years within 5 years of completing their year-long student teaching referred to as the Residency Year. This gives students a chance to go in-depth with acquiring knowledge and skills related to the practices of education while being compensated for the commitment. Given the Program's structure, students will finish their final degree requirements online, allowing them to effectively complete their studies within their Educator Preparation Program (EPP) while participating in the Teacher Residency.

There are many goals of Teacher Residency. In addition to giving Residents a more in-depth experience, this Program was designed with the goal of incentivizing teaching in a wider range of communities across the state and increasing long-term teacher retention. By working with rural and understaffed districts, it is our hope that the districts, Residents, and EPPs will all be served with an efficient model of placing teachers in areas where they are greatly needed and appreciated.

The Teacher Residency is made possible through the collaboration of several key partners. The University of Montana Western (UMW) acts as the Teacher Residency's 'Hub', responsible for facilitation and providing core operations. The Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) are the institutions where Residents are enrolled to earn their education degrees or teacher licensure. Lastly, the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) provides the learning labs, professional development opportunities, and funding for the Teacher Residency. Each of these partners play a crucial role in supporting the Teacher Residency and ensuring its success.

Beginning in fiscal year 2025, the Montana State Legislature will supply funding through [House Bill 833](#). For more information on House Bill 833, please visit the official Montana Legislature website.

## Roles within the Program

The Montana Teacher Residency Program is a collaborative effort with multiple stakeholders for each involved Resident. These stakeholders include: the Residents (student teachers), Teacher Leaders (Resident mentors), host school districts, and Educator



Preparation Programs (EPPs) who provide teacher licensure. Furthermore, The University of Montana Western serves as the Program’s ‘Hub’ and facilitator, while the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) initiated and funds the program. Each stakeholder has responsibilities that must be met to ensure individual and collective success with the Program. These roles are discussed below in detail.

### Resident

Residents are education majors who are preparing for their student teaching experience in the upcoming academic year. They begin by participating in the summer Orientation after which they enter the Residency Year: a one-year, in-school student teaching experience under the guidance of a Teacher Leader. The Residency Year is on an 80/20 time model, wherein 80 percent of the Resident’s time is in the student teaching classroom and the other 20 percent is dedicated to completing coursework. Throughout the Residency Year, they receive various benefits which include a monthly stipend of \$1,400 (pre-taxed), a last-dollar-in tuition grant, and housing assistance in exchange for their commitment to teach in a Montana public school district for a period of three years, within five, following the Residency Year.

It is important to note that Residents must sign contracts before beginning this Program, representing the commitment to complete the Residency Year as well as teaching for 3 years in a Montana public school within 5 years following the student teaching portion of the Teacher Residency. Failure to honor these commitments will enact the clawback of the contract, in which case the tuition grant received will be converted into a loan that must be repaid. After the completion of the Residency Year, they will also undergo yearly evaluations to assess their progress and development as educators.

### Teacher Leader

Teacher Leaders play a crucial role in the Teacher Residency by actively engaging in coaching and modeling instructional practices to assist the Resident. They contribute to the professional development of aspiring educators by sharing their expertise and providing guidance. Additionally, Teacher Leaders join the Teacher Leader Academy cohort, which offers a collaborative learning environment to support their ongoing growth. As recognition for their important contributions, Teacher Leaders receive up to a \$6,000 (pre-taxed) stipend, highlighting the value placed on their dedication and expertise in the program.

### District / Administration

District partners play a crucial role in supporting the growth and development of educators in their region. They demonstrate their commitment by offering various resources and opportunities to the Residents. One essential benefit provided by district



partners is housing, mileage, or a monthly living stipend during the placement period, ensuring that the Residents have a conducive environment for their work. District partners take part in the Teacher Leader Academy cohort, forming a community of educators focused on driving positive change within the education system. District partners also actively engage in yearly evaluations, reflecting their commitment to accountability and continuous improvement. Districts play a pivotal role in empowering educators, fostering a culture of innovation and leadership, and elevating the quality of education in their region.

### Educator Preparation Programs

Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) are dedicated to nurturing and empowering future teachers, and they employ a thorough and competitive selection process to recruit Residents. By meticulously choosing these students, they ensure a diverse and talented pool of individuals passionate about making a positive impact in education. To further support the Residents' educational journeys, these EPPs offer flexible course delivery options, allowing the Residents to balance their professional commitments with their studies effectively.

Recognizing the financial challenges many aspiring educators face, EPPs provide Residents with a last-dollar-in tuition grant. This financial support helps alleviate the burden of educational expenses and encourages talented individuals to pursue their teaching ambitions without undue financial constraints.

As part of their commitment to excellence and continuous improvement, EPPs actively lead and take part in quarterly project evaluations. These evaluations serve as critical assessments of their initiatives and projects, allowing them to ensure the offerings are still relevant, impactful, and aligned with the ever-evolving needs of the education landscape.

### University of Montana Western

UMW acts as the main correspondent for the Program and facilitates the Program's marketing and success. UMW has many responsibilities in facilitating the Program a few of which are: providing the Teacher Leader stipends, working with the EPPs for the Resident stipends, supporting Residents with their housing assistance, as well as answering questions and giving support to the stakeholders involved in the Teacher Residency Program. UMW works closely with the OPI regarding the evaluations of the Program and providing the learning labs and professional development to the Residents and Teacher Leaders.

### Office of Public Instruction

OPI actively sponsors the Resident learning labs and Teacher Leader professional development during the Residency year. One of the significant initiatives of OPI is



supplying stipends to Residents and Teacher Leaders. Through these monetary benefits, OPI aims to support and recognize the valuable contributions of educators who bring innovation and leadership to the field of education. By offering these opportunities and incentives, OPI encourages the development and implementation of innovative teaching practices.

### **Monetary Aspects**

There are numerous monetary benefits to this program which include the following:

#### Resident Monthly Stipend

All Residents in the program will receive stipends in the form of \$1,400, pre-taxed, for 10 months over the course of Residency Year. This stipend will help offset the cost of living while Residents are in the program.

#### Housing Assistance

Residents will receive housing assistance from the district in which they are placed. The purpose of this is to help alleviate or eliminate any housing cost that may accrue while the Residents are student teaching in the Teacher Residency. There are various kinds of housing assistance, but districts will generally offer one of three types: gas/mileage reimbursement, a set monthly stipend, or district housing.

The final housing assistance decision will be made between the Resident and the district. For example, if a Resident is from out of town, the district may provide either housing or a monthly rent stipend that allows the student to seek housing in the area. If the Resident has available housing already in the area, the district may provide utility or mileage stipends instead. Regardless of the type of housing assistance, all districts **MUST** provide some form of stipend in this regard.

#### Tuition Grant

Residents are eligible for a last-dollar tuition grant to eliminate tuition costs during the Residency year. However, since the tuition grant is on a last-dollar model, not all Residents will qualify. If after all financial aid calculations have been completed and the Resident still has a tuition balance, during the Residency Year, they will receive a grant amount that will cover the remaining tuition balance. If there is no unmet tuition amount after all other financial aid is calculated, the grant will not be disbursed. It is also important to note that the tuition grant will only cover tuition costs, not any fees accrued through the Resident's EPP.



### Teacher Leader Stipend

Teacher Leaders will be compensated for mentoring a Resident in the Program. The stipend total amount will be up to \$6,000, pre-taxed, disbursed in a split winter and summer payment. It is important to note that the stipend money is determined by the number of Residents in a district, not by the number of Teacher Leaders. Examples of this are included below:

**Scenario A:** A secondary education Resident is seeking licensure in science and math and is splitting the Residency year with a science Teacher Leader and a math Teacher Leader. Because there is only one Resident, the total stipend for the year is \$6,000 which will be split between the Teacher Leaders.

**Scenario B:** A district hosts two Residents seeking elementary degrees and each one works with a single Teacher Leader. In this scenario there are two Residents, so each Teacher Leader will receive the full \$6,000 stipend.

### **Online Classes**

Since the Residency year is during the last year of a student's degree program, in many cases the student will be required to finish their courses online while in the Teacher Residency. To help alleviate the burden of a full student teaching experience while taking courses, the program is run on an 80/20 time model, wherein 80 percent of the Resident's time is in the classroom fulfilling student teaching requirements and the other 20 percent is dedicated to completing coursework outside of the classroom.

A Resident may need to take classes from an outside EPP if the course needed is not offered from their home institution. If this occurs, the Resident must comply with all requirements of the class dictated by the outside EPP.

### **Orientations and Meetings**

Throughout the year, Residents and other partners may be required to attend various summits and informational sessions. These meetings are designed to further enrich the knowledge the Resident is receiving and establish networks of practice.

The next page includes a calendar of all events planned for the 2024 - 2025 school year.





## **Sample Timeline of Teaching Responsibilities**

Following the first year of Residency, OPI frequently was asked what a timeline of student teaching should look like on a yearlong model. The simple answer to this is that there is no one timeline that will cover all Residents and situations. For example, most elementary Residents will be on a start to finish model due to the nature of elementary education. Secondary Residents may be on a semester model, where they will be required to learn the techniques and expectations of different classes from one semester to the next.

While there is not one catch-all model that can be applied to every Resident, we can provide a general outline of what the year should look like in MOST scenarios. A sample timeline is as follows:

### **Month 1: Acclimating to the Classroom**

In this month, Residents will go through PIR or training days to learn the expectations of the district before the beginning of the school year. As the school year begins, the Resident will start by observing the Teacher Leader, learning their methodologies, grading practices, and other pertinent information for the year. After a week or more of learning the classroom expectations, Residents may begin to occasionally teach lessons based off the Teacher Leader's lesson plans, as well as learning effective methods of grading assessments.

### **Months 2-3: Incorporating More Instruction**

As Residents have learned the procedures of the classroom, they should begin to actively teach more of the lessons during the day based off the Teacher Leader's lesson plans. Additionally, Residents should begin learning lesson planning procedures and may commence some lesson planning of their own.

### **Months 4-5: Taking the Lead on Instruction**

Residents should now begin to actively teach in the classroom for most of the school day. Lesson plans should be a collaborative effort between the Teacher Leader and the Resident, with an increasing focus on input from the Resident. It is important to note that during this time the semester break will occur for most secondary Residents. Depending on the situation, they may want to revisit all the earlier steps before the new semester begins if the future classes vary significantly from the first semester classes.

### **Months 6-8: Continued Classroom Leadership, Reflection**

As the school year progresses into the latter half, Residents should continue to take the lead with teaching and planning, while receiving constant feedback and assistance from the Teacher Leader to hone their skills.





### Months 9-10: Finishing the Residency Year

During these months, the Resident may return some teaching duties back over to the Teacher Leader. This will give them a chance to reflect on their own growth in practice in relation to their mentor's practices. The Teacher Leader and Resident should be consistently discussing successes, growth, and areas for improvement as the school year ends.

### Issues During the Residency Year

If an issue arises during the Residency year, the Resident will need to contact the appropriate parties so that it can be resolved. Generally speaking, if the issue is academic, the Resident will need to follow their EPP's protocol and inform those that their EPP dictates. This may be the Resident's professor, academic advisor or other individuals. If the issue is in regards to the Teacher Residency Program or placement, concerns must be brought to the Teacher Residency Coordinator and the Resident's director of field experience and academic advisor while also following their EPP's protocol. If an issue occurs and the Resident is unsure who to contact, please direct questions to the Teacher Residency Coordinator.

Below are a couple of sample scenarios and who the Resident or Teacher Leader would contact if they occurred:

Scenario	Who to Contact
The Resident disagrees with a grade they received on an assignment.	The Resident will contact the professor of the class and academic advisor if needed. Please follow the EPP's standards.
The Resident is asked to substitute more than 5 days a semester.	The Resident will contact the Teacher Residency Coordinator, their academic advisor, and their director of field experience while following the EPP's policy.
The Resident has a major disagreement with their Teacher Leader.	The Resident and Teacher Leader will contact the Teacher Residency Coordinator, their academic advisor, and their director of field experience while following the EPP's policy.
The Resident is not performing their student teaching duties.	The Teacher Leader will contact the Teacher Residency Coordinator, the Resident's academic advisor and director of field experience while following the EPP's policy.



## FAQS

Below you will find a list of frequently asked questions related to the Teacher Residency and their answers.

**Q - What is the payment schedule for the Resident stipends?**

A: Residents will receive ten \$1,400, pre-taxed, payments during the Residency year, about once a month. The exact schedule will be determined by the Resident's EPP.

**Q - What is the payment schedule for the Teacher Leaders?**

A: Teacher Leaders will be paid up to \$3,000, pre-taxed, by the first of December and June

**Q - Will taxes be applied to the Resident and Teacher Leader stipends?**

A: Yes, taxes and state and federal deductions will be applied to each payment. Teacher Leaders will also have TRS deductions taken out of their stipend.

**Q - Do Residents need to complete a FAFSA?**

A: Yes, Residents will need to complete the FAFSA for the 2024-2025 academic year.

**Q - What does the last-dollar tuition grant cover?**

A: The tuition grant only covers tuition. Residents are responsible for all other associated course and college fees.

**Q - Will every Resident receive tuition grants?**

A: Yes, as long as they have a tuition balance after all other grants and scholarships are applied. They would not be eligible for additional tuition grant support if they do not have a tuition balance.

**Q - How are housing costs being paid?**

A: To participate in the Teacher Residency, districts must commit to providing housing assistance for the Residents, however the amount and type of assistance varies. For example, some Residents already have housing and receive utility support, while other districts pay for fuel for Residents that have housing but must travel. Others may provide housing that the district already own. The goal is to have our Residents incur little to no housing costs during the year.

- 1.This is what makes rural opportunities viable.
- 2.The goal is that the Resident is in a full-time pre-service opportunity with the focus on learning, applying, reflecting, adapting, and adjusting so each Resident is prepared on day one as a full-time licensed teacher to enter the classroom with the skills, knowledge, and aptitude to be effective on day one.



**Q – Is the Resident co-teaching with another teacher or filling an open teaching position?**

A: No. The Resident will be partnered with a Teacher Leader and essentially will be fulfilling a year-long student teaching model. A Resident *cannot* be a Teacher of Record in a classroom.

**Q – Does the Resident need to teach in Montana after the Residency Year?**

A: Yes, Residents are expected to teach in a Montana public school district for 3 years within 5 following the completion of the student teaching portion of the Teacher Residency.

**Q - What happens if the Resident does not complete the three-year commitment of teaching in Montana?**

A: Per the agreement the Resident will sign, they will be required to pay back all of the awarded tuition grant, unless there are extenuating circumstances approved by the Teacher Residency advisory team.

**Q - What calendar will the Resident follow, the college calendar, or the school district calendar at the location of their Residency?**

A: The Resident will follow the school district calendar and will report the first PIR day. They will continue teaching up to the last day of school regardless of the college calendar.

**Q – When will the Resident begin orientation?**

A: The Resident orientation will be in-person in a centralized location sometime in beginning to mid-August. Please watch for emails about the dates, which will also be posted to the OPI website.

**Q - Can a Resident substitute?**

A: A Resident can substitute only in their Teacher Leader’s class for up to 5 days a semester. The Resident does *not* receive payment for substituting

**Q - Can a Resident keep a job while in the Residency?**

A: Residency needs to be the primary focus. Working outside of the Residency is not recommended.

**Q – Is a Resident provided with release time to complete course work?**

A: The Residency is built on an 80/20 time model wherein the student will be released for 20 percent of the scheduled student teaching to work on classwork.



**Q - When a school district has two Teacher Leaders assigned to a single Resident, will they both be paid the \$6,000 Teacher Leader stipend through the funds for this program?**

A: No. There is only one Teacher Leader stipend per Resident. The district, in consultation with their identified Teacher Leaders, may strive to have an alternate plan. That plan would need UM Western and the OPI's approval.

**Q - Is there signed paperwork that will need to be completed by the different parties? If so, when should we expect to see that paperwork?**

A: Yes, there are contracts that will need signatures. Districts, Teacher Leaders, Residents, and universities will be provided this paperwork no later than August.

**Q - Who pays the Teacher Leader costs for attending the in-person Teacher Leader Academies (i.e., travel, lodging, per diem)?**

A: Lodging and meals during the academy are paid for by OPI. Mileage not included.

**Q - Who pays the Resident's costs for attending the in-person Residency learning labs (i.e., travel, lodging, per diem)?**

A: Lodging, meals, and mileage to attend the learning lab are paid for by OPI.

**Q - Who are the partners in the Montana Teacher Residency Program?**

A: The partners include our national think tank that has been working on this effort since October 2021; the Educator Prep Programs in Montana, the local school districts, The Comprehensive Center 17, The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, The Office of Public Instruction, and the University of Montana Western.

**Q - How are/will the partners be informed of progress?**

A: The partners will be informed of the progress of the program through in at least one or more of the following venues:

- Monthly Webinars
- Presentations
- Phone calls
- Emails
- Regular meetings with those affected
- The OPI Compass
- Field visits

**Q - How often will evaluation data collection occur?**

A: At least quarterly and through phone calls, webinars, surveys, emails, and visitations. The Comprehensive Center 17 will lead the evaluation process.