



# **Montana Teacher Residency Program Handbook 2024-2025**



## **Residency Handbook**

### **Program Overview**

The Montana Teacher Residency Program exists to give student teachers a more comprehensive student teaching experience. As opposed to traditional methods where a student is placed for 12 to 16 weeks, the Residency is a year-long experience in a community that is followed by a 3-year teaching commitment within a high-needs rural Montana district that must be met within 5 years following the completion of the program. This gives students a chance to go in-depth with acquiring knowledge and skills related to the practice of education. Additionally, due to the nature of the program, Residents can remotely complete the last class requirements of their degrees simultaneously with the classroom experience, enabling them to efficiently complete their Educator Preparation Program.

The goals of this Residency Program are numerous. 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, with the goal being 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.

Beginning in fiscal year 2025, House Bill 833 will supply funding for Residency. For more information on House Bill 833, please visit the official Montana Legislature website.

### **Monetary Aspects**

There are numerous Monetary aspects to this program that must be considered. These include the following:

#### **Monthly Stipend**

All Residents in the program will receive a \$1,400 dollar a month stipend for the Residency, with monthly payments occurring from September to June.



This stipend will help offset the cost of living while Residents are in the program.

### Housing/ Mileage

Residents will receive some sort of housing or travel stipend from the district in which they are working. The purpose of this is to help alleviate or eliminate any housing cost that may accrue while the Residents are student teaching in the Residency. This takes different forms in different districts. For example, if a Resident is from out of town, the district may provide either a housing option 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 still choose to provide a rent stipend, although some districts are providing utility or mileage stipends instead. Agreement will be reached between the Resident and the district, but all districts MUST provide some form of stipend in this regard.

### Tuition Waiver

Residents are eligible for a tuition waiver that may be up to \$3,000 dollars. However, this tuition waiver is on a last-dollar-in model, which means not all Residents will qualify. For example, if after all financial aid calculations have been completed, the Resident still has \$3,000 dollars or more of tuition need that is unmet, they will be eligible for the full waiver. If these calculations leave an amount of \$1,300, that is the amount of waiver they would receive. Finally, if there is no unmet tuition amount after all other financial aid is calculated, the waiver will not be disbursed. It is also important to note that the tuition will cover tuition costs, but not any fees accrued through the Resident's university.

### Teacher Leader Stipend

The Teacher Leader will be compensated for taking on a Resident within this program. The stipend amount will be \$6,000, disbursed in a winter and a 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 this is one Resident, the total stipend for the year is \$6,000 dollars, 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 \$6,000 for the year.

### **Roles within the Program**

The Montana Teacher Residency Program is a collaborative effort with multiple stakeholders for each involved Resident. These stakeholders include the Resident themselves, the Teacher Leader who is mentoring the Resident, the district hosting them, the Educator Preparation Program training the Resident for eventual licensure, and the Office of Public Instruction as the program originator and overseer. 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 undergraduate education majors who are preparing for their student teaching experience in the upcoming academic year. They begin by participating in orientations, after which they enter a one-year, in-school residency under the guidance of a Teacher Leader. The program is set up on an 80-20 time model, wherein about 20 percent of the Resident's time throughout the school year should be dedicated to completing coursework to finish out their degrees while student teaching. Throughout this Residency, they receive various benefits which include a monthly stipend, a partial tuition waiver, and housing assistance in exchange for their commitment to teach in a high-needs, rural Montana school district for a period of three years following the completion of the program.

It is important to note that Residents must sign contracts and MOUs before beginning this program, representing commitment to complete the



school year as well as committing to 3 years of in-state teaching work within 5 years following the completion of the program. Failure to honor these commitments will enact the clawback of the contract, in which case the stipends and waivers received will be converted into loans that must be repaid. After the completion of the Residency, the graduates can participate in networks of practice, enabling them to connect with other professionals in their field. They will also undergo yearly evaluations to assess their progress and development as educators.

### Teacher Leader

Teacher Leaders play a crucial role in the educational program by actively engaging in coaching and modeling instructional practices to assist the Resident. They contribute to the professional development of 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 a \$6,000 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 some other living stipend during the placement period, ensuring that the Residents have a conducive environment for their work. District partners actively participate in the Teacher Leader Academy, a comprehensive program designed to enhance leadership capabilities among educators. Additionally, they 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. These evaluations supply valuable feedback and help refine the programs and initiatives offered to educators. Districts play a pivotal role in empowering



educators, fostering a culture of innovation and leadership, and elevating the quality of education in their region.

### EPPs (Educational Preparation Programs)

Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) are dedicated to nurturing and empowering educators, 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 programs offer flexible course delivery options, allowing them to balance their professional commitments with their studies effectively.

Recognizing the financial challenges many aspiring educators face, EPPs provide Residents with a partial tuition waiver. This financial support helps alleviate the burden of educational expenses and encourages talented individuals to pursue their teaching ambitions without undue financial constraints. Moreover, Teacher Leaders in these programs receive an adjunct faculty partial stipend, acknowledging their ability and dedication as they contribute to the preparation and mentorship of future educators.

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 find areas of success and areas that require refinement. Through this ongoing assessment process, these programs ensure that their offerings are still relevant, impactful, and aligned with the ever-evolving needs of the education landscape.

### OPI (Office of Public Instruction)

OPI actively sponsors the summits all year round. As part of their efforts, they collaborate with districts and college/university partners to recruit districts for participation. One of the significant initiatives of OPI is supplying stipends to Residents and Teacher Leaders. Through these stipends, 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, helping the education system.

## **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 among these educators. The first meeting is the Program Orientation held at the beginning of August. Below is a calendar of all events planned for the 2024 - 2025 school year.

[\(Updated Calendar TBD\)](#)

## **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 from the beginning of the school year through the end due to the nature of elementary education. Secondary Residents may be on more of 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 specific model that will be a catch-all for every Resident, we can provide a general outline of what the year should look like in MOST scenarios. A sample timeline would be 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. As the school year begins, the Resident will



begin 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 lessons, 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 in a day based off the teacher's lessons. Additionally, Residents should begin learning lesson planning procedures and may want to begin some lesson planning of their own.

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

Residents should now begin to be actively teaching 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: Finishing the Residency

During this month, the Resident should turn 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.

## FAQS

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

### **Q - What is the payment schedule for the Resident stipend?**

A: Residents will be paid \$1400 on the 1st of the month starting in September. Payments will be over 10 months with the last payment in June.

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

A: Teacher Leaders will be paid \$3000 on the first of December and June

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

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

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

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

### **Q - What does the tuition assistance cover?**

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

### **Q - Will every Resident receive partial tuition waivers?**

A: No, there are already some Residents receiving tuition waivers that would not be eligible for additional support on waivers.

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

A: This is a local district decision, and it varies from: monthly housing allowances, providing district housing, or paying for fuel costs. To participate in the Montana Teacher Residency Program, districts had to commit to



providing housing for the Residents. This takes on many different shapes depending on the district. For example, some Residents already have housing and receive housing support while other districts are covering the cost of fuel for Residents that have housing but are required to travel. One district had arranged an AirBnB, while others provided housing that the district already owned. The long and short, Residents cannot incur any housing costs during the year because:

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.

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

A: The Resident will be partnered with a Teacher Leader and essentially will be fulfilling a yearlong student teaching model.

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

A: Yes, Residents are expected to teach in Montana. Preferably a rural or significantly impacted school in Montana for 3 years following the Residency.

**Q - What happens if the Resident does not complete the three-year post Resident commitment to teaching in MT?**

A: Per the agreement the Resident will sign, they will be required to pay back a pro-rated portion of the funds received as part of this program, unless there are extenuating circumstances that are approved by the 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. will report the first PIR day, regardless of the college calendar. They will continue teaching up to the last day of school past the college semester calendar.



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

A: The Resident orientation will be in-person in a centralized location sometime in 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. They do NOT get paid for substituting.

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

A: Residency needs to be the primary focus. Reduction of outside workload is recommended.

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

A: The Resident needs to be provided with at least 20% of scheduled time per week to complete coursework.

**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 the university’s and the OPI’s approval.

**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 is not included.

**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 MOUs that will need signatures. Districts, Residents, and universities will be provided with this paperwork no later than August.

**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, and The Office of Public Instruction.

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

A: The partners will be informed of the progress of the program through multiple 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.