



2026 ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SUMMIT



Year-Long Residency

Livin' that Teacher Life

Dr. Matthew Sutherlin

Director of Educator Preparation & Licensure

Division of Elementary & Secondary Education · Arkansas Department of Education

First Year of Teaching

"They say the first year of teaching is a lot like riding a bike. Except the bike is on fire. And the ground is on fire. And you're in a classroom trying to explain why the glue sticks don't have caps anymore."



Experience the teacher life, before day one

A year-long residency lets an aspiring educator live the full rhythm of the school year alongside an experienced mentor, long before they hold their own keys.

This session explores how that immersive year shapes candidate confidence and classroom effectiveness, and what it takes to build a residency that serves both the aspiring educator and the students in the room.

We will close with learnings from the year-long residency in practice.

WHAT YOU'LL LEAVE WITH

- 1 A clear picture of the year-long residency model
- 2 The case for residency: confidence + effectiveness
- 3 A practical blueprint for implementation
- 4 Early learnings

Where we're headed today

1

The transition gap

Why the jump from candidate to teacher is so steep

3

Impact

Candidate confidence and classroom effectiveness

5

Building it

Designing and implementing a residency that works

2

The residency model

What a true year-long residency looks like

4

Who benefits

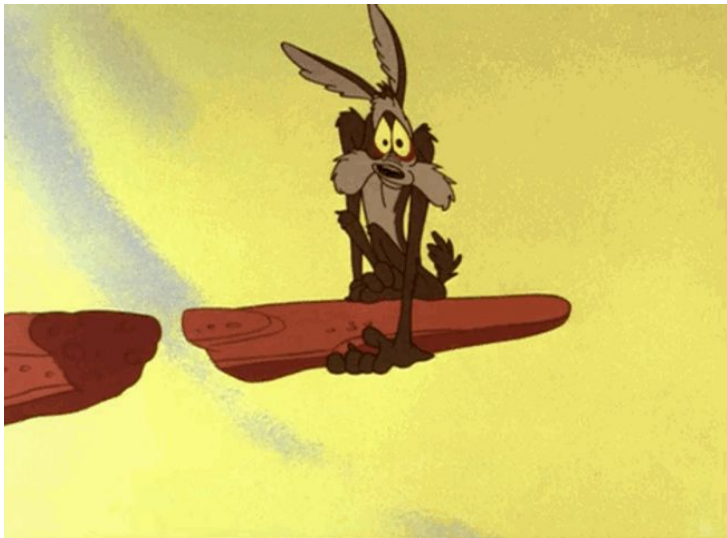
The aspiring educator and the students they serve

6

Early learnings

What we're seeing, and what we're refining

■ CLIFF VS. CUSHION



VS.



***On Your First Day Teaching, Did You Feel Like You Stepped Off a Cliff Or Onto a Cushion?
Do you have stories of times that you felt overwhelmed?***

PART 1 · THE TRANSITION GAP

Why the jump is so steep

Why the leap from candidate to day-one teacher is so steep — and who feels it most.

From pre-service candidate to day-one teacher

Traditional preparation often ends weeks before the real job begins. New teachers are asked to do the hardest version of the work on their very first day.

The cliff

Student teaching ends mid-spring, then candidates step into a full classroom alone in August.

The confidence gap

Many new teachers report feeling unready for the full scope of the role, from families to data.

Sink-or-swim

A steep first-year curve and early attrition land hardest on the students who need stability most.

■ Executive Order

On **January 11, 2023**, Arkansas Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders signed an Executive Order prioritizing *L.E.A.R.N.S.*—Literacy, Empowerment, Accountability, Readiness, Networking, and School Safety.

All completers receiving a degree or alternative teacher training certificate from a state-approved educator preparation program in Spring 2027 and beyond have completed a one-year residency alongside an experienced mentor teacher in a school setting.

PART 2 · THE RESIDENCY MODEL

What a true year-long residency looks like

A full-school-year clinical experience: co-teaching, gradual release, and embedded coaching.



Same idea we trust for doctors

A residency prepares a teacher the way a teaching hospital prepares a physician — full immersion, an expert alongside, and responsibility released over time.

	Medical residency · future physician	Educator residency · future teacher
What it is	On-the-job training in a teaching hospital, after earning the M.D.	On-the-job training in a real classroom, after finishing prep coursework.
Where it happens	A teaching hospital, through rotations across real cases.	A partner school — one classroom, one community, a full year.
The expert alongside	An attending physician models, supervises, and signs off.	An experienced mentor teacher models, co-teaches, and coaches.
Gradual release	Observe → assist → manage with oversight → practice on your own.	Observe → co-teach → lead with coaching → full lead teaching.
Feedback & milestones	Rounds, case reviews, and competency milestones track readiness.	8+ observation cycles and the Aspiring Teacher Rubric track readiness.
The payoff	A physician ready for independent practice.	A teacher who is hire-ready on day one — not sink-or-swim.

What is a year-long residency?

An immersive, full-school-year clinical experience in which a candidate is paired with a skilled mentor in a real classroom, from the first teacher workday to the last.

■ Full-year placement

One classroom, one community, not a single semester.

■ Co-teaching with a mentor

A trained mentor models, then shares, the work.

■ Gradual release

Responsibility grows from observe to co-teach to lead.

■ Coursework + practice

Theory is applied in the same week it's learned.

■ Embedded coaching

Regular feedback cycles drive deliberate growth.

■ Opportunities for stipend support

Pay where possible keeps the pathway accessible.

The residency arc

SUMMER

1

Onboard & match

Mentor pairing, classroom setup, and a shared vision before students arrive.

FALL

2

Observe → co-teach

Learn the students, build routines, and begin sharing instruction.

WINTER

3

Lead with coaching

Own planning and data; lead lessons with a coach close by.

SPRING

4

Lead & launch

Full lead teaching; finish hire-ready for day one of year two.

“I do, we do, you do” — across the residency year

Responsibility shifts from the mentor teacher to the resident, one deliberate step at a time — the same gradual release a strong teacher uses with students.

More mentor responsibility

More resident responsibility

I DO

Focused instruction

- Mentor models the skill and thinking aloud
- Resident observes with a clear look-for
- Residency phase: Summer / early Fall**

WE DO

Guided instruction

- Mentor and resident co-teach together
- Prompts and cues, shared decisions
- Residency phase: Fall**

YOU DO — TOGETHER

Collaborative practice

- Resident leads; mentor coaches close by
- Peers and mentor give in-the-moment feedback
- Residency phase: Winter**

YOU DO

Independent practice

- Resident owns planning and teaching
- Mentor steps back; coaching continues
- Residency phase: Spring**

Adapted from the Gradual Release of Responsibility model (Pearson & Gallagher). In a residency, the release plays out over a full year, not a single lesson.



If you are an EPP, how is your year-long residency structured? If you are a district, how are you supporting the year-long residency?

Summer — Onboard & match

Before students arrive: pair the team, learn the year's materials, and set shared norms.

Resident

- Meets the mentor; co-creates a shared vision and norms
- Studies the HQIM and unit plans for the year
- Helps set up the classroom environment
- Reviews the handbook, competencies, and licensure steps

Mentor teacher

- Orients the resident to the school and community
- Models classroom setup and first-week routines
- Co-plans the gradual-release calendar: who leads, when
- Protects weekly co-planning time in the schedule

Clinical supervisor

- Confirms the placement; reviews the handbook with all partners
- Sets the observation and feedback cadence and tools
- Aligns the team on the Aspiring Teacher Rubric
- Establishes coaching and reflective-practice norms

Fall — Observe → co-teach

Learn the students, build routines, and begin sharing instruction through co-teaching.

Resident

- Learns students by name, need, and data
- Observes the mentor, then co-teaches segments
- Builds and rehearses classroom routines
- Reflects after each cycle on what to try next

Mentor teacher

- Models instruction, then shares the lead
- Gives daily formative feedback in protected time
- Introduces the resident to families early, by role
- Gradually releases specific responsibilities

Clinical supervisor

- Begins the observation cycle (toward 8+ for the year)
- Coaches the co-teaching moves and routines
- Grows the resident's reflective practice
- Monitors the match against rubric criteria



What training(s) are experienced mentor teachers provided on co-teaching?

Winter — Lead with coaching

The resident owns planning and data and leads lessons with a coach close by.

Resident

- Owns planning and assessment for lead lessons
- Analyzes assessment data to adjust instruction
- Leads lessons with a coach close by
- Calibrates grading with the mentor on shared rubrics

Mentor teacher

- Steps back as the resident leads; stays co-present
- Calibrates scoring and grading together
- Agrees a step-in signal for management support
- Debriefs hard days into concrete growth plans

Clinical supervisor

- Continues mid-year observation and assessment cycles
- Focuses observation on routines, climate, and data use
- Anchors feedback to the Aspiring Teacher Rubric
- Documents progress against the competencies



As an EPP, is coaching training documented? Is it documented on based on coaching type? Content vs. Cognitive? From a district perspective, what opportunities are provided to attend coaching training?

Spring — Lead & launch

Full lead teaching, final assessments, and finishing hire-ready for day one of year two.

Resident

- Carries full lead-teaching responsibility
- Sustains data-driven planning and differentiation
- Completes required assessments and licensure steps
- Finishes hire-ready for day one of year two

Mentor teacher

- Hands off the classroom; coaches on independence
- Supports family communication and conferences
- Affirms strengths; names final growth areas
- Advocates for the resident to be hired in the building

Clinical supervisor

- Completes the full set of observation cycles (8+)
- Conducts the summative assessment on the rubric
- Verifies competencies and licensure readiness
- Closes the loop with EPP—district data review

PART 3 · IMPACT

Confidence and classroom effectiveness

What a guided year does for candidate confidence and day-one classroom practice.



Candidate confidence

Confidence isn't a pep talk; it's the product of real reps in real conditions.

- **Management, practiced:** Classroom routines rehearsed across a full year, not a few weeks.
- **Relationships that last:** Knowing students, families, and colleagues by name and by need.
- **The whole calendar:** Living the assessment windows, conferences, and support plans firsthand.
- **An identity shift:** Moving from “student” to “teacher” with a mentor alongside.

“

By August, a resident isn't meeting the job for the first time; they're returning to work they already know.

Classroom effectiveness

A full year of guided practice turns preparation into performance; candidates arrive as ready practitioners, not beginners.

Routines internalized

Procedures and pacing become second nature through repetition.

Data-driven planning

Assessing, analyzing, and adjusting instruction is practiced all year.

Differentiation

Meeting diverse learners is rehearsed with a mentor's guidance.

Strong day-one practice

Effective teaching from the first week, not by winter break.

PART 4 · WHO BENEFITS

Built for the students they serve

The aspiring educator — and, above all, the students in the room.



Built for the students they serve- Benefits!

The aspiring educator

- Confidence built on a full year of real practice
- Competence with the whole job, not just lessons
- A mentor and a support network from day one
- Hire-ready, often in the school that knows them

The students

- Two caring, capable adults in the room all year
- More individualized attention and small-group time
- Stronger, better-prepared instruction
- A teacher who already knows them, by August

PART 5 · BUILDING IT

Designing a residency that works

EPP—district partnership, mentor selection, and a model built to the State Review rubric.

Designing a residency that works

1

EPP–district partnership

Shared ownership between preparation program and schools.

2

Mentor selection & training

Choose skilled mentors, then invest in their coaching skills.

3

Aligned coursework

Sequence learning to match the residency year in real time.

4

Financial sustainability

Stipends and funding that keep the pathway accessible.

5

Clear competencies

Define what “ready” means and release responsibility toward it.

6

Coaching & data cycles

Regular feedback and evidence drive deliberate improvement.

Roles & partnerships

Prep program

- Aligned coursework
- Field supervision
- Competency tracking

District / school

- Quality placements
- Schedules & space
- Pathway to hire

Mentor teacher

- Model & co-teach
- Coach & give feedback
- Gradual release

Resident

- Show up & grow
- Reflect on practice
- Own student outcomes

Co-selecting the Experienced Mentor Teacher

The mentor is the single biggest factor in a resident's growth, so the EPP and the district choose the Experienced Mentor Teacher together, against shared criteria, with shared ownership of the match.

How co-selection works

- 1 District nominates effective teachers who are willing to mentor
- 2 EPP and district review each candidate against shared criteria
- 3 A classroom visit confirms fit and a coaching disposition
- 4 Both partners agree, then formalize time, role, and support

What we look for

- Proven instructional effectiveness
- Experience and advanced credentials
- A coaching mindset that develops adults
- Content and grade-level match
- Capacity: time and release to mentor
- Commitment to co-teaching and the model

Reviewing the residency

1

Clinical Supervisor

Trained, credentialed, and in classrooms often; 8+ observation cycles.

2

Experienced Mentor Teacher

Lead/Master educators with protected time and one resident.

3

Time Requirements

A true two-semester, near-daily clinical placement.

4

Residency Handbook

One clear guide, shared with every partner a month early.

5

Quality of Clinical Experience

Gradual release to the whole job, taught on HQIM.

6

EPP-K-12 Partnership

A real MOU: resourced, accountable, and data-driven.

Clinical Supervisor

The supervisor is the resident's coach. The role should be staffed with a trained, credentialed observer who is in the classroom on a real cadence.

Meets: state minimum

- Up-to-date on all training, incl. DESE-recognized coaching and Aspiring Teacher Rubric
- Feedback shows understanding of coaching practice
- Aids candidates in reflective practice on their teaching
- Conducts a minimum of 6 observations, assessments, and walk-throughs

Exceeds: how we build it

- 8+ observation, assessment, and walk-through cycles
- Has taught at the assignment's grade level or subject
- Helps train new and continuing mentor teachers
- Feedback visibly grows candidate reflective practice

Experienced Mentor Teacher

The mentor is the single biggest factor in a resident's growth. So we hold mentor selection and load to the rubric's highest bar.

Meets: state minimum

- Lead or Master Professional Educator designation (preferred) + DESE-recognized coaching training
- At least three years of teaching experience
- Assigned no more than two teaching candidates
- Documented mentor-selection process
- Practicing administrators/supervisors excluded from the mentor pool
- Trained to support, evaluate, and coach the candidate

Exceeds: how we build it

- Mentor assigned no more than ONE teaching candidate
- Time set aside within the school day for formative feedback
- Lead/Master designation + coaching training verified
- Selection criteria applied with the EPP as co-owner

Examples of Evidence the EPP collects for State Review

The EPP requires dated, verifiable documentation of the core residency activities — so the work is visible, reflection is captured, and coaching has room to grow without tipping into judgment.

Co-teaching

- Co-teaching log: date, model, who led
- Segments the resident co-taught vs. led
- The student-learning goal for the lesson
- Resident reflection after each cycle

Co-planning

- Weekly co-planning agenda and notes
- HQIM and unit plans used to plan
- Gradual-release decisions: who leads, when
- Proof co-planning time was protected

Observations

- A record for each of the 8+ cycles
- Look-fors tied to the Aspiring Teacher Rubric
- Timely, written feedback to the resident
- No surprises: progress shared before checkpoints

Coaching sessions

- Coaching log: date and focus area
- The reflective, non-judgmental questions asked
- Goals set and agreed next steps
- Resident reflection showing growth over time



For EPPs, what evidence is being collected currently on the quality of interactions between mentors and candidates? For districts, what time is built in for these interactions to occur?

Time Requirements

A residency requires time in the room. The residency consists of a full two-semester placement so the candidate lives the whole year.

Meets: state minimum

- ≥ 3 days (18 hrs)/week in the first semester
- ≥ 4 days (24 hrs)/week in the second semester
- OR a semester equivalent of 270 hrs, then 360 hrs
- Residency spans two consecutive semesters (Fall→Spring or Spring→Fall)

Exceeds: how we build it

- 5 days per week, every semester
- Remaining coursework delivered online
- Placement stays effectively full-time
- Two-semester span preserved end to end

Residency Handbook

One handbook makes the model legible to everyone. Every process is covered and put it in partners' hands early.

Meets: state minimum

- Process for assigning the clinical supervisor
- How observations, assessments & walk-throughs are conducted
- How the clinical supervisor shares information
- Process for assigning DESE-qualified mentor teachers
- Mentor training requirements and assignment process

Exceeds: how we build it

- Adds a description of all required assessments
- Presents the steps for candidate licensure
- Given to all partners at least one month before the residency
- Electronic, with live links and a numbered table of contents

Quality of the Clinical Experience

Quality is gradual release to the real job, on real materials. The experience is built around HQIM and data, not just clock hours.

Meets: state minimum

- Gradual release to all teaching responsibilities
- Candidates have HQIM access for planning
- Candidates implement HQIM
- Candidates administer HQIM-designed assessments
- Supervised practice across the full grade level sought for licensure

Exceeds: how we build it

- Plan using HQIM with lesson internalization
- Trained on HQIM through High-Quality Professional Development
- Analyze assessment data to inform instructional practice
- Full gradual release across the entire licensure grade band

Quality of the EPP + K-12 Partnership

The partnership is the foundation the residency stands on. An MOU is formalized and backed with standing, data-driven practices.

Meets: MOU includes

- Shared vision with clear objectives
- A commitment to high standards
- Clearly defined roles for all stakeholders
- Accountability measures
- Applicable timelines
- Guarantee of allocation of adequate resources

Exceeds: how we build it

- Standing policy for open, respectful communication
- Scheduled time for intentional evaluation of data
- Willingness to implement innovative approaches
- Policies mutually agreed to meet evolving needs

PART 6 · FROM THE FIELD

Scenarios, results, and what's next

Real tensions of the residency year, early results, and where we go from here.

Scenarios from the residency year

These scenarios put the model to work. Each one is a real tension a resident can meet during the year. Use them to rehearse judgment before the moment arrives, and to show how the mentor, clinical supervisor, and EPP share the response.

Co-teaching

Ethics

Grading

Family & community

Mentor fit & EPP response

Classroom management

Co-teaching: whose classroom is it?

The situation: Midway through the fall, the resident wants to try a station-rotation lesson. The mentor teacher prefers the whole-group approach the class is used to and quietly takes back the lead when the lesson gets noisy.

What the resident should weigh

- The class belongs to both of you this year
- Student learning comes before who leads
- Disagreement is normal; how it is handled is what matters
- Ask for a co-planning conversation, not a hallway debrief

How the residency responds

- Gradual-release plan names who leads and when
- Weekly co-planning time is protected
- Mentor models, then shares, then hands off
- Clinical supervisor coaches the co-teaching move

Ethics: a student confides in the resident

The situation: A student tells the resident, in confidence, something that suggests possible harm at home, and asks the resident not to tell anyone. The resident is not yet a licensed employee and is unsure of the reporting duty.

What the resident should weigh

- Student safety outranks a promise of secrecy
- Mandated-reporting duties apply in the building
- The resident is never alone in this decision
- Document facts, not conclusions or opinions

How the residency responds

- Handbook states the reporting chain and timeline
- Mentor and supervisor are looped in at once
- District policy and designated reporter are followed
- Resident is coached through the report, not left to guess

Grading: fairness and academic integrity

The situation: The resident grades a set of essays and gives a strong student a low score for what looks like copied work. The mentor worries about the parent reaction and suggests quietly raising the grade. The resident believes the score is fair.

What the resident should weigh

- Grades must reflect the same standard for every student
- Integrity concerns follow the district process, not a hunch
- Evidence and the rubric support the score
- Consistency now protects every student later

How the residency responds

- Grade on shared rubrics tied to the HQIM
- Mentor and resident calibrate scoring together
- Academic-integrity concerns go through district policy
- Supervisor reviews the evidence before a grade changes

Family and community relations

The situation: At a fall conference, a parent is upset about their child's progress and directs the frustration at the resident, questioning whether a "student teacher" should be in the room at all.

What the resident should weigh

- Listen first; the concern is about the child, not you
- Speak to data and next steps, not defensiveness
- The mentor is a partner in the room, not a rescuer
- Follow up in writing on what was agreed

How the residency responds

- Resident is introduced to families early and by role
- Mentor models conference structure, then co-leads
- Communication norms are set in the partnership MOU
- Debrief with the supervisor builds family-engagement skill

When the mentor is not the right fit

The situation: By October it is clear the match is not working: the mentor rarely makes co-planning time, gives little feedback, and has taken on administrative duties that pull them out of the room. The resident is drifting.

What the resident should weigh

- Name the gap early; do not wait for spring
- Focus on the support missing, not personal blame
- Keep teaching and documenting your own growth
- Raise it through the supervisor, not around the mentor

How the EPP responds

- Supervisor documents the concern against rubric criteria
- EPP and district revisit the match under the MOU
- Mentor is re-supported, or the resident is re-placed
- One-candidate load and in-day time are restored

Classroom management under pressure

The situation: During a lead-teaching week, a small group of students derails several lessons. The resident escalates consequences quickly, and the room grows tense. The mentor is watching and unsure when to step in.

What the resident should weigh

- Routines prevent more than consequences correct
- Relationships are the fastest path back to order
- A pre-agreed signal tells the mentor when to step in
- Reflect on triggers, not just on student behavior

How the residency responds

- Management is practiced across the full year, not a week
- Mentor and resident agree on a step-in signal in advance
- Supervisor observation focuses on routines and climate
- Coaching cycle turns the hard day into a growth plan

What's working and what we're refining

What we know works well

- The mentor–resident relationship is the engine
- Confidence grows visibly across the year
- Residents arrive prepared
- Partner schools want to keep their residents

What we're refining

- Protecting mentor time and release
- Paid residency opportunities
- Scheduling and placement logistics
- Keeping coaching dosage consistent



Residency Memo- Learning Policy Institute

Look for an upcoming Residency Memo from the Learning Policy Institute concerning the collaboration between Forward Arkansas and two Arkansas EPPs: UALR and SAU. This paper outlines early learnings from year-long residency implementation.

A smoother transition, by design

1 Invest in mentors Select, train, give time, and compensate when possible the people who carry the model.

2 Protect Opportunities Aspiring Teacher Permits keep the pathway open to the candidates we most need.

3 Align the coursework Sequence the prep program to the residency year, not the other way around.

4 Measure what matters Use competencies, coaching, and outcomes, not just clock hours.

5 Start small, then scale Prove it with one strong cohort and grow what works.



*When the first year isn't
the first time,
everyone wins.*



Let's talk residency.

Questions & discussion

Dr. Matthew Sutherlin

Director of Educator Preparation & Licensure

matthew.sutherlin@ade.arkansas.gov