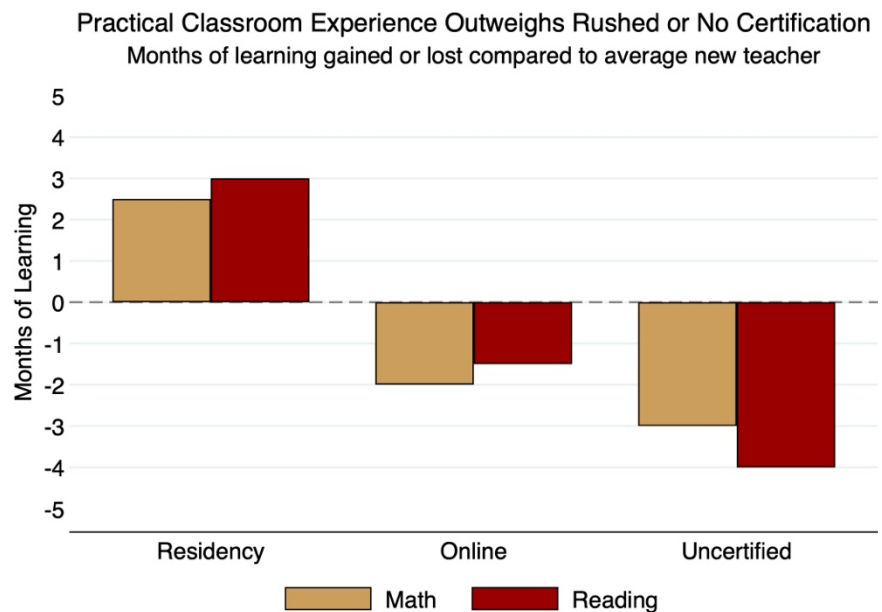


Building a Stronger Teacher Workforce: Insights from Studies on Texas Teacher Preparation

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Purpose of this Brief

Teacher preparation in Texas has seen significant shifts in recent years, driven by increasing reliance on uncertified teachers, the expansion of Grow Your Own models, and the development of residency-based programs. I have authored three studies that collectively highlight the impact of educator preparation programs on student outcomes and teacher retention. As stakeholders and policymakers prepare for the next legislative session, we should recognize the common themes across this research. Taken together, they provide a high-level roadmap for addressing the clear disparities in the quality of preparation statewide.



This Research

Together, these studies examine the increasing reliance on uncertified and online-only trained teachers, the prevalence of these pathways in rural districts, and their effects on student learning. Additionally, the research highlights the positive link between teacher residency programs and student achievement and teacher retention. This summary brief is meant to help stakeholders grasp the full picture and act on recommendations grounded in real evidence—not on partial readings of the data. Policymakers must prioritize these key program elements to ensure Texas students receive the high-quality education they deserve.

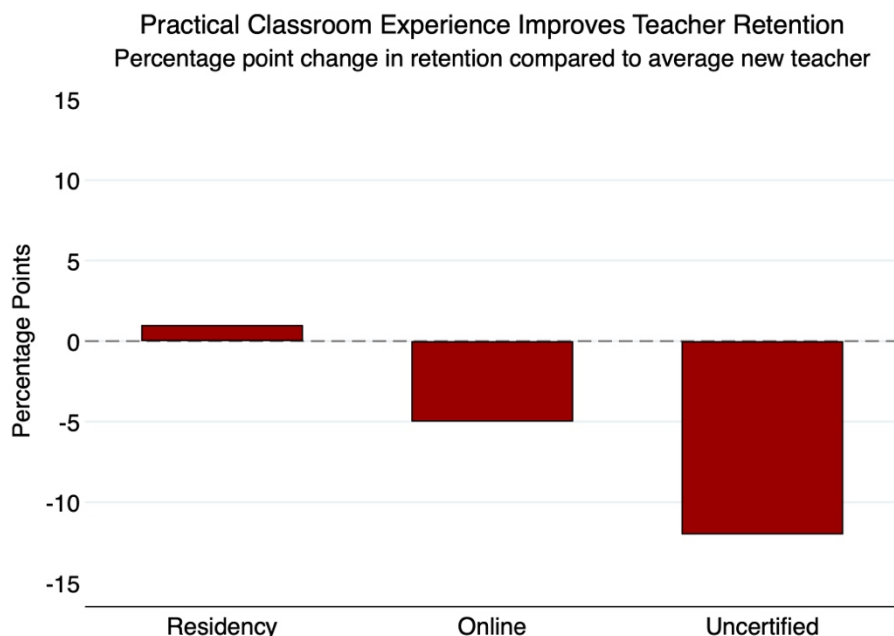
Key Takeaways

1. A majority of new teacher hires are unqualified, especially in rural areas.
2. Teachers who are uncertified or rushing to complete certification through fully online programs are unqualified.
3. Unqualified teachers are contributing to months of learning loss.
4. Unqualified teachers are leaving the teaching profession at the highest rates.
5. Residency programs can help build a stable, effective teaching workforce.

Policy Recommendations

- 1. Expand Teacher Residency Pathways with Financial Support:** Texas is taking a positive step by introducing an [Enhanced Standard Certificate](#) for teachers who complete a rigorous, yearlong residency program. However, many teacher candidates face financial barriers during the student teaching period. Providing financial support for residency programs to provide stipends or other assistance to their teacher candidates would make the programs more accessible, bolstering a high-quality pathway into the profession.
- 2. Build Pathways for Current Classroom Staff to Earn Certification:** Classroom staff, such as paraprofessionals, have already demonstrated a commitment to working in schools and often have significant classroom experience. The state should build more pathways for these individuals to earn full certification, either through accelerated programs or financial incentives that cover tuition and exam fees. This approach would bring more prepared teachers into the workforce, especially in high-need districts.
- 3. Connect Teacher Training with Retention Through Programs Like TIA:** Residency programs give teachers the hands-on experience they need to be successful in the classroom, but keeping them there requires ongoing support. The [Texas Teacher Incentive Allotment \(TIA\)](#) rewards teachers for their performance and helps retain top talent, especially in high-need schools. By linking strong pre-service training, like residencies, with incentives through TIA, we can create a system that prepares teachers for success and rewards them for staying in the classroom. Expanding TIA funding will ensure that more high-performing teachers stay where they are most needed.

Hands-on teacher preparation builds confident, effective teachers



Researcher Bio



J. Jacob Kirksey, Ph.D., is an assistant professor in the College of Education and associate director of the Center for Innovative Research in Change, Leadership, and Education at Texas Tech University. His research is broadly focused on issues at the nexus of education and other areas of public policy, which includes student absenteeism and truancy, inclusion and special education, immigration and education, and the teacher workforce.

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