

# EL PASO INC.

## **GUEST COLUMN: STUDENTS EARN WHEN THEY LEARN FROM WELL-TRAINED TEACHERS**

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May 5, 2025

El Paso is poised for greater economic growth, provided the city can better prepare more students for careers in high-demand jobs. Increasing our educated workforce attracts more businesses, generates greater commercial tax revenue and reduces our dependence on residential taxes. But this starts with strong early education, where El Paso and Texas struggle significantly.

Data shows that 63% of jobs will soon require postsecondary credentials. But according to the Texas Talent Trajectory, only 25% of Texas eighth graders go on to earn a postsecondary credential within 11 years. This rate is improving, but not where we need to be.

The root of this problem? A dramatic shortage of qualified teachers. The good news? Thanks to a lot of hard work, El Paso is a role model for the rest of Texas.

There is no silver bullet for preparing students for college and career success. It requires academic rigor, relevant curriculum and dedication. However, pairing students with highly trained educators dramatically improves achievement outcomes.

In 2023-24, 56% of first-time teachers across Texas were uncertified and resigned at higher rates than certified educators. This revolving door undermines student achievement and widens opportunity gaps.

El Paso recognized this challenge years ago and implemented a revolutionary solution. Our region now boasts the lowest percentage of uncertified teachers in Texas – just 23% thanks to innovative approaches to teacher preparation. Since 2019, seven school districts have partnered with UTEP to create an effective teacher residency where aspiring teachers gain real classroom experience while they learn.

CREEED, the El Paso Community Foundation and UTEP, in partnership with Borderplex Workforce Solutions, spearheaded this innovation by creating the Miner Teacher Residency Program. Before graduation, teacher candidates spend an entire year learning from experienced educators in real classrooms. From 2019 to 2025, there were 606 participants in the program.

The results speak volumes. Teacher retention has increased to 90%, rural districts have seen double-digit decreases in vacancies and student academic outcomes are improving. Having veteran teachers mentor teacher residents has reinvigorated the teaching profession in our community.

This success relies on public-private partnerships and philanthropic funding that is essential to launching these residencies. However, for the model to be sustainable and scalable statewide, legislative support is crucial.

As a member of the **Texas Business Leadership Council**, I regularly speak with business leaders struggling to find workers with the right skills. Growth depends largely on recruiting talent from other states – an unsustainable approach for Texas families and businesses.

The economic case is compelling. Research shows that replacing just 10% of unprepared Texas teachers with well-prepared educators would increase students' annual earnings by \$2,800. Statewide, this represents billions in potential gains for Texas families and our economy.

El Paso's model works because it applies proven apprenticeship principles to education. Candidates receive intensive, hands-on training under expert guidance while earning income – removing financial barriers that prevent many from pursuing teaching careers.

This approach has gained traction across Texas, with nearly 40 residency programs involving over 140 school districts. But philanthropic funding alone cannot sustain this growth.

This legislative session, lawmakers are considering bills to expand these preparation models. Rarely do legislators have such a clear opportunity to improve constituents' lives. We urge state leaders to invest in strengthening our teacher workforce through sustained funding for residencies.

Our students deserve teachers who will empower them to compete for good-paying jobs and build prosperous lives. El Paso has demonstrated what works. Now it's time for the legislature to help scale these solutions statewide through dedicated fund