

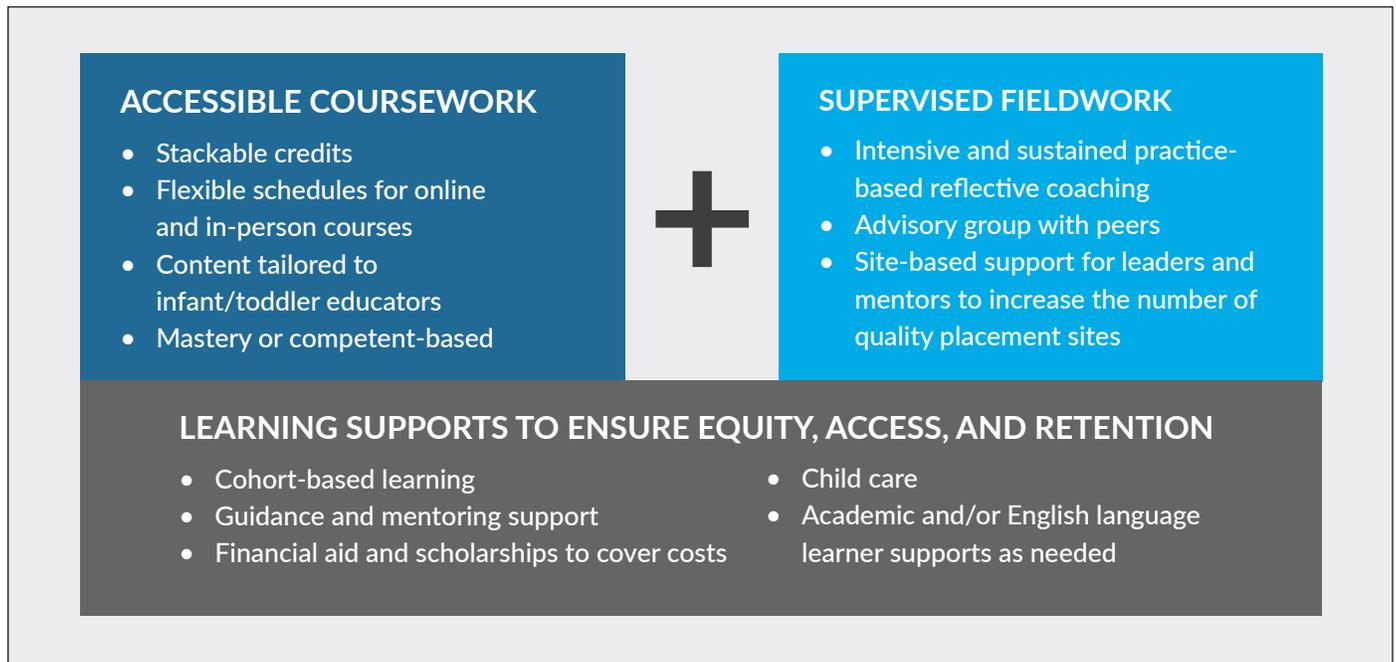


DESIGN ELEMENTS OF AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR RESIDENCY MODEL

For over 100 years, Bank Street College of Education has been at the forefront of understanding how children learn and develop. Our approach to educator preparation combines a deep understanding of human development and educational theory with observation and reflection. Informed by this history and experience, the Learning Starts At Birth initiative designed an early childhood educator residency model that provides a robust approach to on-the-job learning through intensive coaching, mentorship for new-to-the-field educators, placement in high-quality settings, and customized coursework that leads to recognized credentials. When combined with meaningful increases in compensation, residency programs can have a sustained impact on program quality and provide a path toward equity for the early educator and child care workforce.

The residency model is crucial for attracting and supporting new educators as well as offering existing educators meaningful professional learning. Residency programs provide the opportunity to earn credit toward a degree, certification, or other credentials while allowing educators to continue working full time. These design considerations promote equity by ensuring the existing workforce, who are predominantly Black and Latinx women, have access to higher education and increased compensation.

RESIDENCY PROGRAM COMPONENTS



Mentors for New Educators

New-to-the-field residents will require support from an experienced **mentor**. Some residency programs offer residents the opportunity to work alongside an experienced practitioner or “mentor educator” within the same classroom. Other programs leverage on-site mentors from another classroom (or in the case of home-based providers, this could be a nearby provider within a staffed child care network) who push in to support and meet with the resident. Mentorship not only provides necessary induction support to residents but also creates opportunities for leadership development for experienced teachers, enriching their professional lives and establishing additional steps on a career pathway.

Expert Supervised Fieldwork and Advisement

Effective residency programs must include support mechanisms that integrate personal and professional development, making it possible for residents to deeply experience the interplay of cognitive and non-cognitive elements as part of their learning. To translate theory and research into practice, residents receive **intensive and sustained coaching**, which is different from mentoring or technical assistance. Coaches can be higher education faculty or adjuncts or affiliated with state agencies or intermediary organizations rather than a coworker. A coach is a learning collaborator who holds the teacher's progress in mind and helps them integrate and synthesize knowledge and competencies. Coaches help educators activate and better articulate their previous knowledge, skills, values, and belief systems to construct a philosophy from which they can approach their work—a process that is especially vital when teachers are faced with dilemmas of practice. This approach differs from some forms of job-embedded coaching that is intended to drive the implementation of a specific skill or strategy. Bank Street College of Education invests heavily in advisement, coaching, and reflection throughout all of its graduate school programs and professional learning opportunities. We believe firmly that trusting relationships are the bedrock of all learning and teaching, and that our interactions with others have the potential to become a vehicle for learning, growth, and change.

Individual coaching and reflection are combined with a small-group experience or advisory groups that help practitioners think about their own development while learning from their peers' experiences. Through sustained practical experience, reflective supervision from a coach, and close collaboration with peers, residents develop the ability to connect theory to practice and reflect deeply on their growth as educators.

High-Quality Placement Sites

Whenever possible, residents are placed in **high-quality settings**, which serve as supportive learning environments. These high-quality care settings offer all children developmentally meaningful interactions that help foster brain development. Over time, aspiring educators will internalize the qualities of the learning environment created for them and develop their own educator styles that reflect their personal experience in learning to become an educator. If an inadequate number of high-quality placement sites exists, whole site or administrative level coaching might be required before recruiting apprentices or engaging in individual job-embedded coaching. Alignment and investment in the apprentices' professional learning experiences are critical to a program's quality and, therefore, ensuring that center directors and mentors who support an apprentice on a day-to-day basis have the competencies to do so effectively is paramount.

A Competency-Based Approach

Coursework is tailored to the needs of the early educator and child care workforce and is organized around a clear framework that defines what early childhood educators need to know and be able to do. A **competency-based approach** is informed by the power of integrated learning experiences where skills are demonstrated in context through observations or mastery projects. This enables residents to demonstrate their strengths and where they need further practice. Specific competencies can reflect the needs of the program's community and/or state.

Accessible Coursework

Accessible coursework is delivered in a blended format (online and in person) to offer full-time educators the flexibility that they require. While interactions might occur across a computer screen instead of in person, high-quality adult learning and active engagement with teachers and peers in the same cohort are essential.

Learning Supports to Ensure Equity, Access, and Retention

Residency programs should include **additional supports** for all participants. In addition to the elements listed above, program design should consider the cost of books and other materials, transportation to higher education institutions (for in-person learning/coaching), release time from work to complete residency requirements, child care, and assistance for English language learners and those who need additional academic support.

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Financial Aid and Scholarships

To ensure broad access, residency programs must incorporate adequate **financial aid and scholarships** to cover the cost of coursework. The early childhood workforce is poorly compensated, lacks access to benefits, and typically does not have the financial resources required to pay for further education. It is important to elevate and professionalize the work of educating young children to acknowledge its crucial nature, but this cannot come at the cost of putting low-income women of color out of work.

Compensation

In order to have a sustained impact on program quality, these design elements must be coupled with sustained financial incentives and strategies to increase **compensation**, eventually resulting in pay parity with similarly credentialed elementary school educators. Equitable compensation is essential to attracting and retaining skilled and knowledgeable educators.

Residencies, coupled with sustained increases in compensation, are a key way to support and retain early childhood educators and improve child care program quality. If designed with these elements and intention, they can provide early childhood educators the opportunity to earn credentials and degrees through meaningful coursework and on-the-job learning experiences. These programs have the potential to be transformative by deepening educator expertise and laying the groundwork for compensation parity—two key drivers for strengthening quality and realizing the potential of early care and education.

