UNIVERSITY-BASED TEACHER PREPARATION is often considered the status quo, though many programs are making changes to better support candidates and P-12 partners. These programs enroll candidates who want to be teachers and have the means to support themselves during training. Candidates then take classes and student teach for varying lengths of time before becoming teacher of record post-graduation. Once these novice educators are on their own, there’s typically a steep learning curve—but strong programs prepare teachers for the long haul, and they stand a good chance of staying in the classroom to master their craft.

FAST-TRACK PROGRAMS prepare a large number of teachers to enter some of the highest need classrooms. Fast-tracks to teaching often grow from district shortages, have specific recruitment goals, and feature little to no coursework prior to becoming teacher of record. Aspiring teachers who choose this type of training might not have the means to enter a university-based program or they may be career-changers who need a salary while they learn to teach. The jump from limited training to taking charge of a classroom is difficult for many first-time teachers, and high turnover means that few fast-track grads stay in the classroom long enough to gain the experience needed to become experts.

PARTNERSHIP-BASED RESIDENCIES create an on-ramp for the profession by supporting teachers as they go from recruits to experts. Residencies build from strong partnerships between university-based preparation and P-12 schools, so recruitment and training is aligned with district needs. These programs scaffold coursework and clinical experiences so that aspiring teachers gradually gain responsibility, leading to a paid year-long placement in a P-12 classroom. Residency structures eliminate the financial barriers that can push aspiring educators to fast-tracks and ease the transition to the classroom, putting graduates ahead of the learning curve and making them more likely to stay in teaching.