



Successful Teacher Residencies

What Matters and What Works

Cathy Yun and Julie Fitz

Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

Across the country, districts and schools struggle with persistent teacher shortages. Many states have attempted to bolster the supply of teachers by loosening credentialing requirements or implementing fast-track programs that quickly bring new teachers into the classroom, often without student teaching or robust coursework about how to teach. However, underprepared teachers are not only less effective on average but also leave teaching at significantly higher rates than fully prepared teachers. The resulting teacher turnover, which is disproportionately experienced by underresourced schools, undermines student achievement and carries high costs for the schools and districts that need to replace the teachers who leave.

Some states, including California, have taken a different approach, launching new teacher preparation models called teacher residencies that subsidize and support high-quality preparation for teaching in high-need shortage areas. Modeled after medical residencies, teacher residency programs are partnerships between local education agencies (LEAs) and educator preparation programs (EPPs) that require teacher candidates—typically referred to as “residents”—to spend a full year in a clinical placement alongside an expert teacher while completing highly integrated coursework focused on skills for successful teaching. In paid residency programs, residents typically make a multiyear commitment to teach in the host LEA following program completion in exchange for financial support during preparation. This commitment to stay and teach in the host LEA makes residencies particularly appealing for LEAs that aim to improve retention.

Teacher Residencies in California

Like other states, California has faced significant and ongoing teacher shortages. In response to these shortages, California has made significant investments—amounting to more than \$1.4 billion since 2016—in teacher recruitment and preparation in general, including funding specifically to support residency pathways. Residency-specific investments have included the Teacher Residency Grant Program (2018–2023) and the Statewide Residency Technical Assistance Center Grant Program (2022). Other state investments have included the Golden State Teacher Grant Program; the Classified School Employee Teacher Credentialing Program; the Integrated Undergraduate Teacher Preparation Program Grant; the Local Solutions to the Shortage of Special Education Teachers Grant; and the Teacher Credential, Examination, and Performance Assessment Fee Waiver Program.

Preliminary data suggest that California’s investments are paying off in terms of providing highly prepared, racially diverse teachers. In 2021, about 10% of the state’s teacher preparation completers—more than 1,200—self-identified as having been prepared through a residency, and between 2019 and 2022, 758 completers attended a program funded by the Teacher Residency Grant Program (TRGP). According to a WestEd study, 69% of program completers from the first three cohorts in residency programs funded by the TRGP identified as people of color (compared with 55% of student teaching and internship completers).

Overall, analyses of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing’s (CTC’s) 2021–22 and 2022–23 program completer survey data (including programs not funded by the TRGP) were consistent with and expanded on WestEd’s findings. Candidates who were prepared through a residency were more likely to identify as candidates of color and rate their preparation as very effective compared with those who took other pathways. In addition, residency completers reported more intensive clinical experiences with higher levels of support and feedback and were more likely to pass teaching performance assessments on their first attempt.

Study Approach

As a result of the expansion of teacher residencies within the California landscape, we have the opportunity to examine examples of successful residencies to understand how they operate. In a series of case studies, we examined five of the state's most effective programs, as indicated by graduates and their employers: the Alder Graduate School of Education Master's and Credential Teacher Residency Program; Claremont Graduate University Teacher Education Program; Kern Urban Teacher Residency at California State University, Bakersfield; Teacher Residency for Rural Education at California State University, Bakersfield; and Tri-County Teacher Residency Program at California State University, Monterey Bay. These programs were purposively selected because they incorporated research-backed characteristics of effective residencies, which allowed the research team to understand the specifics of how the programs implemented these characteristics. The studied programs were located at two public and two private institutions of higher education; served between 15 and 325 residents, the majority of whom identified as people of color; offered different credentialing options; and had other unique programming characteristics. Four of the five studied residencies worked with LEAs that had received funding from the California TRGP.

This report includes program descriptions and cross-case findings related to key program characteristics that are commonly found in effective residencies, plus additional programming considerations that emerged from our case studies. We suggest several strategies for sustaining and strengthening residencies, both at the program level and through state and federal policies.

What Matters for Successful Residencies

Across programs, 11 practices emerged as particular promoters of success. Observed program practices were consistent with the following eight key characteristics previously identified by the Learning Policy Institute and the Pathways Alliance as common to effective residency programs:

1. **Strong LEA–EPP partnerships** that include a shared vision and goals, dedicated and sustainable staffing toward residency management with clear articulation of roles and responsibilities, regular and frequent meeting times and communication, and collaborative troubleshooting.
2. **Selectively recruited diverse candidates to meet district hiring needs** through targeted recruitment that is designed to promote a good fit for the prospective resident, the program, and the partner LEA; ongoing communication and outreach to prospective applicants; and reenvisioned admissions processes that remove common barriers without sacrificing candidate selectivity.
3. **A full-year teaching experience alongside an expert mentor teacher** that allows for exposure to the full arc of the school year and involves guided gradual release of responsibilities in residents' clinical experiences, with frequent high-quality feedback for residents as they develop their pedagogical practice.
4. **Expert mentor teachers who coteach with residents** and are carefully recruited, selected, and matched with residents; compensated and incentivized in ways that recognize their critical role in preparing residents; and given opportunities for ongoing professional development.
5. **Coursework about teaching and learning that is tightly integrated with clinical practice** and, additionally, leads to a cohesive program curriculum that has been designed to meet the needs of partner LEAs and involves program structures and schedules that are feasible for residents.

6. **Cohorts of residents** that are supported through intentional community building and placement in clusters at residency clinical placement sites.
7. **Financial supports for residents**, namely a residency-year stipend that helps cover living expenses, is accompanied by financial aid advising and additional resources toward program-related costs, and is sustainably funded through the blending and braiding of funds with EPP and LEA cost sharing.
8. **Ongoing mentoring and support for graduates**, including guidance through the credentialing process and support for the transition into full-time employment and induction.

Building on these eight previously identified characteristics, findings from the current study point to three additional characteristics that were common across the studied programs:

9. **Proactive whole person supports** that residents can easily access through a “go-to person,” including strong program communication; active monitoring of resident progress; course instructors and clinical coaches with diverse backgrounds that mirror residents’ intersectional identities; and attention to basic needs such as housing, child care, transportation, food security, and access to health and wellness care.
10. **Ongoing development of program capacity** that focuses on regular data collection and analysis, increases coordination with other EPP pathways and campus resources, and accesses technical assistance support as appropriate.
11. **Explicit focus on promoting equity for both residents and the students they teach** through equity-oriented mission and vision statements, program design that minimizes common barriers, and program learning objectives that prepare residents to enact equity-focused teaching practices.

Recommendations

State and federal investments in residency pathways have provided essential support for the initiation, growth, and continuous improvement of the programs we studied and the residents who participate in them. Given that residencies have shown promise in helping districts solve shortages, preparing effective teachers, recruiting residents from diverse backgrounds, and making the teaching profession more accessible to candidates from historically excluded groups, we offer the following state- and federal-level recommendations for supporting high-quality residency pathways.

Recommendations for California Policymakers

- **Maintain funding for the California Teacher Residency Grant Program.** Funding should be maintained through and beyond the 2026–27 school year (when funding is due to expire), with continued attention to ensuring that both EPPs and LEAs can build effective capacity for management, work toward sustainable funding models, and provide financial packages for candidates that adequately support their living expenses during the residency year.
- **Continue to provide financial aid for prospective teachers who will teach in high-need communities, including residents.** The Golden State Teacher Grant Program, which provides \$20,000 in tuition support for students enrolled in a CTC-approved teacher preparation program, is due to expire in 2025–26, with funds expected to run out in 2024–25. Renewing this program (with adjustments

for inflation) or creating an alternative reliable source of financial aid for candidates, such as a guaranteed forgivable loan tied to service, can support continued access for the diverse set of candidates that residencies tend to serve.

- **Support residencies in establishing apprenticeship funding streams.** With state leadership, a residency program could be structured as a teacher apprenticeship, as outlined in Department of Labor–approved national guidelines and standards, thereby enabling these programs to potentially leverage federal and state workforce development funding.
- **Continue to fund and develop thoughtful technical assistance that helps residencies design sustainable, high-quality models.** In 2023, California launched the Statewide Residency Technical Assistance Center (SRTAC) to support the scaling and sustainability of residencies. SRTAC has huge potential to support capacity-building for residencies, particularly in key areas such as partnership development, program management, coursework and clinical alignment, and support for residents. There are numerous ways that SRTAC can build program capacity, such as by helping match residency programs with existing technical assistance providers, providing grant-writing support, developing tools that synthesize recommendations for strengthening residencies, and creating template documents that programs can modify to fit their context. Developing relationships with residency programs can provide a foundation for facilitating meaningful program transformation over time.

States can do a great deal to strengthen their teaching workforce with support for residencies. As of 2024, there were 23 states, including the District of Columbia, that had created or supported such programs in their state-level policies. Federal policymakers can also play a role in ensuring that these models spread and that prospective teachers can afford to access high-quality preservice preparation and stay in the teaching profession.

Recommendations for Federal Policymakers

- **Expand funding for the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) Grant Program.** TQP grants have provided important sources of start-up funding for several studied residencies and for many more across the country. Expanded funding for TQP grants can help more residencies similarly launch, develop, and expand their programming.
- **Upgrade the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant to cover the full cost of tuition.** For prospective teachers to be able to afford comprehensive preparation, they need adequate financial support. Increasing the federal TEACH Grant amount to cover the cost of pre- or postbaccalaureate teacher preparation can increase the attractiveness and feasibility of preservice teacher preparation programs, including teacher residencies, particularly for diverse candidates.
- **Cover teachers' monthly loan payments until their debt is retired.** Existing federal loan forgiveness programs require teachers to shoulder monthly payments for years with salaries that are lower than those of similarly educated professionals. These programs could instead be structured such that teachers' federal loan payments are covered by the federal government as long as they remain in the classroom until the loans are fully repaid, a policy that could serve as an incentive for both recruitment and retention.

Introduction

Across the country, districts and schools struggle with persistent teacher shortages. The School Pulse Panel conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics found that in August 2023, 45% of public schools reported having one or more unfilled teaching positions, with 66% of these schools reporting that their difficulty in filling these positions was due to a lack of qualified candidates.¹ Teacher shortages are never experienced uniformly across subject areas and communities, and reported vacancies were particularly pronounced in schools that predominantly serve students of color and/or high-poverty student populations and in subject areas such as special education; English as a second language (ESL)² or bilingual education; general elementary; and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).³

Many states have attempted to bolster the supply of teachers by loosening credentialing requirements or implementing fast-track programs that quickly bring new teachers into the classroom. However, underprepared teachers are not only less effective on average⁴ but also leave teaching at significantly higher rates than fully prepared teachers.⁵ The resulting teacher turnover, which is disproportionately experienced by underresourced schools, undermines student achievement. It also carries high costs for the schools and districts that need to replace the teachers who have left.⁶ Taking into account the labor involved in recruiting, onboarding, and supporting new teachers, these costs can range from \$9,000 per teacher in rural areas to more than \$21,000 in urban areas.⁷ For schools and districts that experience a revolving door of underprepared teachers, these costs add up. New, more sustainable pipelines into the profession are needed.

Some states, including California, have taken a different approach, launching new teacher preparation models called teacher residencies that subsidize and support high-quality preparation for teaching in high-need shortage areas.⁸ Modeled after medical residencies, teacher residency programs are partnerships between local education agencies (LEAs) and educator preparation programs (EPPs) that require teacher candidates—typically referred to as “residents”—to spend a full year in a clinical placement alongside an expert teacher while completing highly integrated coursework focused on skills for successful teaching.

For LEAs, paid teacher residency programs can be an effective strategy in a multipronged approach to developing and retaining talent. In paid residency programs, residents typically make a multiyear commitment to teach in the host LEA following program completion in exchange for financial support during preparation. This service commitment makes residencies particularly appealing for LEAs that aim to improve retention.

In recent years, the state of California has made substantive investments in residency preparation. (See [Teacher Residencies in California](#).) In 2021, about 10% of the state’s teacher preparation completers—more than 1,200—self-identified as having been prepared through a residency,⁹ and between 2019 and 2022, 758 completers attended a program funded by the Teacher Residency Grant Program (TRGP).¹⁰ As a result of the expansion of teacher residencies within the California landscape, we had the opportunity to examine examples of successful residencies to understand how they operate. In a series of case studies, we examined five of the state’s most effective programs, as indicated by graduates and their employers: the Alder Graduate School of Education Master’s and Credential Teacher Residency Program (Alder); Claremont Graduate University Teacher Education Program (Claremont); Kern Urban Teacher Residency (Kern Urban) and Teacher Residency for Rural Education (TRRE) at California State University, Bakersfield

(CSUB); and Tri-County Teacher Residency Program (Tri-County) at California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB). Understanding how these residencies develop and operate their programming can inform the design and continuous improvement of teacher residency programs in California and across the country.

What We Know About Teacher Residencies

The teacher residency model was initially developed to help address districts' teacher shortages while simultaneously strengthening teacher preparation. As the number of residencies has grown, so too has the research base examining the impacts and outcomes of residency programs.

Residency graduates are typically found to be as or more effective than other beginning teachers and tend to stay in teaching longer, particularly compared with emergency hires or alternative-route candidates, who are often hired during shortages.¹¹ Residency graduates' persistence in the profession allows them to further grow in their effectiveness while also reducing teacher turnover in the schools in which they work. Since teacher turnover negatively impacts student achievement and tends to happen at disproportionately high rates in high-poverty schools,¹² residency preparation shows particular promise for closing the “revolving door” of teachers experienced by educationally marginalized student populations.

Residency graduates are typically found to be as or more effective than other beginning teachers and tend to stay in teaching longer.

Residencies also appear to support racial and ethnic diversification of the teaching workforce, the benefits of which have been well documented. Studies have found that students of color can benefit both academically and nonacademically when they are taught by a teacher of color: These findings are particularly strong for Black students taught by Black teachers. Across studies, students of color have often been found to achieve higher test scores, have a lower likelihood of chronic absenteeism and suspension, and become more likely to graduate high school and aspire to attend college when they have teachers of their same cultural or racial background.¹³ Notably, the benefits of a diverse teacher workforce do not accrue exclusively to students of color: Some studies have found that students from all racial and ethnic groups express favorable perceptions of the instructional abilities and classroom culture created by their teachers of color.¹⁴ Studies of individual residency programs have shown that residency participants tend to be more racially and ethnically diverse than teachers from other comprehensive pathways.¹⁵ Nationally, 69% of the 2,261 residents prepared by the programs in the National Center for Teacher Residencies (NCTR) network in 2022–23 identified as a person of color.¹⁶ In comparison, nationally, 32% of preservice teachers identified as a person of color in 2022.¹⁷

Considerable variability exists between programs that are nominally referred to as “teacher residencies,” prompting efforts to build a shared definition of the teacher residency model. Identifying the program features that contribute to the model's positive outcomes can support high-quality implementation. An early synthesis of studies by the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) identified eight key characteristics shared by effective residencies.¹⁸ These characteristics also appear in the definition of teacher residencies

advanced by the Pathways Alliance,¹⁹ a coalition of “organizations dedicated to supporting and implementing diverse and inclusive educator preparation pipelines.”²⁰ These eight characteristics, with details drawn from the Pathways Alliance definition of teacher residencies, are:

1. **Strong LEA–EPP Partnerships.** Teacher residencies, as preparation pathways, are “grounded in a shared vision for quality teacher preparation coconstructed with leadership from participating preparation programs and schools or school systems.”²¹ These residency partners regularly collaborate and establish clear roles and agreements around the delivery of programming and continuous improvement practices to ensure ongoing program alignment with partnership goals. Partners also work toward the long-term financial sustainability of the program so that program implementation is not dependent on the availability of short-term grant funding. Furthermore, partners develop models to financially support residents during the residency year, drawing on the financial assets of both LEAs and institutions of higher education (IHEs) to do so, and they provide ongoing support to residents after program completion.
2. **Selectively Recruited Diverse Candidates to Meet District Hiring Needs.** Residency programs aim to prepare candidates who meet the workforce needs of their partner LEAs. In particular, the programs recruit top-notch candidates who have racial and ethnic identities that are underrepresented in the teacher workforce, use competitive screening processes for admission, and prepare admitted residents to teach in high-need subject areas and grade levels.
3. **Full-Year Teaching Experience Alongside an Expert Mentor Teacher.** Residents spend, at minimum, a full academic year alongside an experienced mentor teacher, preferably in a school that serves diverse students and operates in alignment with residency program priorities. Over time, residents take on more instructional responsibilities in their placement classroom, increasingly functioning as coteachers, while the mentor teacher remains the teacher of record throughout the residency year. Mentor teachers receive ongoing support from program supervisors and faculty to help residents make “connections between clinical experiences, coursework, and resident performance assessments,”²² and program faculty also monitor residents’ experiences to ensure alignment across program components. Residents attend their placement following the transitional kindergarten (TK)–12 academic calendar rather than that of their preparation program and are integrated into the school community.
4. **Expert Mentor Teachers Who Coteach With Residents.** High-quality mentors are key to residency preparation. Programs carefully recruit and select mentors who have the experience and disposition to support residents’ learning and development and whose approach to teaching aligns with program priorities. Mentors are compensated for their work and recognized as “school-based clinical educators.”²³ In the classroom, they model, coplan, coteach, and reflect with residents, preparing them to meet certification requirements, embody professional standards, and develop relationships within the school and district. As part of their role, mentors engage in ongoing professional learning to enhance their instructional coaching and have opportunities for collaboration and reflection with other mentor teachers.

5. Coursework About Teaching and Learning That Is Tightly Integrated With Clinical Practice.

Residents engage with a robust preservice curriculum that is informed by research, addresses all certification requirements and professional standards, and prepares candidates to address the needs and priorities of the program's partner LEA(s) and students. Coursework complements and scaffolds residents' clinical experiences by establishing a firm knowledge base that is grounded in the science of learning and development and by engaging residents in "practice-based learning opportunities" and ongoing reflection on their professional identity and the identities of the students they serve. All coursework assignments, assessments, and feedback are "aligned and coherent across the coursework and clinical experience."²⁴

6. Cohorts of Residents. Residents are placed in "teaching schools" that model good practices with diverse learners and are designed to help novices learn to teach. By designating specific schools that engage in equitable and effective instruction as residency placement sites, programs can ensure that "residents are prepared in well-aligned, supportive sites"²⁵ that instantiate best practices and match the likely future contexts of their teaching.

7. Financial Support for Residents in Exchange for a 3- to 5-Year Teaching Commitment. In an effort to make residency preparation affordable and financially attractive to a diverse pool of candidates, programs provide residents with a stipend designed to cover living expenses during the residency year. The Pathways Alliance notes that "ideally ... at least some resident funding comes from LEAs, reflecting the residency's status as a stable part of LEAs' instructional and talent cultivation and development strategies."²⁶ In some cases, programs may allow residents to supplement their stipend by serving in compensated support roles (e.g., as substitute teachers, paraeducators, after-school program staff), provided that these responsibilities do not detract from their primary responsibility as a resident coteacher. In exchange for financial support during the residency year, residents make a commitment to teach in a partner LEA for a period of 3 to 5 years following program completion.

8. Ongoing Mentoring and Support for Graduates. After program completers are hired in partner LEAs, they continue to receive support as they transition into their first lead teaching role. This ongoing support often takes the form of induction programming provided by the hiring LEA or in partnership with the preparation program.

Although residencies often take on context-specific program features, these eight characteristics remain key to the model.

Teacher Residencies in California

Like other states, California has faced significant and ongoing teacher shortages. In 2021–22, California issued more than 10,000 intern credentials, Short-Term Staff Permits, and Variable Term Waivers to help schools and districts meet their immediate staffing needs, an indicator that demand for credentialed teachers far outstripped the supply.²⁷

In response to these shortages, California has made significant investments—amounting to more than \$1.4 billion since 2016²⁸—in teacher recruitment and preparation in general, with specific funding to support residency pathways. Residency-specific investments have included the Teacher Residency

Grant Program (2018–2023) and the Statewide Residency Technical Assistance Center Grant Program (2022). Other state investments have included the Golden State Teacher Grant Program; the Classified School Employee Teacher Credentialing Program; the Integrated Undergraduate Teacher Preparation Program Grant; the Local Solutions to the Shortage of Special Education Teachers Grant; and the Teacher Credential, Examination, and Performance Assessment Fee Waiver Program.

In 2018, the California legislature initiated the Teacher Residency Grant Program (TRGP) to support the development, implementation, and expansion of residency programs. As of 2023, the state had allocated more than \$670 million toward this initiative, which is administered by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC).²⁹ Through the TRGP, LEAs planning, implementing, or expanding a teacher residency in partnership with a CTC-approved EPP are able to apply for grants of up to \$40,000 per resident (an increase from the \$25,000 maximum offered per resident at the time of our data collection in 2022–23).³⁰ TRGP-funded programs are required to:

- support designated shortage fields (i.e., special education, bilingual education, computer science, STEM, transitional kindergarten, and kindergarten) and recruit and retain teachers who reflect the diversity of the communities served by partner LEAs;
- provide a stipend of no less than \$20,000 per resident (starting fiscal year 2023–2024);
- require residents to make a commitment to teach for a minimum of 4 years in the grantee LEA within 8 years of program completion; and
- incorporate key characteristics and components of effective residency programs as previously described, namely:
 - a partnership between an LEA and a CTC-approved teacher preparation program;
 - a full year of clinical experience alongside an experienced mentor teacher, accompanied by initial preparation coursework;
 - preparation that is tailored to the LEA context and allows residents to learn about the LEA's instructional initiatives and curriculum;
 - a cohort model; and
 - no-cost induction support following program completion.³¹

Grant funds can be allocated toward resident³² and mentor stipends, preparation faculty stipends or release time, or residency program staff compensation. Additionally, up to 5% of grant funds may be used for program administrative costs.³³ The LEA–EPP partnership must match the state commitment with at least \$20,000 (80% of the first \$25,000 of the grant amount for each resident), which can be in-kind matching.³⁴

The CTC awards three types of grants: capacity grants, implementation grants, and expansion grants. Capacity grants fund a planning period before residency launch; implementation grants support programs through the initial launch phase; and expansion grants fund operating residencies that aim to increase the number of residents, partners, or pathways.

California's robust investments have expanded the residency pathway within the state. Between 2018 and 2023, the CTC awarded 200 grants to 129 different teacher residency partnerships across the state.³⁵ Of the awarded grants, 59 were capacity grants, 77 were implementation grants, 40 were expansion grants, and 24 were implementation and expansion grants.³⁶ WestEd's California Teacher Residency Grant Program Dashboard reports that across the first four cohorts (school years 2019–20, 2020–21, 2021–22, and 2022–23), TRGP-funded programs enrolled 1,362 residents.³⁷ A sizable proportion of California's new teachers (nearly 10%, or 1,226, in 2021) reported being prepared through a residency program.³⁸ Notably, not all of these programs are grant funded; as a result, they may lack important features of the residency model that are required by the TRGP.

Preliminary data suggest that California's investments are paying off in terms of providing highly prepared, racially diverse teachers. Ongoing evaluations conducted by WestEd show that the residents from TRGP-funded residencies are, as a group, more racially and ethnically diverse than the general population of teachers, have credentials in high-need subject areas, and are retained at higher rates than teachers from other preparation pathways.³⁹ Across the first four cohorts from TRGP-funded programs, 67% of completers identified as people of color; in terms of credentialing, 42% completed credentialing programs for teaching special education, 62% for teaching in a STEM field, and 29% for a credential with bilingual authorization. Of the 297 residents enrolled in the 2019–20 cohort, 88% were still teaching during the 2022–23 school year.⁴⁰

Preliminary data suggest that California's investments are paying off in terms of providing highly prepared, racially diverse teachers.

In 2022, California appropriated \$20 million toward a competitive grant to create a statewide technical assistance center that would support the planning, launch, expansion, and continuous improvement of residency programs.⁴¹ In 2023, the CTC awarded the competitive grant to the Santa Clara County Office of Education to operate the Statewide Residency Technical Assistance Center (SRTAC), in partnership with the Residency Lab; the University of California, Los Angeles Teacher Education Program; and WestEd. To support implementation, the center also partners with four county offices of education—Humboldt, Sacramento, San Diego, and Tulare—that serve as “regional hubs” across the state. The Santa Clara County Office of Education itself serves as the fifth regional hub.⁴²

Other state investments intended to support teacher recruitment and preparation more generally can also be leveraged to support California residency programs. The Golden State Teacher Grant Program provides up to \$20,000 in scholarships for teacher candidates who commit to teaching in high-need schools for 4 years, a commitment that graduates can fulfill concurrently with their residency grant teaching commitment.⁴³ Additional investments include the Classified School Employee Teacher Credentialing program, which provides up to \$24,000 over 5 years to support classified staff such as paraeducators in earning their bachelor's degree and teaching credentials (funded through 2026);⁴⁴ the Integrated Undergraduate Teacher Preparation Program grant, which provides funding to IHEs to develop accelerated programs and can be braided with teacher residency funding to allow residents to complete their bachelor's degree and earn their teaching credentials in 4 years, rather than the 5-year postbaccalaureate

pathway that is more common in California (funded through June 2025);⁴⁵ and the Teacher Credential, Examination, and Performance Assessment Fee Waivers, which covered the cost of examination, assessment, and credentialing fees for teacher candidates (funded through June 2024).⁴⁶

Study Approach

As a result of the expansion of teacher residencies within California, we have the opportunity to examine examples of successful, high-quality residencies to understand how they operate. In this multiple case study, we conduct a deep-dive investigation of five teacher residency programs in California to document the nuts and bolts of their program infrastructure, with particular emphasis on understanding how they implement the previously identified eight key program characteristics that are common to effective residencies.

By understanding the details of how these residencies develop and operate their programming, we can provide robust examples of the ways that residencies develop programming that aligns with the residency research base and share insights that can inform the design and continuous improvement of residency programs across the country. Furthermore, through this examination, we illustrate the complexity of residency implementation and the critical role that residency programs play in preparing a highly qualified and diverse teacher workforce.

Using a case study approach and cross-case analyses,⁴⁷ the study included data from five residency programs at four institutions, drawing from more than 150 documents and 120 interviews and focus groups. Documents included course syllabi, program handbooks, evaluation reports, clinical observation rubrics, memoranda of understanding, and other program documents. Interview and focus group participants included a wide range of interest holders, such as current residents, residency graduates, mentor teachers, clinical coaches, course instructors, hosting or hiring principals, residency program leaders, teacher preparation program administrators, and LEA administrators. (See [Appendix A: Study Participants](#).) Transcriptions were iteratively coded using open coding and a priori categories derived from prior research.

High-quality residency program selection took place in three stages. First, top-rated and effective residency programs were identified using recommendations from state-level informants in combination with state-level program completer survey data and program outcome data. Next, potential programs were examined to determine if they demonstrated the eight research-based characteristics of high-quality residencies. (See [What We Know About Teacher Residencies](#) for a list of research-based characteristics.) This stage required initial data collection through questionnaires and interviews with leaders of residency programs with the potential to be included in this study. Next, with the goal of selecting sites that would represent the diversity of residency programs across the state, we considered geographic location, institution type (i.e., public or private), course modalities (i.e., online asynchronous, online synchronous, in-person), and credentialing area (e.g., bilingual, special education) when determining the sites that would be included in our final sample. Finally, we excluded programs that had been described in more than one previous Learning Policy Institute study.

Study residency programs included large and small urban and rural programs partnering with public and private universities. The overarching question “How do successful residencies do their work?” guided us as we focused our analysis on the following questions for each case study:

- How are residencies structured in terms of their organization, programming, and financing?
- What is the experience like for residents?
- What procedural and structural features support the residency to enable smooth operations and success?
- What ongoing challenges do residencies face?

The following sections of this report include program descriptions and cross-case findings related to each of the eight key program characteristics common to effective residencies, plus additional programming considerations that emerged from our case studies. In this report, we draw on only selected program examples to illustrate each of our findings. More comprehensive descriptions of program practices can be found in the individual case write-ups that accompany this report. Individual case reports are available for two of the five programs, with the third case report featuring two additional programs at the same institution. The fifth program (at California State University, Monterey Bay) does not have an accompanying case report because the program was discontinued in summer 2023. (See [California State University, Monterey Bay](#).)

Report Structure

The following section provides brief descriptions of the five case study programs and their outcomes. Findings presented in subsequent sections are organized by the eight characteristics of high-quality residencies identified in previous research. Following the discussion of the findings related to these eight characteristics, the report includes findings related to three additional characteristics that emerged from analyses of the five case study programs in the current study. After the discussions of characteristics and findings, the report describes ongoing challenges experienced in the case study programs, followed by a summary of findings and recommendations for policy and practice.

Case Study Sites

In this multiple case study, we examined five California teacher residency programs across four different institutions of higher education (IHEs). Our site selection process (see [Appendix B: Methodology](#)) resulted in the selection of five programs at four IHEs:

1. Alder Graduate School of Education Master's and Credential Teacher Residency (Alder)
2. Claremont Graduate University Teacher Education Program (Claremont)
3. California State University, Bakersfield Kern Urban Teacher Residency (Kern Urban)
4. California State University, Bakersfield⁴⁸ Teacher Residency for Rural Education (TRRE)
5. California State University, Monterey Bay Tri-County Teacher Residency Program (Tri-County)

As shown in [Table 1](#), while all of the residency programs meet the evidence-based characteristics of effective residency programs, they vary in years of operation, number of partners, program format, and cost. Of the five residencies studied, four (Alder, Kern Urban, TRRE, and Tri-County) worked with one or more local education agencies (LEAs) that had received California Teacher Residency Grant Program (TRGP) funds in support of the residency as of 2022–23. Notably, because programs and individual partnerships drew on different sources of funding, not all practices discussed in this report aligned with TRGP requirements.

This section provides brief descriptions of each program. For more details on individual programs, please see program case reports.

Table 1. Summary of the Studied Teacher Residency Programs, 2022–23

Program details	Alder	Claremont	Kern Urban	TRRE	Tri-County
Institution of higher education partner	Alder Graduate School of Education	Claremont Graduate University	CSU, Bakersfield	CSU, Bakersfield	CSU, Monterey Bay
LEA partner(s)	47 public transitional kindergarten–Grade 12 school systems throughout California ^a	Corona-Norco and Ontario-Montclair Unified School Districts	Bakersfield City School District (BCSD) ^b	Tulare County Office of Education ^a and multiple districts	Monterey County Office of Education ^a
First cohort	2010–11	2020–21	2016–17	2020–21	2019–20
Credentials offered^c	MS, ES (Mild to Moderate Support Needs only), SS (English, math, science, social studies, world languages)	MS, ES, SS (English, math, science, social studies, world languages)	MS, SS (math, science)	SS (English, math, science, world languages, art)	MS (Bilingual), ES, SS (English, math, science, social studies, world languages)

Program details	Alder	Claremont	Kern Urban	TRRE	Tri-County
MA degree	MA in Education	MA in Education	No	Optional MA in Curriculum and Instruction ^d	No
Program length	12 months	12–18 months	10 months ^e	12–15 ^f months	10–12 months
Program format	Hybrid	Online	In person	In person	In person
Clinical experience	4 days/week (August–June)	5 days/week (August–June)	4 days/week (August–June)	3 days/week (August–June)	5 half-days/week (August–June)
Resident stipend (may vary by LEA)	\$12,000–\$37,000	\$25,000–\$42,000	\$18,000–\$23,000	\$35,000	\$17,000
Mentor stipend	\$2,000–\$5,000 (varies by LEA)	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$4,500	\$2,000
Enrollment	325	34 ^g	20	15	27
Resident demographics (cumulative)	0.5% American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander; 9.5% Asian/Asian American; 14% Black/African American; 45% Hispanic or Latino/a; 26% White; 4% two or more races (1.3% race/ethnicity unknown)	11.2% American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander; 7.6% Asian/Asian American; 8.8% Black/African American; 45.3% Hispanic or Latino/a; 21.8% White; 1.8% two or more races (3.5% race/ethnicity unknown)	3.1% Asian/Asian American; 3.9% Black/African American; 68% Hispanic or Latino/a; 19.5% White; 5.5% two or more races	3.4% Asian/Asian American; 1.7% Black/African American; 66% Hispanic or Latino/a; 15% White; 6.7% two or more races (7.2% race/ethnicity unknown)	96% Hispanic or Latino/a; 4% White
Service requirement^h	4 years in a partner LEA	3 years in a high-need school	4 years in BCSD	3–4 years in a partner LEA or other high-need school in Tulare County	4 years in a high-need partnership school
Retention rates	87% (2-year retention of 2022 graduates in partner LEAs, <i>n</i> = 103)	100% (2-year retention of 2021 graduates in their hiring school, <i>n</i> = 5)	84% (3-year retention rate of 2017–2021 graduates in BCSD, <i>n</i> = 96)	100% (2-year retention of 2021 graduates in high-need schools, <i>n</i> = 5)	86% (overall retention of credentialed program completers, <i>n</i> = 26)

^a At least one partner LEA used California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) Teacher Residency Grant Program (TRGP) funding to support the residency partnership in 2022–23.

^b While BCSD had received a CTC TRGP expansion grant, these funds were not used to support any enrolled residents in 2022–23.

^c ES = Education Specialist; MS = Multiple Subject; SS = Single Subject.

^d Optional MA requires coursework beyond that required for credentialing, adding an additional semester to the program length.

^e Does not include four foundational courses, which are required before admission to Kern Urban.

^f Includes four foundational courses, which TRRE residents take as a cohort prior to beginning their residency.

^g In 2022–23, the program newly enrolled 34 funded residents: 25 Claremont Fellows and 9 Claremont Native American Fellows. The program also enrolled an additional 7 part-time unfunded candidates, who are not included in the enrollment count.

^h Different funding sources stipulated different minimum service requirements. The Teacher Quality Partnership grant required that funded residents serve as a full-time teacher “in a high-need school served by the high-need LEA in the eligible partnership and teach a subject or area that is designated as high need by the partnership” for a minimum of 3 academic years immediately following program completion, whereas the TRGP required a minimum of 4 years in “a school within the jurisdiction of the grant recipient that sponsored the candidate or another public school in California,” to be completed within 8 school years of program completion.

Sources: Learning Policy Institute analysis of case study program documents. (2024); Alder Graduate School of Education. [About Alder Graduate School of Education](#) (accessed 07/01/2023); Alder Graduate School of Education. [Impact](#) (accessed 07/01/2023); Alder Graduate School of Education. [School partners](#) (accessed 07/01/2023); [Applications for new awards: Teacher Quality Partnership Grant Program](#), 89 F.R. 23573 (proposed April 4, 2024); California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. (2023). [Appendix A authorizing legislation: Teacher Residency Grant Program](#); Claremont Graduate University. (2022). [Preliminary cohort guide](#); California State University, Bakersfield. [Teacher education](#) (accessed 07/01/2023); California State University, Bakersfield. [College of Social Sciences & Education](#) (accessed 07/01/2023); Gonzalez, H., & Saylor, V. (2023, January 27). [Data talk with CTC: Kern Urban \[Webinar\]](#); California State University, Bakersfield. (2022). [Kern Urban Teacher Residency handbook](#); Teacher Residency for Rural Education Project. [TRRE](#) (accessed 07/01/2023); Teacher Residency for Rural Education Project. [Mentor benefits](#) (accessed 07/01/2023); Teacher Residency for Rural Education Project. [Program costs](#) (accessed 07/01/2023); Teacher Residency for Rural Education Project. [Course sequence](#) (accessed 07/01/2023); California State University, Monterey Bay. [Bilingual Authorization Program](#) (accessed 07/01/2023); California State University, Monterey Bay. (2022). [Clinical experience manual, teacher credential programs, 2022–2023](#).

Alder Graduate School of Education

The Master’s and Credential Teacher Residency is a 1-year program offered by the Alder Graduate School of Education (Alder), a nonprofit, private institution accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC). Over 3 semesters, Alder residents earn a Master of Arts in Education in addition to a preliminary Multiple Subject (elementary), Single Subject (secondary), or Education Specialist (special education) credential.

Launched in 2010, the Alder residency evolved from a 5-year pilot program at Aspire Public Schools, a California charter network, into an independent graduate school of education that stands out among other California residency programs by virtue of its size and service area. Alder enrolled 325 residents during the 2022–23 academic year, making

it the largest teacher residency preparation pathway and one of the larger teacher preparation programs in California. As of 2022–23, Alder operated 20 residency cohorts with 47 LEA partners across California, including public school districts, public charter schools, county offices of education, and a Special Education Local Plan Area.

Alder enrolled 325 residents during the 2022–23 academic year, making it the largest teacher residency preparation pathway and one of the larger teacher preparation programs in California.

On average, Alder residents assign high ratings to the program, with 97% of graduates rating the program as effective or very effective on the 2022–23 CTC Credential Program Completer Survey, compared with 86% of completers overall. Overall, 95% of Alder graduates have been hired as full-time teachers

following the residency year, and 90% of Alder graduates have been rated by their employers as more effective than other first-year teachers working in the same schools.⁴⁹ The program reported that 65% of Alder’s 2019 graduates were still working in the same partner LEA after 3 years, compared with only 43% of non-Alder teachers who started in the LEA during the same year.⁵⁰ During the 2022–23 school year, 83% of enrolled residents identified as members of racial and ethnic groups that have historically been excluded from the teaching profession,⁵¹ 69% were first-generation college graduates, and 54% were Pell Grant recipients.⁵²

Consistent with its mission to recruit and educate “excellent teachers and leaders who reflect our schools’ communities,”⁵³ Alder emphasizes a whole child approach based on the science of learning and development, with a focus on building strong connections to culture and community and practicing critical examination of inequities in schooling. The program also promotes equity in teacher preparation by applying a “high-touch, whole adult” approach to support residents throughout their time in the program. The program recognizes that lack of opportunity may have prevented some candidates from developing specific skills prior to the residency, and the program attempts to address these systemic inequities by incorporating strong supports. Alder views this high-touch, supportive approach as key to preparing the diverse pool of educators that they recruit and bring into the profession.

Claremont Graduate University

The Claremont Teacher Education Program is a 12- to 18-month residency-based program offered by Claremont Graduate University (Claremont), a nonprofit, private institution accredited by WASC and CTC. Claremont residents earn a Master of Arts in Education in addition to a preliminary Multiple Subject, Single Subject, or Education Specialist credential.

Launched in 2020 after a programwide redesign, the Claremont residency program is notable as a program with fully online coursework and coaching that candidates can enroll in and complete from anywhere in California. These virtual forms of engagement are augmented by in-person clinical placements and mentoring. Claremont residency is highly rated by graduates, with 100% of graduates rating the program as effective or highly effective on the 2022–23 CTC statewide completer survey. After program completion, 94% of residents were hired into the partner LEAs where they completed their clinical placements or other underresourced schools, with a 100% 2-year same-school retention rate for the first cohort of five graduates. Claremont residents were a diverse group, with 83% identifying as people of color overall in 2023.

Claremont’s program is built around critical social justice competencies and a classroom ecology framework that centers relationships and interpersonal interactions. By amplifying candidates’ funds of knowledge—the skills and knowledge they have accumulated through their lived experiences and cultural practices—and building nurturing relationships with candidates, the program aims to enact and model practices that embody the concepts that residents learn about in their coursework throughout the program. The Claremont residency program has taken various steps to align its practices with these frameworks, such as creating a set of critical social justice teaching competencies and integrating them into all of the courses; aligning clinical observations, residents’ self-reflections, and evaluations with these competencies; centering the work of diverse scholars as course texts; collecting regular feedback from residents about their experiences in the program; and diversifying the program’s faculty.

California State University, Bakersfield

California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB) operates a consortium of seven residency programs, each with its own credentialing focus based on unique partner needs. (See [Table 2](#) for an overview of CSUB's programs.) Overall, CSUB residents across all seven residencies rate their programs highly, with 97% of all residency graduates rating their program as effective or highly effective on the 2022–23 CTC completer survey, compared with 86% of completers overall. In this report, we describe core university practices that span across programs and profile two of these residencies: the Kern Urban Teacher Residency (Kern Urban) and the Teacher Residency for Rural Education (TRRE). The different contexts of these programs and the districts with which they partner (urban vs. rural) help illustrate how residency preparation can be modified to meet the large range of district needs for both large urban and small rural districts.

Each of the seven CSUB residencies has a different credentialing focus and unique characteristics, but, as part of a consortium, they share some core practices. The CSUB coordinators of the seven residencies meet once per month as a professional learning community so they can exchange ideas and help each other with challenges they may be facing. These meetings also help coordinators ensure that each residency aligns with the overall goals of the CSUB teacher preparation program. Such alignment is achieved through shared signature assignments in courses and a shared framework for clinical experiences.

Coursework and clinical expectations are built around high-leverage teaching practices that are aligned to the California Teaching Performance Expectations to help residents develop effective teaching moves and strategies to support their diverse students. Course objectives, professional development for residents and mentors, the clinical observation rubric, and resident summative assessments all are structured around the following high-leverage practices:

- building relationships and interacting with students respectfully;
- engaging learners effectively;
- managing class procedures and student behavior;
- utilizing a variety of resources to plan, design, and implement instruction that meets learners' diverse needs;
- eliciting student thinking and discussion;
- demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness using assessment in instruction; and
- growing and developing as a professional.⁵⁴

These shared candidate competencies provide coherence for the overall teacher preparation program while also allowing each residency to be unique.

Each residency recruits candidates who live or have roots in and around the partnership school districts and the communities they serve. This recruitment strategy makes it more likely that residency graduates will be retained due to their lifelong connections to the area and, often, to the districts that host or hire them. In addition, because some of the partner districts are located quite far from CSUB's main campus, the residencies typically hold in-person classes and meetings at locations within or in close proximity to their partner districts.

Table 2. Seven Residency Programs at California State University, Bakersfield

Residency	Partner LEA(s)	Credential focus	2022–23 enrollment
Black Educator Teacher Residency	Panama-Buena Vista Union School District; Lancaster School District; Palmdale School District	Multiple Subject	12 ^a
Kern Teacher Residency	Greenfield Union School District	Multiple Subject	18
Kern High Teacher Residency	Kern High School District	Single Subject	25
Kern Urban Teacher Residency	Bakersfield City School District	Multiple Subject; Single Subject math, science	20
Teacher Residency for Rural Education	Tulare County Office of Education	Single Subject English, math, science, world languages, art	15
Greenfield Teacher Residency for Education Specialists	Greenfield Union School District	Education Specialist Mild/Moderate Support Needs (MMSN) or Extensive Support Needs (ESN)	8
Education Specialist Teacher Residency–Bakersfield	Bakersfield City School District	Education Specialist Mild/Moderate Support Needs (MMSN) or Extensive Support Needs (ESN)	3

^a The Black Educator Teacher Residency begins in the spring, so enrollment represents the program year from spring 2022 through fall 2023.

Sources: Bakersfield City School District. [Kern Urban Teacher Residency](#) (accessed 09/13/2023); California State University, Bakersfield. [BETR partners](#) (accessed 09/13/2023); California State University, Bakersfield. [Teacher residencies](#) (accessed 09/13/2023); Teacher Residency for Rural Education. [About the project](#) (accessed 09/13/2023).

Despite these shared core practices, each residency has distinctive features. Kern Urban is a 10-month program offered in partnership with Bakersfield City School District, which is a transitional kindergarten (TK)–8 district. Over 2 semesters, Kern Urban residents work toward a Multiple Subject (elementary) credential, with the option of adding a Single Subject (secondary) credential in math or science, while completing a yearlong clinical experience in a Bakersfield City School District TK–8 classroom. The program has a particular emphasis on preparing candidates to integrate STEM education into the general TK–8 curriculum using the California Common Core State Standards for Mathematics (CCSS-Math) and the Next Generation Science Standards.

Launched in 2016, Kern Urban is the longest-running residency among CSUB's residency cohorts and since 2022–23 has been fully funded by the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)—California's school funding formula. Over 7 years, with its strong partnership with Bakersfield City School District, Kern Urban has prepared a total of 128 graduates, with a 3-year district retention rate of 84% and a 5-year district retention rate of 79%. This 5-year retention rate is notable, as it measures graduate retention

beyond any grant-related service requirements. Kern Urban residents are racially diverse, with 79.1% identifying as people of color in 2022–23, and they closely reflect the racial demographics of the district’s student population.⁵⁵

Kern Urban is also notable among programs because of its focus on data-driven outcomes and continuous improvement efforts. The program leadership team has systematized data collection and analysis on an annual cycle and engages in ongoing collaboration to examine the data and use them to inform decisions and program improvement. The value of continuous improvement is integrated into resident and mentor experiences through ongoing professional development and reflection as a critical part of the practice of teaching.

In 2022–23, TRRE was another of CSUB’s seven teacher residencies, though the program transitioned to new IHE partners—California State University, Fresno, and California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt—for the 2024–25 academic year. TRRE is a 12- to 15-month program operated in partnership with the California Center on Teaching Careers at the Tulare County Office of Education. Over 3 semesters, TRRE residents worked toward a Single Subject credential in math, science, or English, although the program has since added new credentialing options. Residents also had the option of completing an additional semester of coursework to receive a Master of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction.

The TRRE program launched its first cohort in 2020 in response to the staffing needs of rural school districts and the barriers to program access for candidates who live in Tulare County’s rural communities. Although a relatively young residency, TRRE already demonstrates promising outcomes. As of 2023, TRRE had graduated 33 new teachers. Although the program has not existed long enough to fully understand its impact on retention, all five graduating residents from the first cohort continued to teach in a high-need district as of the 2023–24 school year. TRRE residents were racially diverse, with 87% of residents in the 2022–23 cohort identifying as people of color. Because the rural communities that TRRE serves have high rates of linguistic diversity, the program had a strong focus on differentiating instruction for and supporting students who are multilingual.

In addition to its focus on serving rural communities, TRRE is notable for a partnership structure that leverages the relationships between the Tulare County Office of Education and surrounding school districts. This partnership enables the residency’s collaboration with multiple rural districts that could not, on their own, place and hire a full residency cohort or spare the staffing capacity necessary for independent residency management. The county office facilitated collaboration with three school districts during the 2022–23 school year (Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District, Tulare Joint Union High School District, and Visalia Unified School District) and added three more LEA collaborators during the 2023–24 school year (Delano Joint Union High School District, Hanford Joint Union High School District, and Wonderful College Prep Academy–Delano site). By working with multiple districts to create a single residency cohort, the county office made high-quality residency preparation a more viable talent development pathway for districts in the rural Tulare region. The program’s credentialing options were determined using a 2018 survey of districts’ needs, facilitated by the county office, so that residents would graduate with credentials in high-need areas.

California State University, Monterey Bay

The Tri-County Teacher Residency Program (Tri-County) was a 10- to 12-month program offered by California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB), in partnership with the Monterey County Office of Education. Due to several converging factors, including the loss of three key personnel and a transition between funding sources, the university temporarily discontinued the residency in summer 2023, with plans to reopen once funding is stabilized. During the program's operation, Tri-County residents earned a preliminary Multiple Subject, Single Subject, or Education Specialist credential over the course of 2 or 3 semesters. Residents also had the option to earn a bilingual authorization and were encouraged to pursue this path.

Tri-County launched in 2019 and was notable for its focus on preparing teachers who had specialized expertise in providing instruction for students who are multilingual or in bilingual school settings. The program enrolled 48 residents across four cohorts, 45 of whom sought bilingual authorization. Of the 48 residents, 96% ($n = 46$) identified as Hispanic or Latino/a. Of all program completers who received their preliminary credentials and secured teaching positions ($n = 26$), 85% ($n = 22$) were teaching in classrooms at the end of the 2023–24 academic year. Among program completers, 38% had pending credential requirements—mostly the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA) and the edTPA teacher performance assessment—as of summer 2024, with most having obtained a Short-Term Staff Permit or 30-Day Substitute Teaching Permit and working in partner LEAs.⁵⁶ Tri-County graduates who self-identified as residents had positive overall perceptions of their preparation, rating it an average of 4.3 out of 5.0 on the 2021 CTC completer survey.

Another noteworthy aspect of the Tri-County program was that it was open to both undergraduate and graduate students. Notably, many residents were part of the university's 2+2 pathway into teaching, in which students complete the first 2 years of their undergraduate degree at a local community college and then transfer into CSUMB's Integrated Undergraduate Teacher Preparation (ITEP) pathway to complete their degree in a total of 4 years. This 2+2 design not only increased access to a teacher preparation program by easing the transition between the two institutions but also provided an accelerated yet comprehensive pathway to teaching and allowed candidates to participate in a funded yearlong clinical placement through the residency.

CSUMB's 2+2 design provided an accelerated yet comprehensive pathway to teaching and allowed candidates to participate in a funded yearlong clinical placement through the residency.

Despite the program's lapse in operation, Tri-County's story nonetheless offers indispensable lessons for both new and established residency programs. The cross-case findings that follow draw from these lessons, as well as from the stories of the four other residency programs previously described, for the purposes of illustrating their successes, identifying significant program features, and demonstrating the complexity of high-quality residencies.

Cross-Case Analysis

This multiple case study was the basis of a cross-case analysis that identified common themes across the five case study residency programs. Data from each program were iteratively coded using a priori themes drawn from the previously mentioned eight characteristics of effective residencies. (See [What We Know About Teacher Residencies](#).) Data analysis also uncovered emergent themes that were common across the five case programs, from which three new characteristics—the inclusion of proactive whole person supports, ongoing capacity-building for residency-affiliated personnel, and an explicit focus on promoting equity—were derived.

In the following sections, organized around the 11 characteristics of effective residencies, findings and examples describe shared practices and note variations across studied programs that demonstrate how the programs enacted the characteristics. For more detail about a specific program, consult the individual case write-ups of the Alder, Claremont, and CSUB residencies, which provide greater detail about each program's structure and practices.

Characteristic 1: Strong LEA–EPP Partnerships

One of the major differences between residency programs and other comprehensive preparation programs is that they are administered through a highly collaborative partnership between an educator preparation program (EPP) and one or more local education agencies (LEAs). This partnership is a defining and foundational component of a high-quality teacher residency program. Notably, residency partnerships are different from the partnerships cultivated between EPPs and LEAs for the purpose of placing traditional candidates for student teaching. Whereas partnership in the traditional context typically boils down to an EPP field-placement coordinator and an LEA human resources officer working together once per semester to find enough mentor teachers and classrooms for candidate placements, residency partnerships tend to be ongoing, intensive, and highly collaborative. In a high-quality residency partnership, the LEA(s) and EPP collaboratively envision, design, implement, and continuously improve the preparation experience for residents, mentor teachers, and clinical coaches.

Research on residency partnerships has begun to articulate the practices that contribute to strong partnerships. WestEd’s study of residencies funded through California State University’s New Generation of Educators Initiative—which included Kern Urban Teacher Residency (Kern Urban)—identified four key levers that helped strengthen partnerships: creating and operationalizing a shared vision, identifying key roles, ensuring space and time to collaborate, and sharing data to identify needs and monitor progress.⁵⁷

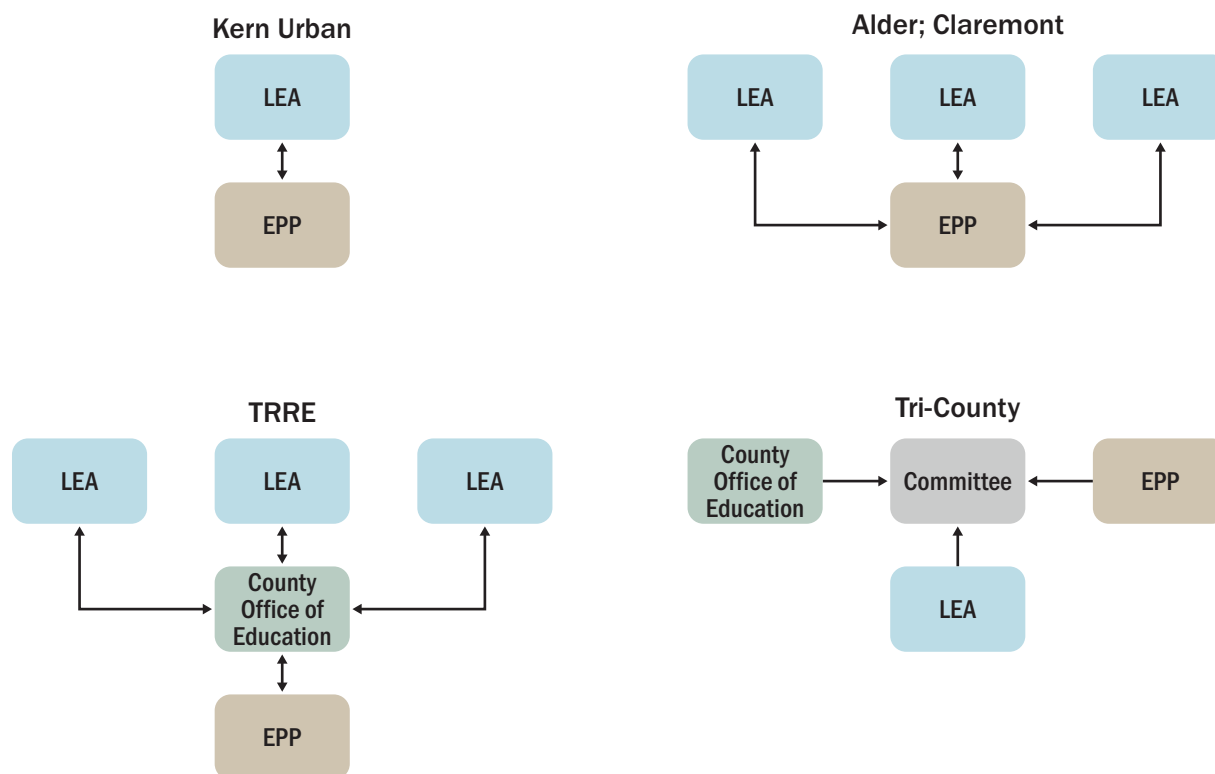
The findings we present in this and subsequent sections align with and reinforce the importance of these practices while also contributing new insight into the many possible variations in program partnership structures. While there is no one best approach to partnership, the different models and structures observed in the studied programs have different affordances and constraints. Furthermore, the models that programs adopted were informed by specific program goals and local contexts. As the foundation for high-quality residencies, a program’s partnership model can help enable certain program practices and should be designed with goals, resources, and community needs in mind.

Partnership Structures

Effective and deep partnerships looked different from program to program. Among the five studied residency programs, there were four different partnership models, each of which required different coordination and management approaches. (See [Figure 1.](#)) These unique models were developed in response to the unique goals and contextual factors that situated each program, including the interest and willingness of LEAs to partner, the availability of resources and capacity, local needs, and program enrollment trends. One notable difference in the partnership structures of the residency programs was the variation in the number and type of LEAs with which they partnered, resulting in heterogeneous models for residency management and leadership.

Kern Urban had the most straightforward partnership model. The program partnered with a single partner LEA, Bakersfield City School District, which has been its sole partner since the program’s inception. This single-district partnership works because the district’s hiring needs are ongoing and large enough for it to furnish positions for cohorts of 15 to 25 residents each year. Kern Urban’s single-district partnership model allowed for the development of a residency program that was highly tailored to the district’s workforce needs and that incorporated district norms and procedures into residents’ coursework.

Figure 1. Four Different Partnership Models at Case Study Sites



Note: EPP = educator preparation program; LEA = local education agency; TRRE = Teacher Residency for Rural Education.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of case study program documents and participant interviews. (2024).

The Teacher Residency for Rural Education (TRRE) program operated as a partnership between California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB) and a county office of education, the Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE). TCOE served as the fiscal lead for the residency program and managed the program's collaborations with the six districts where the program placed residents, all of which were located within the rural Tulare region.

TRRE's partnership model emerged to meet the unique workforce needs of rural districts. Although small rural school districts have vacancies that are just as urgent to fill as those in larger districts, they tend to have fewer openings each year because of their smaller size. Their relatively few vacancies make it untenable for any one rural district to hire the 15 to 20 residents produced through a residency cohort each year. The limited staffing capacity of small, rural districts can also represent a challenge. District administrators who already straddle multiple roles often have limited ability to take on the responsibilities associated with a robust residency partnership. TCOE's involvement allowed the residency to circumvent both these challenges. The office assumed responsibility for managing the residency partnership and used its preexisting relationships in the region to coordinate resident placements at multiple cooperating districts. TRRE's partnership structure allowed the residency to function as a pathway into teaching that served multiple districts, with the county office playing a key coordinating role.

For the Tri-County Teacher Residency Program (Tri-County), California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB) partnered with a county office of education and a school district, and representatives from each partner came together to form a residency leadership committee. While only a single district (North Monterey County Unified School District) participated as a partner in residency leadership, Tri-County collaborated with multiple districts across the region for resident placements. Similarly to TRRE, this collaboration with multiple districts was adopted so that the residency could address the workforce needs of districts across the geographically broad Tri-County region (i.e., Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties), particularly those small districts that would otherwise be unable to support a residency program. Although opening collaboration to LEAs across multiple counties expanded the potential reach of the residency, the program faced a challenge in that the number of cooperating districts shifted constantly, in accordance with districts' interest and capacity. The loose coupling between the Tri-County program and other cooperating LEAs was, in some cases, further disrupted by staffing turnover and district reprioritization at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Alder Graduate School of Education Master's and Credential Teacher Residency (Alder) and the Claremont Graduate University Teacher Education Program (Claremont) shared a similar model in which the EPP directly partnered with multiple LEAs, although each residency adopted different approaches to managing these partnerships. In 2022–23, Claremont placed residents in one of nine school districts but was in the process of shifting toward deeper, more collaborative partnerships with fewer districts. Despite the placement flexibility enabled by loose cooperation with a large number of surrounding LEAs, the director of teacher education at Claremont, who oversaw the residency, acknowledged that “conceptual, programmatic, [and] operational coherence” becomes more difficult to maintain across “so many moving parts and stakeholders.”

Out of a desire to improve coherence and develop more sustainable partnerships—and supported by a grant from the Gates Foundation—the program transitioned toward concentrating placements in a small number of LEAs with which the program could collaborate more closely. The program cultivated “deep” residency partnerships with two districts in 2023–24, with plans to expand to four districts in 2024–25. The program aimed to secure heightened levels of LEA involvement and work with a broader set of LEA staff and administrators, with the rationale that doing so would contribute to sustained prioritization of the residency pathway within the LEA. Deeper partnerships involve more robust partnership agreements and commitments, both financial and otherwise. The residency aimed to have each LEA partner contribute funding toward resident stipends; share responsibility for recruiting mentor teachers; and, ideally, host multiple resident placements at a single site.

Alder partnered with 47 LEAs in 2022–23—which included public school districts, public charter schools, county offices of education, and one Special Education Local Plan Area—and, in contrast to Claremont, it intended to maintain the scope of these partnerships. Alder's LEA partners were located throughout the state of California, with large concentrations in the San Francisco Bay Area in Northern California and the greater Los Angeles area in Southern California. Each LEA partner hosted its own cohort of residents or, in the case of LEAs with fewer vacancies, partnered with other local LEAs to create a full cohort.

Alder created coherence across partners by establishing clear expectations for partnership, including the requirement that all partners hire a clinical partnership director (often referred to as a “clinical director”), a role that the university partially funds with a pass-through of student tuition dollars. Although

an LEA employee, this individual is also considered a clinical faculty member at Alder and becomes well acquainted with the Alder programming model, which allows them to support implementation within their LEA.

Despite variation in program partnership models, which were informed by specific program goals and local contexts, the partnerships in all five of the programs studied were characterized by deep and reciprocal engagement. The strength of the partnerships seemed to depend not on the partnership model per se, but rather on the practices in which the partners engaged. Strong partnerships were enabled by shared vision and goals, sustained commitment and shared responsibilities, regular and frequent meetings, and data sharing.

The partnerships in all five of the programs studied were characterized by deep and reciprocal engagement.

Shared Vision and Goals

A shared vision and common goals formed the foundation for all partnership work and engagement and kept the focus on the core values of the residency. Residency-involved individuals from both the EPP and partnering LEA(s) expressed highly aligned understanding of their programs' objectives. The studied residencies shared several key goals: prepare highly effective educators, diversify the teacher workforce, and promote culturally responsive and inclusive practices in schools. Individual residencies had additional local and contextual values and goals. For example, affiliates of the Claremont residency, across roles, identified focusing on critical social justice issues and disrupting inequities as program goals.

The shared vision and goals between partners resulted from intentional efforts to establish a clear understanding of residency aims between partner organizations. In Kern Urban's case, the residency program had been, from the very beginning, collaboratively designed by LEA and EPP stakeholders. Through this collaborative design process, residency leaders at both the EPP and LEA established a shared understanding of the residency's goals and priorities. Similarly, TRRE's program was built around the goal of preparing, for the Tulare region, teachers who would, as TCOE's residency lead put it, "plan to stay in the profession much longer" due to their roots in the region and who would have credentials that aligned with the county's shortage areas. This shared understanding aligned the work and expectations of both the county office and EPP during program development and continued to guide the residency's expansion and programmatic refinement.

Establishing a shared understanding of the residency's vision and goals was an important part of the partnership-building process. Case study programs invested time in explicitly articulating program values to new partners and establishing expectations for how LEAs would support these values. Visioning meetings typically occurred before partnership agreements were formalized and programs were planned. Program leads at Alder described requiring several meetings between LEA and EPP teams to ensure that both teams had a shared understanding of the program's prioritized competencies and conceptual frameworks, including what pedagogies and instructional approaches residents would learn and be expected to practice in their clinical placements.

Sustained Commitment and Shared Responsibilities

By establishing a shared sense of purpose for the residency collaboration, programs laid a foundation for sustained partnership commitment. Large amounts of time, effort, and persistence from both EPP and LEA leads were required to sustain partnerships. LEA partners contributed in significant ways to residency management and often allocated staffing resources toward the residency, a practice that was described as critical for effective and streamlined division of roles and responsibilities. (See [Adequate Support for the Residency.](#))

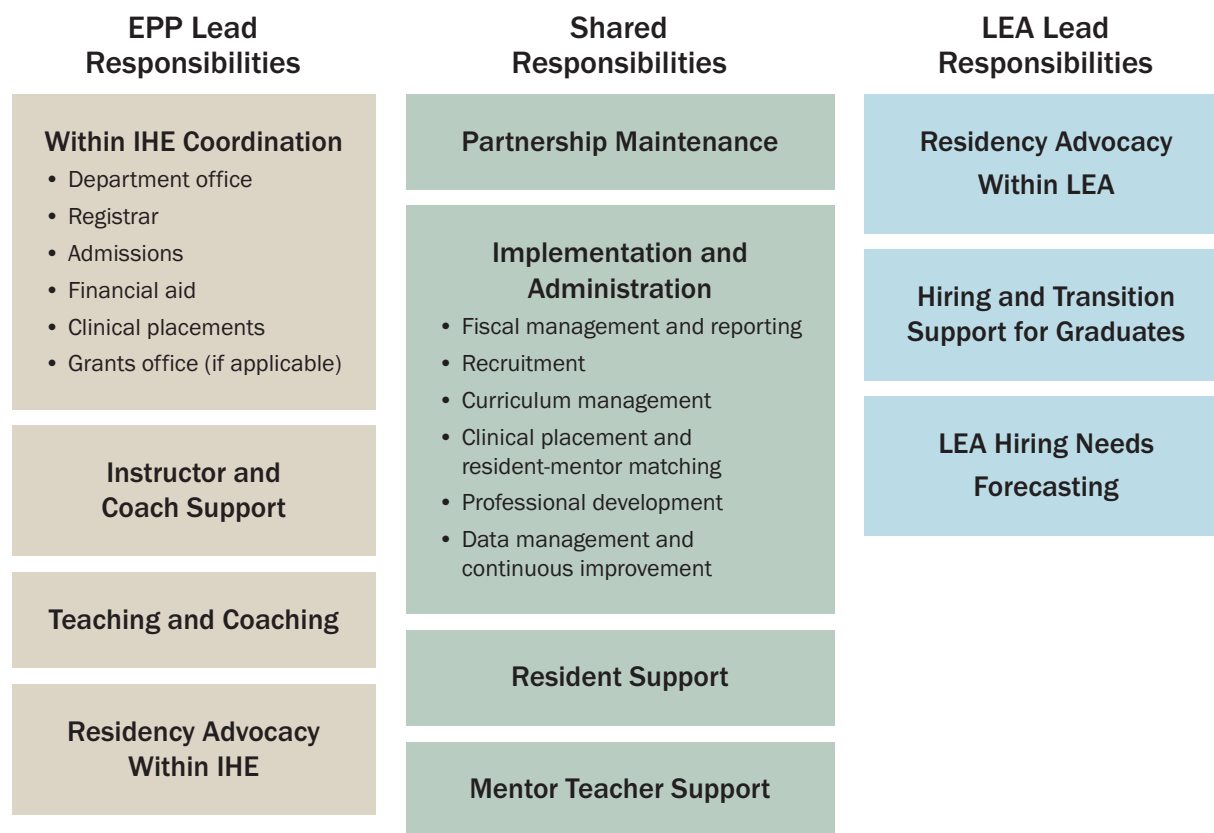
Among the residencies in the current study, residency leadership teams typically had one or two LEA representatives who were responsible for the residency partnership and program. The residents usually had an LEA “champion,” typically an individual in a high-level administrative position such as a superintendent or assistant superintendent who would advocate for the program within the LEA, and an LEA “lead,” who managed day-to-day operations. Similarly, program leadership teams also had one or two EPP representatives, often an administrator (e.g., a director, department chair, or other supervisory administrator) and a program coordinator, or EPP “lead,” whose title varied by program. In most cases, the administrator supported and advocated for the residency within the EPP and larger institution while the coordinator was responsible for managing program operations.

Participants reported that the sustainability of residency partnerships often relied on having “champions” in both the LEA and EPP who could represent and advocate for the residency. Depending on the program, these individual took on responsibilities such as presenting data to leadership and board members, requesting funding and other resources, and generally garnering support for the residency. They played an important role in securing the resources and support the residency needed by communicating the program’s value to organizational leadership. The Bakersfield City School District superintendent, who championed Kern Urban within the district, voiced his conviction that “if the board and the superintendent believe in [the program], grants or no grants, it’s going to be funded.”

The LEA and EPP leads were responsible for the day-to-day residency management. Across programs residency partners divided or shared responsibilities for ongoing operational tasks. (See [Figure 2.](#)) The specific division of these tasks—including, but not limited to, resident and mentor recruitment and selection, resident and mentor support during the residency year (including mentor professional development), stipend allocation, hiring support, data collection, grant management, and continuous improvement for the program—varied by program and partnership model, but in all cases, the LEA and EPP leads shared responsibility for managing the residency. The practice of sharing responsibilities is consistent with prior research on the practices of effective residency programs.⁵⁸

Shared commitments and responsibilities were typically explicated and documented in a written agreement or memorandum of understanding between the partners. Agreements frequently described the goals and aims of the residency partnership as well as the responsibilities for which each partner was responsible. In addition, formal written agreements included negotiated contingencies and procedures, both anticipated and observed. Such additions to partner agreements reinforced partners’ shared understandings and preempted future conflicts about partners’ respective obligations.

Figure 2. Study Participant Residency Leader Responsibilities



Note: EPP = educator preparation program; IHE = institution of higher education; LEA = local education agency.
Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of case study program documents and participant interviews. (2024).

Regular and Frequent Meetings

Regular partnership meetings between LEA and EPP residency leaders allowed all partners to have a voice in residency management and helped maintain program coherence through the development of strong and evolving mutual understandings. Making time to meet regularly and frequently is a seemingly simple but key practice that supported the effective division of tasks and created a structure for ongoing partnership engagement. Meetings were critical for not only creating but also maintaining the shared vision of the residency and expected program outcomes.

Once the partners established a shared vision, all programs had ongoing meetings to make decisions about each partner's roles and responsibilities as well as program structures and requirements, such as which credentials and subject areas to offer, expectations for mentors, and course and clinical schedules. Although meeting frequency ebbed and flowed depending on the time of year, most residency teams met weekly, with additional communication between meetings. Program leaders also described having at least one partner meeting, typically at the end of the program year, to review program data and engage in continuous improvement.

Data Sharing and Joint Problem-Solving

Partnership meetings provided dedicated time and space for residency leaders to share data and collaborate on data-driven joint problem-solving in a timely manner. Engaging in joint problem-solving enabled program leads to review and respond to resident and mentor feedback or needs and collaboratively address puzzles of practice as they arose.

In addition, keeping the LEA champion informed about program outcomes was an important part of partnership maintenance. For example, Kern Urban hosted three meetings per year that brought together the district superintendent (a key program champion), the assistant superintendent of educational services, the assistant head of human resources, and CSUB's dean of education. During these meetings, the leadership team shared data on resident demographics and retention and identified residents' successes and the ongoing challenges that they—and the program more generally—faced. These meetings provided an opportunity to highlight the program's ongoing contribution to district staffing while key district stakeholders were at the table. The superintendent and other individuals could then carry the narrative to the district board of education, which makes funding decisions for the program.

In summary, the strength of the studied residency partnerships seemed to depend on not the partnership model per se, but rather on the practices in which the partners engaged. The studied residencies' partnership practices, which both promoted and were supported by the strong collaboration between LEAs and EPPs, reflect research-based practices associated with successful residencies.⁵⁹

Characteristic 2: Selectively Recruited Diverse Candidates

In addition to providing stronger, more coherent preparation for teaching, research indicates that residency programs are more successful when they prepare candidates who meet the workforce needs of their partner local education agencies (LEAs), specifically by recruiting and preparing diverse candidates in high-need credentialing areas.⁶⁰ The studied residency programs shared certain recruitment strategies that supported this goal. They prioritized the recruitment of candidates who wanted to pursue credentials in high-need areas for partner districts and who already lived in close proximity to the communities served by partner LEAs. Individual programs adopted different strategies for connecting with local prospective candidates, but across programs, one effective recruitment strategy was that residency leadership extended support to candidates during the application process. Multiple programs developed procedures for the application process that allowed them to select candidates whose dispositions aligned with program priorities.

Strategies for Targeted and Localized Recruitment

Responsibility for resident recruitment varied across programs. In some cases, the educator preparation program (EPP) and LEA both contributed to recruitment efforts, whereas in other programs recruitment was primarily handled by the EPP's residency coordinator. Claremont was the only program where residency staff were assisted by a campus-based recruiter who was paid using grant funds.

Regardless of the specific arrangement, recruitment efforts of the studied residency programs were informed by the staffing needs of their LEA partner(s). In most cases, the EPP and LEA jointly determined the credentials and subject areas the residency program would offer so that programs only recruited candidates who were interested in pursuing credentials in areas where their partner LEAs had teacher shortages. For example, in response to district leaders' desire to increase math and science integration in classroom instruction, Kern Urban began offering Single Subject credential preparation in math and science for middle school content-area candidates, while it had previously only offered a Multiple Subjects credential pathway.

In another example, Tri-County observed that local districts were expanding bilingual and dual-immersion programs. Although the residency started out with a focus on recruiting education specialists, it pivoted toward preparing teachers with a Bilingual Authorization in response to this need. In some cases, LEAs had staffing needs that were relatively consistent. In cases where staffing needs were less consistent, residency program coordinators collaborated with LEA human resources departments to access data on projected enrollments, vacancies, and anticipated turnover, including upcoming retirements. The fact that LEA residency staff were often housed in human resources helped facilitate access to this type of data.

Across programs, recruitment efforts focused on attracting individuals who already lived or worked in the communities served by partner LEAs. Residency program leaders expressed the belief that this strategy contributed to the diversity of the residency cohort, given that local candidates would be more likely to match the demographics of their

Recruitment efforts focused on attracting individuals who already lived or worked in the communities served by partner LEAs.

LEA partners' student populations. The high proportion of candidates of color served by these programs, particularly Latino/a candidates, suggests that this belief was justified. Programs also viewed localized recruitment as a strategy that would promote program graduates' retention in partner LEAs, because candidates with roots in the region would likely be more inclined to remain in that area. This recruitment focus highly appealed to LEA partners. "We want people who are loyal, who want to serve the community ... and be part of our community. Most people [who] want to join the residency are from the community, and many have attended [Bakersfield City] schools in the past," shared the executive director of new teacher development for Bakersfield City School District, Kern Urban's district partner.

Programs' approaches to localized recruitment varied. Strategies included the following:

- **Reach out to classified staff already working in the partner LEA.** Alder recruited candidates with a special focus on individuals working as substitute teachers, paraeducators, instructional aides, after-school support providers, and other classified staff in the schools of partner LEAs. Classified staff made strong candidates due to their experience working with students and preexisting familiarity with the staff, processes, and norms of the LEA where they would complete their clinical placement (and, after program completion, likely take a job as teacher of record).
- **Leverage 2+2 community college transfer pathways.** The Tri-County residency recruited from a 2+2 transfer pathway at a local community college. This practice helped the program bring in residents with strong ties to the local community who were likely to be interested in remaining local for their teaching career. (See [Tri-County's Recruitment Pipeline Into a 2+2 Pathway](#).)
- **Post informational flyers at community venues.** To connect with community members who were interested in pursuing teacher credentialing, TRRE staff posted informational flyers in areas where community members were likely to encounter them (e.g., in local businesses such as Starbucks or Target). They also set up a recruitment table at Tulare's World Ag Expo, a major community event, to draw the attention of local community members attending the festival. Other venues or outlets could include multilingual newspapers and radio stations, international grocery stores, popular community restaurants, and churches.
- **Host information and/or place advertisements on web-based and social media platforms.** Institutions of higher education and LEAs often hosted a page on their respective websites with a program summary and an interest form that prospective applicants could submit to request further program information. These submissions usually went directly to the residency coordinator so they could follow up with individual outreach. In other cases, programs advertised the residencies on popular job boards (e.g., Indeed or LinkedIn) or purchased Google advertisements.
- **Encourage passive recruiting through reputation and word of mouth.** For established programs, the most effective recruitment assets were reputation and word of mouth. Many interviewed residents and residency graduates noted that recommendations from current and former residents and other program stakeholders had greatly influenced their decision to apply to the residency program. While word of mouth can be a powerful boost for recruitment, it can take several years for a program to build up a strong reputation in partner districts and/or graduate a large pool of individuals who can recommend the program to friends and colleagues.

Tri-County's Recruitment Pipeline Into a 2+2 Pathway

Tri-County recruited heavily from students participating in the Integrated Undergraduate Teacher Preparation (ITEP) pathway at California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB), an accelerated program that allows candidates to complete their bachelor's degree and credential in 4 rather than 5 years. "Those are people [who] have transferred from community colleges and are actually really looking to stay in the area, so this is the Grow Your Own teacher model," shared one residency staff member.

A major feeder into the ITEP program—and into the residency—was Hartnell College, a local 2-year public community college that partnered with CSUMB as part of a 2+2 pathway. Given this cohort of transfer students' ties to the local community, they were attractive candidates for the residency. To facilitate recruitment, the Tri-County clinical placement coordinator reached out to each Hartnell transfer student individually to extend an invitation to join the residency program as a means of funding their yearlong clinical coteaching experience (which is required for all teacher credentialing candidates at CSUMB). During the 2022–23 academic year, nearly 20 Hartnell transfer students responded to the invitation and were admitted as Tri-County residents.

Both the university and the residency made special accommodations to create access for Hartnell transfer students. Rather than taking their education coursework at CSUMB's main campus, Hartnell transfer students took their coursework, as a cohort, in person at CSUMB's satellite campus in Salinas, which was closer to where many of them lived. The clinical placement coordinator also made sure to place them locally for their clinical experience, clustering all Hartnell residents in Salinas City Elementary School District or Alisal Union School District, the two elementary school districts that serve the neighborhood where Hartnell is located. Most of these residents were assigned the same clinical coach as well to make it easier for coaches to support and observe multiple candidates in the same location.

These practices resulted in a stronger cohort experience for Hartnell residents compared with the experiences of other Tri-County residents. Most Hartnell residents had preexisting relationships with others in their cohort before entering the residency, and taking program coursework together and sharing clinical placement sites further deepened their bonds. "I feel really connected," one resident said. Another echoed this sentiment, saying, "It's really fun because we have been together in all of our classes, [and] some people that are in the residency program ... they're also at my site."

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of case study interviews and program documents. (2024).

Reenvisioned Admissions Process

Program staff noted that making initial contact with interested candidates was only the first step in the admissions courtship. Several program leaders noted significant attrition between the first point of contact and the application submission. For example, a TRRE staff member reported that "for every 40 hits that we get [on Indeed], two people come and talk to us about the program. And of those two, one moves on to the [application phase]."

Program leaders expressed concern that a portion of this attrition may occur because interested candidates are intimidated by the application process or encounter difficulties while navigating it. (See [Table 3](#) for an overview of application requirements.) They noted that this may particularly be an issue for first-generation college attendees and those who have not been in school for a while. Residents we interviewed affirmed that the application process could be daunting. One Kern Urban resident explained:

The application process was a bit difficult because there's so many steps that you have to take before you can apply to the residency. So you applied to the university, you applied to the main credential program at the university, and then you applied to the residency. It's a three-step application process, [which] can be very overwhelming for people. I have heard from other residents that it was one of the most difficult processes because it's so complex and you have to submit documents here, documents there.

With the goal of removing barriers that might prevent interested candidates from completing their program application, programs adopted two main strategies:

1. **Streamline program application requirements.** One strategy was to minimize the burden associated with submitting an application by reducing the number of requirements. At Alder and Claremont, which had greater degrees of flexibility as private universities, the residency programs minimized the number of documents that applicants needed to assemble for their application. Rather than requiring applicants to submit documentation of their tuberculosis clearance, California Commission on Teacher Credentialing Certificate of Clearance, and Mandated Reporter Training certificate as part of the application package, which is the standard practice in the CSU system, Alder and Claremont required this documentation after candidates had been accepted to the program, before they were able to enroll in coursework. (See [Application Requirements: Trade-Offs](#).) Within the CSU system, residency programs had less latitude to modify application requirements. Nonetheless, TRRE took steps to reduce application requirements by incorporating four required foundational courses—which other CSUB residencies treated as prerequisites to be completed before applying—into the program itself. By removing this requirement from the application, the program improved access for candidates who were ready to dive into preparation but had not had a chance to complete foundational courses before program application deadlines.
2. **Extend high levels of support to applicants.** Program leaders and others involved in recruitment reached out to applicants frequently to provide information about application processes, offer updates about the applicants' outstanding requirements, and encourage their persistence. One Claremont resident recalled, "The moment I submitted that application, folks were reaching out." A Kern Urban resident said that program leadership "lined it up perfectly for us. They gave us plenty of emails, plenty of reminders, plenty of explicit instructions." TRRE's residency coordinator clarified that supporting students through the application process did not involve "lowering the bar or lowering our standards." Instead, providing such support was a way to remove barriers to entry for individuals with limited experience in navigating higher education and governmental systems.

Application Requirements: Trade-Offs

Programs' application requirements varied, in some cases significantly (see [Table 3](#)), as did the rationales that motivated the inclusion or exclusion of specific requirements. Differences between programs housed within the California State University (CSU) institutions and those within private institutions stood out most starkly, exemplifying two different approaches to the residency application process.

The CSU Programs' "Come Prepared" Approach

The CSU application process front-loaded requirements. Applicants (with the exception of those applying to the Teacher Residency for Rural Education) needed to complete prerequisite coursework, submit all of the documentation required for clinical placement participation (e.g., tuberculosis clearance, California Commission on Teacher Credentialing Certificate of Clearance, and Mandated Reporter Training certificate), and complete a subset of credentialing requirements (e.g., Basic Skills Requirement and Subject Matter Competency) before they could submit their program application.

The benefits of front-loading requirements were threefold. First, prerequisite coursework ensured that all admitted candidates started the program with a basic foundation in education theory. Second, requiring documents needed for clinical placement participation up front eased the administrative burden on residency coordinators, who did not have to track which admitted residents still had outstanding requirements. Third, requiring applicants to have already met the Basic Skills Requirement and Subject Matter Competency ensured that residents would not need to study for and complete related assessments during the first semester of their residency and got rid of the uncertainty about whether or not they would pass. However, there was the trade-off that applying to the program required significant planning and preparation, which might deter or serve as a barrier for candidates who were otherwise ready to dive into teacher preparation.

Alder and Claremont's "Come as You Are" Approach

Unlike the CSU institutions, Alder and Claremont required no prerequisite coursework before candidates were eligible to apply to the residency. Documentation for clinical placement participation was submitted not as part of the application packet but after candidates were accepted into the program and preparing to enroll. While Claremont required applicants to have met the Basic Skills Requirement, it allowed candidates to satisfy the Subject Matter Competency after enrollment. Alder did not require applicants to have met either requirement, and it supported enrolled residents in meeting them during the program year.

The benefits of minimal up-front requirements were threefold. First, this approach ensured that all who were ready to begin their teacher preparation journey could immediately apply to the program, without the barrier of an additional and expensive semester of prerequisite coursework or the need to pass challenging assessments. Second, it afforded candidates more time to gather the documentation required to participate in a clinical placement. Third, this approach meant that applicants did not have to spend money on these requirements before they were sure of their seat in the program.

The trade-off was that programs took on a greater administrative burden. University staff needed to keep track of which residents had outstanding requirements prior to assigning clinical placement sites and ensure that all residents met the two credentialing requirements on time. They also took

on a higher degree of risk because if residents ended up being unable to meet the Basic Skills Requirement or Subject Matter Competency, they would not be able to continue in the program. Alder reported a 10% program attrition rate, sharing that the “primary reason for resident attrition from the program” was that residents had difficulty passing all of the required California Subject Examinations for Teachers. To address this challenge, Alder allocated significant staff capacity to help residents meet these requirements, both by reviewing their transcripts to see if they could meet requirements without testing and by providing test preparation supports for residents who needed to take the exams.

Source: Alder Graduate School of Education. (2022). *Teacher residency at Alder GSE annual program assessment report 2021–2022*; Learning Policy Institute analysis of case study interviews and program documents. (2024).

Table 3. Program Application Requirements and Admissions Processes

Program	Residency application requirements	Admissions process
Alder	• GPA of 3.0 or higher (preferred)^a • Résumé • 250- to 500-word personal statement	• Phone screening • Individual or group interview and demonstration lesson
Claremont	• \$80 application fee • Academic transcripts • GPA of 3.0 or higher (preferred)^b • Résumé • Two recommendations • Three-page statement of purpose	• Group interview, conducted as a Socratic discussion around an assigned article
Kern Urban	Apply to California State University, Bakersfield. • \$70 university application fee • Academic transcripts Complete three or four prerequisite courses. ^c	• Group interview • For some candidates, a one-on-one follow-up interview
Teacher Residency for Rural Education (TRRE)	Apply to credential program. • \$30 credential service fee • Minimum GPA of 2.75 • Two recommendations • Writing assessment (teacher education essay or approved course or exam) Apply to residency.	• Individual interview

Program	Residency application requirements	Admissions process
Tri-County	Apply to California State University, Monterey Bay. • \$70 university application fee • Academic transcripts Apply to credential program. • Minimum GPA of 2.67 • One- to two-page essay Apply to residency. • Résumé • Spanish fluency (for elementary candidates) • 500- to 750-word personal statement	• Individual interview

^a Candidates with a GPA below 2.65 could appeal to provide context, but candidates with a GPA below 2.0 were not eligible for the program. Candidates who had been tentatively accepted following the interviewing process were required to submit their transcripts to verify that they had met the GPA minimums.

^b Candidates with a GPA below 3.0 could address why in their statement of purpose.

^c This requirement was waived for TRRE residents, who completed prerequisite coursework as a cohort after being admitted to the residency.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of case study program documents. (2024).

Programs also adopted admissions and selection processes that allowed them to selectively identify candidates who were well positioned to succeed both in the program and as future teachers in partner LEAs. The following key strategies supported this selectivity:

- **Involve all residency partners in individual or group interviews.** Candidate interviews were conducted jointly with representatives from both the EPP and the LEA partner. Bakersfield City School District's executive director of new teacher development, who supported the Kern Urban program, explained why he valued his district's involvement in the admissions process so highly:

I want to be a part of choosing our residents because we're going to make a commitment to them, and they're going to make a commitment to us. And yes, they're Cal State students, but they are also going to be [Bakersfield City School District] employees, hopefully until they retire.

Kern Urban, Claremont, and Alder used a group interview format, whereas in the TRRE program, representatives from CSUB, the Tulare County Office of Education, and the host districts conducted individual interviews with each resident and then collaboratively determined whether the resident would be a good fit for the program. In some programs, this determination was aided by a rubric that residency representatives used to evaluate applicants' performance in program-relevant domains.

- **Develop interview protocols that elicit desired applicant competencies.** In collaboration with their LEA partners, programs identified specific skills and dispositions that they believed were central to successful program completion and future teaching effectiveness and designed interview protocols

that focused on these competencies, such as interpersonal interaction and communication, ability to receive and apply feedback, and self-reflection. The Kern Urban admissions team also evaluated candidates' compatibility with the Bakersfield City School District's values of equity, caring, and collaboration by considering applicants' experience working with, or willingness to work with, diverse populations; the depth of their interest in and commitment to a career in education; and their openness to diverse perspectives.⁶¹ Alder's admissions process uniquely required applicants to plan and deliver a demonstration lesson. After delivering the lesson, applicants received feedback from the admissions committee and had the opportunity to revise their lesson and deliver it a second time. The intention of this structure was to allow the admissions committee to see how an applicant responded to feedback, which would be more of a focus for the committee than the applicant's demonstrated pedagogical skill or content knowledge. "One of the aspects of a residency is they are getting so much feedback," explained Alder's CEO. "If people can't handle feedback, they're not going to be happy in the program."

- **Communicate core residency values through the admissions process.** The admission and selection process also provided residency program leaders an opportunity to communicate core residency values and to evaluate the alignment of candidates' personal convictions and reasons for entering the teaching profession with those values. As part of their group interviews, Alder applicants participated in a critical reading and small-group discussion focused on antiracism, antibias, identity, and equity. The choice of topic signaled to applicants that equity-focused content would be a defining characteristic of the program and allowed the selection committee to gauge each applicant's willingness to engage in conversations around these themes. Similarly, Claremont's small-group interview centered the program's critical social justice focus in a facilitated discussion on an article about the school-to-prison pipeline, which applicants read in advance. "It was a really good reading ... very indicative of what they're all about, the message, and what they strive for," recalled a Claremont resident.

Notably, EPP and LEA partners made admissions decisions collaboratively, which is a shift from common practice and helps ensure that resident-LEA fit is prioritized, which supports retention of residency graduates once they are hired into the LEA.

Characteristic 3: Full-Year Teaching Experience Alongside a Mentor Teacher

In each studied program, residents completed a clinical placement that spanned a full academic year and was conducted alongside an expert mentor teacher. This aspect of the residency programs was a requirement of the California Teacher Residency Grant, but it is also one of the major strengths of the residency model and is supported by research that has identified the features of successful residencies.⁶² Studied programs required residents to be in their clinical placements for between 3 and 5 full days or 5 half-days per week. The clinical experience is the centerpiece of clinically oriented preparation, and the current study identified four key aspects of a high-quality clinical experience—namely, that the experience spanned the full arc of a school year, was coconstructed with partner local education agencies (LEAs), structured a gradual release of responsibility, and involved high-quality feedback for residents.

Full Arc of a School Year

Residents began their clinical experience on or before the first day of school and attended through the last day of the school year, which was typically after their educator preparation programs (EPPs) ended the spring semester. The alignment of the clinical placement schedules with the LEAs' academic calendar allowed residents to experience the entire arc of the school year, from preparing the classroom before students arrived all the way through the end-of-year celebrations. This aspect of the experience provided an opportunity that nonresidency student teachers often do not have and that research has found to be highly valued by residents.⁶³ Each program adopted a clinical schedule that specified the number of days and hours that residents were required to attend their clinical placement each week. (See [Table 1.](#)) These schedules were often adopted and revised in consultation with partner LEAs.

Coconstructing Clinical Experiences With Partner LEAs

One of the key benefits of a residency model is that the deep, reciprocal partnerships between EPPs and LEAs can help the residency program strategically address LEA needs and keep the EPP locally relevant through tailored programming. Such reciprocal partnerships between EPPs and LEAs call for a shift from how EPPs historically have been siloed from LEAs and solely responsible for preservice educator preparation.

Studied programs adopted two main strategies to meet LEA partners' needs and tailor preparation to their unique contexts. One strategy was to design clinical placement schedules that accommodated LEA schedules. The typical lack of alignment between LEA and institutions of higher education academic calendars can be seen as a major challenge for applying this strategy, but all of the studied programs were able to institute start- and end-date requirements for residents that aligned with their partner LEAs' school year.

Such alignment may require reconfigurations of EPP faculty and staff who support program admittance, clinical placement logistics, and prerequisite coursework. In addition, partner LEA instructional schedules might vary to include professional development or other teacher responsibilities on certain days, which EPPs can take into account when developing residents' clinical schedules. For example, Alder crafted

a clinical schedule designed to allow residents to participate in LEA-based professional learning and grade-level team meetings, and the university was open to revising clinical schedules based on partner LEA requests.

Another approach was to design innovative clinical models that address specific LEA staffing needs or goals, whether immediate or long term. For example, in response to urgent shortages of paraeducators and substitute teachers, Claremont crafted different clinical models for several of their key partners that allowed residents to spend a portion of their clinical hours working in these roles. Taking a different tack, Kern Urban designed a clinical model that had residents spend 1 semester each in a primary (transitional kindergarten to grade 3) and intermediate (grades 4–8) classroom, providing them with experience in both primary and middle school classrooms. From the LEA's perspective, these different experiences made Kern Urban residents more versatile hires for the district. Their experience in different classes and grade levels allowed them to be slotted into a variety of open positions. LEA funding for the residency not only made this clinical model possible but also gave Bakersfield City School District leverage to advocate for it. The approach appeared to be effective locally: 100% of Kern Urban graduates to date have been hired in the district. In both cases, customizing residents' clinical schedules in accordance with specific partner needs and goals increased the value-add to partnered districts, thus helping them justify the decision to invest local funds into residents' preparation.

Gradual Release of Responsibility

Each program established the expectation that mentor teachers incorporate residents into the classroom as coteachers and gradually increase residents' scope of responsibilities over the course of the placement year. This coteaching approach differs from conventional student teaching, which is driven by the mentor teacher. In residencies, the mentor and resident collaborate and share responsibility in planning, implementing, and reflecting on lessons from the beginning and are both learning to improve their practice. The expectation of the reciprocity, collaboration, and shared learning associated with residency clinical practice was illustrated in Tri-County's *Clinical Experience Manual*, which described coteaching as a relationship in which the resident and mentor are “partners who explore the world of teaching and learning together.”⁶⁴

All programs provided structures to guide the gradual expansion of residents' classroom responsibilities. At the beginning of the year, residents were expected to lead classroom routines (e.g., facilitating morning meeting, taking attendance, administering exit tickets) and lesson components. Over time, with the pacing dictated by each program's unique calendar, residents began taking responsibility for larger chunks of instruction, such as teaching small groups or coplanning and teaching whole lessons. By the end of the year, the goal was for residents to fully participate as coteachers on all aspects of running the classroom. By pacing residents' undertaking of classroom responsibilities, programs allowed residents to gain comfort and confidence in managing different aspects of instruction.

High-Quality Feedback

Over the course of residents' clinical experiences, they were regularly observed and given feedback by multiple individuals, including clinical coaches (sometimes called "clinical supervisors"), mentor teachers, and other LEA staff, such as the principal of their placement site. Notable trends in program feedback structures included the following:

- **Structure clinical feedback around program frameworks.** Using program frameworks to structure feedback helped ground clinical feedback in the program's prioritized goals and competencies. Claremont used a set of Critical Social Justice Teaching Competencies that were developed at the institution and that reflected and extended the California Teacher Performance Expectations to guide both coursework and clinical components of the program. Claremont mentor teachers and clinical faculty advisors (Claremont's term for clinical coaches) were expected to look for evidence of competency development in their observations and deliver feedback that promoted residents' development in accordance with these competencies. Importantly, programs that established the expectation for clinical coaches and mentor teachers to deliver feedback informed by a specific program framework provided professional learning that developed the coaches' and mentors' capacity to provide this feedback. (See [Characteristic 4: Expert Mentor Teachers](#).)
- **Require regular, written feedback from mentor teachers that is shared with residency staff.** Given their daily proximity to residents, mentor teachers provided residents with regular feedback that varied in degree of formality. Much of the feedback was delivered informally, but, in nearly all programs, mentors also were periodically required to document their feedback and share it with program staff. At Claremont and Alder, mentor teachers submitted weekly documentation of their observations of and meetings with residents, whereas mentors at TRRE submitted feedback on residents' strengths and areas for growth once or twice per semester. At Kern Urban, mentors conducted "formative observation cycles" twice per month. Mentors used a Google Form to submit written feedback that was shared with residents and the EPP and LEA leads. Having mentors document their feedback allowed program staff to monitor residents' clinical progress in an ongoing fashion and tweak programming for both residents and mentors in accordance with trends they observed across mentors' feedback.
- **Allow observation and feedback from additional LEA staff.** In some programs, LEA staff other than the mentor teacher, such as the placement site principal or a human resources representative, also observed and provided feedback to residents. Programs articulated two main benefits of these observations. First, the feedback gave residents a preview of the observations they would experience as first-year teachers. Second, observations allowed LEA staff to monitor residents' progress and contribute to their professional growth with the LEAs' priorities in mind. LEA staff appreciated this opportunity because it allowed them to get to know the residents who would likely work for their LEA in the future and could inform placement decisions for residency hires.

Notably, some residency programs discouraged or limited observations of residents by LEA staff out of a desire to protect the residency year as a time for learning. Leaders of these programs expressed concerns that observations by LEA human resources personnel, for example, could

negatively impact residents' future hiring prospects. While this concern is valid, one of the benefits of residency preparation, from the LEA perspective, is that an LEA can develop a better understanding of candidates' skills and potential for growth over the course of the residents' yearlong clinical placement. Negotiating norms and purposes of resident observation by LEA staff up front, as part of partnership conversations, can allow for the adoption of a program design that balances the concerns and desires of all residency partners.

Characteristic 4: Expert Mentor Teachers

The opportunity for residents to teach for a full year alongside an expert mentor teacher has been identified as an essential characteristic of successful residencies.⁶⁵ In fact, the research literature recognizes the mentor teacher's influence as the most important factor in a novice teacher's professional development.⁶⁶ The studied programs acknowledged the importance of having mentor teachers serve as clinical educators and the outsize impact that mentors have on residents' developing practice, given the amount of time residents spend coteaching in their classrooms. In this section, we discuss how programs addressed the recruitment and selection of mentor teachers, supported positive mentor–resident relationships, and provided mentorship incentives and professional development.

Recruitment and Selection

The residency programs in this study aimed to recruit mentors who had the experience and dispositions to support residents' learning and development in alignment with program priorities. Program leaders noted that recruiting mentor teachers for the residency could be a challenge, in part because mentoring a resident was known to require more engagement, time, and effort than hosting a nonresident student teacher.

To find appropriate mentors, programs relied on recommendations from their local education agency (LEA) affiliates—including district administrators, the superintendent, and staff (e.g., principals, department chairs, current mentor teachers) at schools already serving as placement sites—or gave LEA partners the responsibility of securing appropriate mentors. For more established residencies, programs also invited their own sufficiently experienced graduates to serve as mentor teachers. (See [Kern Urban Graduates Return as Mentor Teachers](#).) Mentor applications, when they existed, were relatively informal, although notably, Kern Urban conducted a classroom observation of each applicant's teaching to inform the selection of program mentors.

Kern Urban Graduates Return as Mentor Teachers

As a result of the program's longevity, graduates of early Kern Urban Teacher Residency (Kern Urban) cohorts have garnered enough experience as lead teachers to return to the program as mentors to new generations of Kern Urban residents. Many choose to do so, eager to “pay forward” their positive residency experience. “I feel like I’m such a successful teacher specifically because of this program. So I wanted to give back and complete the circle,” shared one program graduate and current mentor.

There are benefits to having former residents as mentor teachers. First, they are far more intimately acquainted with program norms and goals than the typical teacher, which lowers the learning curve during the mentorship onboarding process. For instance, their familiarity with the program's conceptual framework for clinical practice enables them, from the very beginning of the year, to provide feedback that aligns with program emphases.

Second, program graduates draw on their experiences as residents to inform the support they provide their mentees. Those we interviewed for this study shared that they often reflected on which of their own mentor's practices did or did not work for them during their residency and that their approach to mentorship was shaped by these experiences.

Furthermore, the opportunity to reengage with the program as a mentor reinforced the sense of community that graduates cherished when they were part of a Kern Urban cohort. As one graduate-turned-mentor said, “As a resident, you have a community in your cohort [of fellow residents], and as a mentor, you have a community in your cohort [of fellow mentors].” The program cultivates mentor cohort connectedness at a monthly Mentor Learning Community (MLC) meeting. While the main goal of MLC meetings is to develop coaching and mentoring practices, they also afford time and structure for developing relationships among mentors as they reflect together and find common themes. “[The MLC facilitators] really try to make sure mentors feel like they are together in this,” said one program graduate and mentor.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of interviews and program documents. (2024).

From our focus groups with mentor teachers in each of the studied programs, we learned that there were two main reasons why mentors might turn down the opportunity to host a resident: Either they felt unqualified and lacked the necessary confidence, or they had other obligations and felt it was not the right time to take on a resident. Mentors who had previously turned down the opportunity to host a resident cited that the decision to do so had stemmed from a need to focus on their own development, a feeling of limited capacity, and/or the fact that they were experiencing complicated life events outside the classroom. Despite initially turning down the opportunity to mentor, these teachers eventually stepped into the mentorship role when they later felt they had the capacity to do so. This shift suggests that programs should not necessarily refrain from asking teachers who have previously declined to serve as mentors. According to the mentors in the current study, persistence and strategic outreach are important factors when recruiting teachers to take on a resident.

Mentor–Resident Relationships

The relationship between the mentor teacher and resident is central to preservice teacher preparation, as the resident spends the most time with and apprentices under their mentor. In acknowledgment of the critical role of the mentor teacher, studied programs worked not only to recruit and select high-quality mentors but also to make good-fit matches between mentors and their residents. Program leaders then continued to monitor the relationships and residents’ clinical experiences to ensure residents were getting the support they needed from their mentors.

First, program staff aimed to minimize the potential for conflict through careful mentor vetting and, in some cases, matching processes that considered mentor and resident preferences and personality compatibility. The process was not an exact science, but the studied programs often used a combination of observation, anecdotal evidence, and questionnaires to match mentors and residents. Residents and mentors often reported that the matching process was relatively opaque but that they could tell from the good fit of their matches that the behind-the-scenes process was intentional and thoughtful.

Once mentors and residents were matched, studied programs actively monitored resident–mentor relationships with the goal of identifying and resolving instances of tension or conflict. Program staff (typically the clinical coach) used observations, conversations with residents and mentors, and other forms of feedback to understand the tone of the clinical relationship. When needed, they stepped in to mediate the mentor–resident relationship, in some cases by clarifying program expectations, providing

mentor teachers with coaching strategies, and supporting the resident on topics related to communication or professionalism. Mediation, in some cases, occurred indirectly. For instance, Alder clinical directors used residents' feedback to inform the topics addressed in the mentor seminar, which allowed them to unobtrusively mediate challenges reported by residents. As one resident shared, referencing her clinical director, "She'll address the whole group of the mentors and just say, like, 'Hey, when you are observing them, you can't interrupt their lesson, you know?'"

In instances where it became clear that a resident-mentor match was not working, programs initiated a placement change, although programs noted that the need to do so was rare. Placement changes also occurred when mentors could no longer continue in their role due to illness, parental leave, or other factors. Given the importance of the clinical experience in the residency program, transitioning residents into a more positive placement could make a huge difference.

A Tri-County clinical coach recalled a situation in which a resident reached out to inform him that she felt undervalued within her mentor teacher's classroom and intended to quit the program. He thought, "No, we can do something to help her. We know she has potential." The coach immediately involved the Tri-County leadership team, who reached out to their connections within the resident's placement district to find a replacement mentor. The resident was quickly moved into the classroom of a different teacher within the same school. The coach proudly noted that the resident ended up completing the program and was hired by a partner school district. "That was one of our success stories," he shared. "[The district was] able to hire someone that we would have lost completely."

Incentives for Mentor Teachers

Mentors were commonly motivated by a desire to share their knowledge and practices to empower the next generation of teachers. A Kern Urban mentor revealed, "I felt like I had so much information to offer, so much knowledge ... that I was so willing to share it out, tell them the nitty-gritty of what teaching is, as well as how difficult it can be."

Mentor teachers enjoyed mentoring and viewed it as an opportunity for professional growth. Mentors said they were "thankful" and that they "love it." According to a 2021–22 mentor survey at Alder, for example, not only did 97% of mentors agree or strongly agree that hosting a resident was beneficial for their students, but 97% of mentors agreed or strongly agreed that being a mentor helped them improve their own practice,⁶⁷ which in turn promoted job satisfaction. The superintendent for Monterey Peninsula Unified School District shared:

One thing that I've been really surprised and pleased with is the number of mentors who, in the surveys at the end of the year, say, "I'm more likely to stay within [the district]"... because they're growing in their own professional expertise. ... That has been something that I didn't necessarily anticipate when we signed up for this, but [it's] certainly something that's really resonated with me.

Our data countered the narrative that mentors "do it for the money." Even so, in recognition of the heightened mentorship expectations in residencies, programs aimed to provide mentors with larger stipends than teachers who hosted conventional student teachers, ranging from \$2,000 to \$5,000 per year. (See [Table 1.](#))

Professional Development

WestEd's early research on California's Teacher Residency Grant Program–funded residencies found that many mentors reported not receiving adequate communication, support, professional development, or feedback from programs.⁶⁸ In contrast, the studied residencies required residency mentors to participate in regular professional learning sessions. Programs provided these sessions to help mentors prepare to engage deeply in program content, develop their skills as clinical educators, and align their feedback to residency frameworks and competencies. Providing such sessions can help mentors feel more confident and prepared in taking on a resident.

Four programs (Alder, Claremont, Kern Urban, and TRRE) gathered mentors for professional learning on a monthly basis, and the remaining program (Tri-County) convened mentors twice per semester. Typically, these gatherings occurred during the school day, with the residents taking over classroom instruction while the mentor attended. Programs also tailored professional learning to mentors' needs by analyzing the data from mentor surveys on residents' classroom progress and soliciting mentors' input on the skills and practices they were interested in developing.

In addition to developing content knowledge and skills, mentorship professional learning gatherings also facilitated connection and collaboration among mentors. The gatherings provided a space for mentors to ask each other questions, collaboratively troubleshoot challenges, rehearse difficult conversations, and learn from their peers' successes. One Kern Urban mentor shared, "Without the meetings, it would be really tough. ... I think that they're pretty vital to the mentorship."

At TRRE and Kern Urban, mentors' monthly professional learning opportunities were co-led by staff from the institution of higher education and the LEA, which recognized the LEA's role and expertise in staff development. "We definitely need to invest in our mentors," shared the TRRE coordinator for Visalia Unified School District, who co-led TRRE Mentor Summits. Building the capacity of mentor teachers, from her perspective, honors the "huge role and responsibility" that the mentor teachers take on by bringing a resident into their classroom and helps the mentor teacher build the capacity of that resident.

Claremont's model for mentor development was unique in that mentors met monthly along with residents and clinical coaches to participate in a 2-hour shared learning experience. Typically, these clinical practicum meetings took place synchronously online and involved some whole-group professional development, cross-role collaboration, and role-alike breakout groups. These meetings were intended to provide opportunities for mentors to grow in their mentorship skills as well as engage in content learning around equity and program competencies.

This learning was especially important for mentors who might not already have been familiar with Claremont's approach and emphasis. Claremont mentors affirmed that the clinical practicum was a valuable piece of the program, with one mentor noting that it enabled everyone to be "on the same page," adding, "We can all check in about how things are going, get help with things that we need, and preview what's coming up." Mentors expressed that they have "a ton of room for growth" and that these professional development meetings have contributed to their own growth and evolution as teachers.

Characteristic 5: Integrated Coursework and Clinical Practice

Prior research has indicated that successful teacher residencies tend to tightly integrate coursework about teaching and learning with clinical practice.⁶⁹ The coursework helps develop residents' foundational knowledge in education theory and pedagogy, while the clinical experience gives them the opportunity to put these learnings into practice and receive formative feedback. The studied programs required 2 or 3 semesters of coursework—which included up-to-date research-aligned content on language and literacy methods, mathematics methods, and the science of learning and human development—taken alongside a 2-semester (full school year) clinical placement experience.

Some of the studied programs had residency cohorts engage in coursework alongside candidates enrolled in other pathways or pursuing different credentials. For example, at Claremont, Multiple Subject, Single Subject, and Education Specialist credential candidates had a number of common courses, such as their foundational Teaching and Learning Process course series, which they took together. This practice contributed to economies of scale, which can be critical for sustaining programs, especially for smaller educator preparation programs (EPPs), although it could come with the trade-off of a lessened ability to tailor coursework to the specificities of a credential or individual local education agency (LEA) partners.

Practice-Relevant Coursework

The studied residencies intentionally created and maintained cohesion across program coursework and between courses and clinical experiences. The programs we studied used a combination of strategies to encourage alignment, namely by closely tying coursework to clinical experiences through assignments, competencies, and program frameworks; collaborating with LEA partners to integrate tailored content into coursework; and creating structures to promote communication between differently positioned residency staff.

One strategy that supported alignment between coursework and clinical experience was the adoption of a set of core competencies or frameworks to guide all program elements. Most programs bridged coursework and clinical experiences in this manner. For example, CSUB's programs (Kern Urban and TRRE) centered around seven “high-leverage practices” that provided a framework for the design of course content, clinical expectations, assessment practice, coaching, and mentorship. (See [California State University, Bakersfield](#).) Similarly, Alder's Program Learning Outcomes and Student Learning Outcomes informed the design of courses and clinical expectations, as did Claremont's Critical Social Justice Teaching Competencies.

Another strategy was to design coursework to be highly relevant and immediately applicable to residents' clinical placements. As one Alder resident put it:

Every course is directly linked to what we can be doing inside the classroom. What you're reading about or what they're talking about, it's everything you can apply to your classroom, which makes it much more worthwhile to learn about.

Coursework across all programs incorporated assignments that required residents to apply their course learning in their clinical placements. Assignments included, for example, conducting classroom observations, designing and implementing lesson or unit plans, developing and analyzing assessments of student learning, and working through inquiry cycles on a classroom puzzle of practice. The assignments facilitated the immediate implementation of course concepts, allowed residents to observe in real time how instructional design choices could play out, and structured residents' reflections on what they experienced in their clinical placements. Programs typically had a regular monthly or weekly seminar for residents to help them apply course learning to address puzzles of practice in their clinical settings, making explicit connections between courses and clinical experiences.

Furthermore, programs worked to ensure the relevance of residents' preparation by integrating LEA norms and practices into coursework. This approach was seen most robustly in the Kern Urban program, due to the residency's single-district partnership. Kern Urban instructors incorporated the LEA partner's curricula into residency coursework and periodically invited district representatives to contribute to courses as a guest speaker or coteacher in order to provide the district perspective on course content such as classroom management. By weaving LEA norms and processes into residency coursework, programs lessen the learning curve that residents will face in their clinical placements and first year as a lead teacher while at the same time priming them to be ready on Day 1 to implement important district initiatives—a priority for LEA partners.

Programs worked to ensure the relevance of residents' preparation by integrating LEA norms and practices into coursework.

Finally, programs supported the implementation of these core competencies across program components through regular communication and meeting structures that allowed for collaboration between differently positioned residency staff—namely, academic faculty and course instructors, clinical faculty and staff, and EPP and LEA representatives. Regular touchpoints between these different residency roles supported alignment among courses, as well as connections between courses and clinical practice, and provided opportunities to realign and recalibrate courses and clinical experiences in response to emergent inconsistencies.

Interdisciplinary Coursework

Preparation programs have many standards and requirements they must include, making it challenging to cover so much content. Programs addressed this challenge by integrating content within courses. For instance, an interdisciplinary approach to reading and language arts instruction was common across programs. Studied programs integrated literacy with content methods such as visual and performing arts, science, or social studies in combination with literacy methods to help residents adopt a multidisciplinary approach and develop “language-rich lessons for diverse learners” across content areas.⁷⁰

Culturally responsive pedagogy and principles related to diversity, equity, and inclusion were also distributed and integrated across various courses, including content methods courses. This interdisciplinary approach not only created a more streamlined experience for residents but also aligned with how people learn, according to what is currently known about the science of learning and development.⁷¹

Condensing content into a smaller number of interdisciplinary courses did not require sacrificing key competencies in the studied programs. Course content included literacy methods that incorporate the science of reading, math methods based in inquiry, and whole child pedagogy aligned to the science of learning and development.

Across all programs, Multiple Subject credential literacy methods covered the full range of topics related to the science of reading. Courses included topics related to culturally relevant pedagogy, motivation, social and emotional learning, family engagement, and classroom culture, which were also emphasized in other coursework. Notably, all literacy methods courses emphasized the four domains of literacy—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—as well as explicit alignment to state standards and skills-based components of literacy. All Multiple Subject and Education Specialist (special education) literacy courses included phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, as well as formative and summative reading assessment and specific strategies for supporting multilingual learners and English language development, such as Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English. Single Subject credential courses focused on developing students’ reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills while they engaged in content learning.

Mathematics methods were integrated into the literacy and content methods series for Alder and Claremont, whereas CSUB and Tri-County both had stand-alone courses for Multiple Subject residents. Nonetheless, the content of courses had significant overlap across programs. All mathematics methods courses included math literacy—students’ ability to apply math concepts to real-world situations—with special attention to eliciting student thinking and engaging students in math discourse. The courses also included grounding in state standards and covered equity and access in math, math mindset or identity, productive struggle, and Universal Design for Learning. Most courses also included culturally relevant math instruction, math fluency, and the use of an inquiry approach to math.

When it came to incorporating content on the science of learning and human development, Alder and Tri-County stood out among programs. Alder had the most comprehensive coverage of the interplay between learning and development. In alignment with Alder’s emphasis on whole child pedagogy, all residents took a course that “focuses on the principles of child/adolescent development and learning as occurring in family, school, and community contexts.”⁷² The course examined academic, cognitive, psychological, linguistic, and social perspectives to help residents understand the role of schooling in development and learning. Whole child approaches were aligned with the science of learning and development⁷³ and included key topics such as peers and friendships; identity development, ethnoracial identity, gender identity, and sexual identity; family, culture, and social class; inclusive and responsive pedagogical approaches; and development of positive and supportive relationships with students.⁷⁴

Creating and Maintaining Program Coherence

The case study programs implemented practices to intentionally create and maintain program coherence and the tight connection between coursework and clinical experiences. They achieved these aims by creating spaces and dedicating time for collaboration between and among course instructors, clinical coaches, and mentor teachers. (See [Aligning Practices the Claremont Way](#).)

Aligning Practices the Claremont Way

Among the programs studied, the Claremont Graduate University Teacher Education Program (Claremont) adopted the most extensive formalized structures to create alignment across program components. In addition to aligning syllabi with the program's Critical Social Justice Teaching Competencies, the program created meeting structures that convened program staff to discuss and refine their practices in accordance with program priorities.

The program brought together course instructors and clinical coaches at monthly Clinical Academic Meetings (CAMs), which were designed to build and maintain coherence across courses and between course content and clinical practice. These meetings provided opportunities for instructors and coaches to ensure consistency with program frameworks, share practices, collaboratively troubleshoot challenges, and make connections between courses and clinical coaching. One Claremont instructor said, "The meetings are really helpful because that's how I was able to connect with [other instructors] and see what they're doing in their classes." One coach provided an example of how he used the CAMs to connect with course instructors and support residents in applying learning from their coursework:

We have a chance to say [to our colleagues], "I noticed my candidate was struggling with classroom management and trying to figure out ecology. What have you covered in class that I can further build on?" [These conversations allow me] to reinforce [course concepts in my feedback to candidates]: "Candidate, I know what classes you're taking. You should have been doing X, Y, and Z."

In addition to CAMs, Claremont held monthly Critical Practicum meetings that brought together residents, course instructors, clinical coaches, and mentor teachers and supported program coherence within and across roles. In addition to providing the opportunity for shared professional learning, these meetings also created a venue for delivering updates on program logistics, information about upcoming program requirements, and details about other relevant resources. By including residents, instructors, coaches, and mentor teachers in these meetings, the program ensured that everyone received the same information and resources, which supported a shared understanding of program expectations and the connections between courses and clinical expectations. These meetings particularly helped mentor teachers gain a deeper understanding of Claremont's unique Critical Social Justice Teaching Competencies. "When we have the monthly meetings," shared one mentor, "the language they're using to talk to us and to speak to their candidates all aligns."

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of case study program documents and participant interviews. (2024).

Characteristic 6: Cohort Model

Research indicates that cohorting is a key characteristic of effective residency programs. It is also a requirement for programs receiving a California Teacher Residency Grant.⁷⁵ By creating cohorts of residents, programs develop strong learning communities that often live on beyond the program itself. And by designating specific schools that engage in equitable and effective instruction as residency sites, programs can ensure that “residents are prepared in well-aligned, supportive sites”⁷⁶ that instantiate best practices and match their likely future teaching contexts.

Each of the five study programs created cohorts of residents who learned and worked together. Cohorts in most of the studied programs were limited in size, with a maximum of 25 residents. The smaller programs—Kern Urban, TRRE, and Tri-County—operated a single residency cohort. In these instances, all residents in the program were members of the same single cohort. Within the program cohort, Tri-County also had a smaller specialty “subcohort” that was made up of undergraduate residents who transferred from the program’s partner 2-year institution—Hartnell College (Hartnell)—as part of a 2+2 pathway.

Alder, in contrast, operated multiple distinct residencies, each in partnership with one or more partner local education agencies (LEAs). As a result, Alder formed cohorts based on the LEAs in which residents’ clinical placements took place. Some LEA partners hosted a whole cohort, consisting of between 12 and 20 residents, whereas other LEA partners banded together to form a “combined cohort” of residents in the same region.

A Critical Support

Residents and program leads expressed the importance of support from peers within the resident cohorts. One Tri-County graduate shared, “I chose [Tri-County] because I was in a cohort. ... I knew I was going to get the help I needed.” Across programs, residents expressed that they communicated frequently with fellow cohort members outside of class time on messaging apps, which they used to ask questions, share resources, plan gatherings, and celebrate licensing milestones. As one Claremont resident shared, “If I didn’t have a cohort, I’d be lost. ... When I have a question, I go to my classmates before I go to anybody else, because most of the time they have an answer for me.”

Program graduates reported that they continued to benefit from informal cohort support after program completion. This ongoing cohort support was most frequently noted by Kern Urban graduates, 100% of whom had been hired in the same district by virtue of the residency’s single-district partnership. As a result, these graduates had ample opportunity to remain connected with fellow cohort members and noted appreciatively that they entered into their new roles with a preexisting network of close teacher colleagues in their school or district. For example, graduates described these connections as an important source of support for induction. One graduate explained:

Seeing our cohort [at the induction meeting] made me feel more comfortable—I wasn’t alone in a crowd of a bunch of new teachers. I was like, “Oh, friendly faces!” And I knew if I had other questions, I could reach out to any of them because they’re going through the same first year.

Furthermore, due to their shared preparation experiences, graduates also described a feeling of connection to Kern Urban graduates from different cohorts. “It just builds a different community on top of the community we already have in our districts,” said one graduate.

Intentional Community Building

All five programs implemented multiple structural supports to foster cohort relationships. Strategies included bringing cohorts together at regular intervals for shared learning and reflection—either through shared coursework, resident seminars, or other learning opportunities—and clustering residents at clinical placement sites. Programs often used more than one of these strategies to build and reinforce cohort bonds.

Of the various strategies, taking courses with fellow cohort members was mentioned the most frequently as an effective mechanism for building community and connection. Notably, courses were described as “safe,” “collaborative,” and “interactive,” suggesting that what happened in courses was a critical factor in how connected residents felt to their cohort. Creating community within courses was not a given, however: Residency staff described building community within courses as intentional work.

To facilitate cohort-bonding through coursework, CSUB opened unique course sections for each residency program that were only available for that program’s residents. This practice allowed Kern Urban and TRRE residents to meet with their respective cohorts for a full day of coursework each week, which provided frequent touchpoints and shared experiences that supported the development of cohort relationships. The residents from these programs articulated particularly deep affinities for their fellow cohort members, often describing their cohort relationships in familial terms.

Separate sections for cohorts may not be feasible for all residencies, especially in smaller programs. All other case study programs intermingled residents with candidates from other cohorts or subgroups in most or all of their credentialing coursework but provided opportunities for cohorts to bond and gel. For example, at Alder, cohorts took their summer coursework together but then were intermingled with residents from other cohorts for fall and spring coursework. Shared summer coursework laid a strong foundation for relationships that continued to develop throughout the residency year.

Across programs, cohorts met regularly for a Resident Seminar or Resident Learning Community meeting. These meetings occurred on a weekly or monthly basis and provided residents with the opportunity to reflect on their clinical experiences and coursework in community with their cohort. These convenings were a key means of developing and sustaining cohort relationships. One Alder resident reflected, “Coming into seminar is like a weight lifted off my shoulder, because I know it’s a safe place for us to all debrief about what we’re going through in our classes. We’re all just going through the same thing ... and we’re all here to support each other.” The formal facilitation of residents’ reflections enabled program leaders to encourage, as the TRRE coordinator noted, healthy and “solutions-oriented” dialogue about challenges.

Alder and Claremont created further opportunities, beyond coursework and the Resident Seminar, for residents to connect with one another in cohorts. For example, at Alder, residents met with their cohort mates through 10 days of in-person, cohort-based “course intensives”—full-day sessions for concentrated coursework that were spread across the year. At Claremont, residents attended a monthly Critical Practicum meeting that brought together (in a virtual format) residents, mentor teachers, clinical coaches, and course instructors in a shared professional learning community. The program also hosted monthly “Spicy Saturdays”—optional, in-person meetings where current and former residents gathered for shared learning and networking in an informal, low-stakes setting.

Clustered Clinical Placements

The community feeling that developed through regular, shared meeting times was further amplified when residents were placed with cohort members at the same clinical sites. One TRRE program graduate recalled that she and the two other residents at her clinical site would “meet up throughout the day and bounce ideas off of each other.” She added, “We would share key takeaways for the week or things that didn’t work.” Similarly, a Tri-County graduate noted the special relationships that developed among residents at her placement site:

There were three or four of us in the same school. So that’s how we started to connect, and I ended up making some amazing friends. ... We’re in different schools right now, but I feel like I got closer to them, and it also really helped me with [coursework].

While programs could not always facilitate placements for multiple residents at a single site, often due to limited mentor capacity, program leaders noted that it was a priority to move in this direction. “We’re hoping to have a minimum of two residents at each school site so there’s a cohort experience on campus,” noted the Claremont Fellows coordinator. As the program moves toward this goal, Claremont has begun asking partners to find sites that can provide multiple mentor teachers and prioritizing these sites for resident placements.

Characteristic 7: Financial Support for Residents

Teacher preparation requires that candidates take on significant financial burdens, whether in terms of tuition costs, foregone wages, or both. These expenses may act as a barrier for many prospective candidates, pushing them toward internship pathways that provide a salary but do not allow for high-quality preparation or leading them to pursue careers other than teaching.⁷⁷ Effective residencies provide financial support, which promotes access to high-quality preparation for a more diverse group of candidates and enables residents to fully engage with their learning during the residency year rather than working on nights and weekends. All of the residency programs in this study made various forms of financial support available to residents, working to maximize financial aid and provide advising to ensure residents could access all available funding sources.

Stipends and Other Income

All programs provided resident stipends in exchange for a 3- to 5-year teaching commitment within partner districts, a practice that has been identified in research as a feature of successful residency programs.⁷⁸ These stipends provided residents with a source of income during the residency year that could be used for living expenses or tuition. While program stipends varied significantly (from \$12,000 to \$42,000; see [Table 4](#)),⁷⁹ residents across programs shared that the availability of a residency-year stipend was one of the top factors that attracted them to their program. Many of the residents we interviewed, particularly those with familial obligations, said they would not have been able to afford an unpaid preparation pathway. Residents also noted that the stipend allowed them to avoid working an additional job in order to sustain themselves financially during the residency year.

Program leads also reported that instituting or increasing their program's stipend resulted in a higher number of program applicants. For example, a superintendent in an Alder partner district shared that when his district was awarded a Teacher Residency Grant Program grant, the district was able to supplement its \$15,000 investment in each resident's stipend with an additional \$22,000 from the grant, bringing the total stipend to \$37,000. As a result, he reported the number of interested applicants went from around 40 to more than 100. The higher stipend, the superintendent shared, made the residency possible for a set of individuals who could not have justified spending a year out of work with only \$15,000 in income: "If you can increase [the stipend] to a degree where it's comparable to their current salary, then you're going to get a lot more applicants, and a lot more diverse applicants." This assertion that instituting or increasing stipends resulted in a more diverse set of applicants—specifically applicants identifying as candidates of color, first-generation college graduates, and individuals with their own families to support—was echoed by leaders at other residencies.

Table 4. Tuition Costs and Financial Supports for Residents by Residency Program, 2022–23

Category	Alder	Claremont	Kern Urban	TRRE	Tri-County
Program tuition	\$20,500 (credential and Master of Arts)	\$35,100 ^a (credential and Master of Arts)	\$6,660 ^b (credential)	\$10,340 ^c (prerequisite courses and credential)	\$6,660 (credential)
Additional campus fees (per semester)	\$0	\$370	\$949	\$551 (summer); \$949 (fall/spring)	\$700
Resident stipend^d (may vary by LEA)	\$12,000–\$37,000	\$25,000–\$42,000	\$18,000–\$23,000	\$35,000	\$17,000
Eligibility-based grants^e (maximum per resident)	\$34,640 (GSTG, TEACH, Cal Grant)	\$23,772 (GSTG, TEACH)	\$42,976+ (GSTG, TEACH, Cal Grant, Pell Grant, Middle Class)	\$42,976+ (GSTG, TEACH, Cal Grant, Pell Grant, Middle Class)	\$42,976+ (GSTG, TEACH, Cal Grant, Pell Grant, Middle Class)
Scholarships and other available program cost supports per resident^f (maximum per resident)	Scholarships: \$10,000 (need-based) Exam preparation and registration fee assistance: \$450	Scholarships: \$5,000 (need- and merit-based)	Scholarships: \$15,000 ^g Exam and other assistance: \$8,000 ^h Conference and travel: \$3,000	Scholarships: \$15,000 ⁱ Tuition assistance from Tulare County Office of Education: \$3,751	Scholarships: \$5,000 ^j

Note: LEA = local education agency; TRRE = Teacher Residency for Rural Education.

^a 36 units x \$975 per unit, with teacher preparation subsidy.

^b Does not include four foundational courses, which are required before admission to Kern Urban Teacher Residency.

^c Includes tuition for foundational courses.

^d Programs using California Commission on Teacher Credentialing Teacher Residency Grant Program funds were required to provide minimum stipends of \$20,000 per resident beginning in fiscal year 2023–2024.

^e Not all residents were eligible for all grant types. Cal Grant = Cal Grant Teaching Credential Program (\$10,868 for private universities; \$7,390 for California State Universities); GSTG = Golden State Teacher Grant (\$20,000); Middle Class = California Middle Class Scholarship (varies based on family earnings); Pell = federal Pell Grant (\$6,895); TEACH = federal Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (\$3,772).

^f Not all residents were eligible for all scholarship types.

^g \$10,000 (California State University Robert Noyce Scholarship) + \$5,000 (California State University Residency Year Scholarship).

^h California State University, Bakersfield's Kern Urban Teacher Residency reimburses all credentialing-related fees and costs associated with acquiring a substitute teaching credential, including tuberculosis test, Certificate of Clearance, 30-Day Substitute Teaching Permit, Live Scans, liability insurance, transcript fees, health physicals, SAT score verification, and all required exams.

ⁱ \$10,000 (CSU Noyce Scholarship) + \$5,000 (CSU Residency Year Scholarship).

^j \$5,000 (CSU Residency Year Scholarship).

Sources: Alder Graduate School of Education. [Program costs](#) (accessed 12/03/2022); California Student Aid Commission. [What are the Cal Grant award amounts?](#) (accessed 02/01/2023); California State University, Bakersfield. [Schedule of tuition and fees](#) (accessed 02/01/2023); California State University, Monterey Bay. [Undergraduate tuition and fees](#) (accessed 07/12/2024); Claremont Graduate University. [Teacher education \(online\)](#) (accessed 07/12/2024); Claremont Graduate University. [Tuition & fees](#) (accessed 07/12/2024); California State University. [Robert Noyce Scholarships](#) (accessed 07/12/2024); California State University. [CSU Residency Year Scholarship](#) (accessed 07/12/2024); Claremont Graduate University. [Cost & aid](#) (accessed 12/02/2023); U.S. Department of Education, Federal Student Aid. [Receive a TEACH Grant to pay for college](#) (accessed 07/12/2024); California State University. [Cal Grant Teaching Credential Program](#) (accessed 07/12/2024); California Student Aid Commission. [Middle Class Scholarship \(MCS\)](#) (accessed 07/12/2024); U.S. Department of Education, Federal Student Aid. [Federal Pell Grants](#) (accessed 07/12/2024).

Some programs also created opportunities for additional income by allowing residents to substitute teach in partner districts, although they established safeguards to preserve the learning focus of the residency. For example, Kern Urban residents could substitute teach, but only for their own mentor teacher in the event of their absence. TRRE residents could enter the general substitute pool, but only on Fridays, a day the program kept free from coursework and clinical obligations to help meet districts' need for substitute teachers. TRRE residents who opted to substitute teach on a weekly basis could earn an additional \$8,000–\$10,000 in substitute teaching pay, which represented a substantive increase in take-home pay.

In addition to offering these sources of financial support, programs assisted residents in identifying and applying for eligibility-based state and federal grants. Three grants were identified by programs and residents as important sources of funding: the Cal Grant Teaching Credential Program (Cal Grant), the Golden State Teacher Grant (GSTG), and the federal Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant. [Table 4](#) includes a summary of maximum grant amounts available to residents by program.

- **Golden State Teacher Grant.** The GSTG provides up to \$20,000 to teacher candidates enrolled in a California Commission on Teacher Credentialing–approved credential program in return for a 4-year service commitment in a California priority school or preschool program.⁸⁰ Notably, GSTG funds may be used for any program-related expense, including cost of living.⁸¹
- **Cal Grant Teaching Credential Program.** The Cal Grant provides up to \$7,390 at California State Universities and \$10,868 at private universities to teacher candidates who received a Cal Grant as undergraduates and demonstrate financial need. Candidates who enroll in a residency (or any state-approved teacher credential program) within 15 months of receiving their bachelor's degree can apply for an additional year of Cal Grant funds, which are “intended to cover the basic CSU tuition fee for credential students.”⁸²
- **Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education Grant.** The federal TEACH Grant provides up to \$4,000 to students completing coursework to begin a career in teaching in exchange for a 4-year commitment to teach in a high-need field at a school or education service agency that serves students from low-income backgrounds.⁸³

According to Alder’s CEO, the GSTG in particular was a “game changer” for Alder’s program. The grant has increased “residents’ ability to say yes to joining the program” and allowed them to graduate with a lower debt load. Between the 2018–19 and 2022–23 school years, the percentage of Alder residents taking out federal loans for their teacher preparation fell from 72% to 26%, and the average amount of federal loans decreased from \$27,000 to \$10,000.

While both the GSTG and TEACH grants establish 4-year service requirements as a condition of receipt, these requirements are equivalent to or only slightly longer than the commitment that residents make as part of their program. Notably, for all programs that have partnerships with local education agencies (LEAs) receiving California Teacher Residency Grant Program funds (Alder, Kern Urban, Tri-County, TRRE), a 4-year service commitment is already a requirement. Since residents are already committed to serving in a high-need school, the stipulations of the service requirement represent little additional commitment.

Reducing Program Costs

On a 2021 survey of residents enrolled in programs funded by the California Teacher Residency Grant Program, more than 50% of residents reported that they had experienced difficulty paying school expenses and/or bills during their residency year.⁸⁴ The experience of financial hardship was particularly concentrated among African American residents, approximately 75% of whom reported that they had experienced difficulty paying for school expenses. Finding ways to reduce program costs, the data suggest, may improve the accessibility of residency pathways for a more diverse set of candidates.

Programs adopted a number of strategies that helped reduce program costs. For example, programs could negotiate with the institution of higher education to reduce program tuition. At Claremont, the need to move the program online due to the pandemic created an opportunity to rethink all aspects of the program, including cost. Using the rationale that online courses used fewer university resources, the program director at the time advocated and gained institutional support for subsidies that reduced tuition for teacher candidates by half, from almost \$72,000 down to about \$35,000 for the 2022–23 school year. In 2023–24, the university continued to offer teacher candidates a reduced tuition of \$975 per unit, compared with the regular Claremont rate of \$2,020 per unit for all other programs.⁸⁵ For Claremont’s Teacher Education Program, reducing the tuition was another way to enact its social justice values.

Another approach, adopted by the Tri-County residency, was to integrate the residency program into a 2+2 university pathway. In 2+2 programs, students complete the first 2 years of their undergraduate degree at a community college before transferring to a 4-year university for the latter 2 years of their degree, a practice that significantly lowers the total cost of the degree. By recruiting 2+2 transfer students into the residency, the program provided a streamlined opportunity for undergraduate students to access comprehensive yet relatively low-cost teacher preparation.

Finally, another option was to combine coursework so that residents would pay for fewer courses. Claremont and Alder both adopted this approach. Because both residencies used coursework models that integrated teacher credential and master’s degree coursework, residents were able to save a year or more of tuition in obtaining their graduate degrees. This approach promotes more equitable access to a graduate degree and increases lifetime earning potential for graduates because they can start their teaching careers at a higher level on the pay scale. (See [Streamlined Courses and Integrated Master’s Degree](#).)

Robust Financial Aid Advising

As previously stated, there are potential candidates who do not undertake teacher preparation programs because they perceive that they cannot afford to do so. Program leaders realized that financial aid awareness was key to recruiting residents. Tuition represented a major expense for many residents, and programs helped residents see how they might cover this expense by informing them of state and federal grant programs designed to finance teacher preparation.

Program leaders realized that financial aid awareness was key to recruiting residents.

Although all programs provided financial aid advising, such advising was most systematic and robust at Alder, which clearly listed the program costs and sources of available financial supports on its website, outlining how much financial support residents might expect from various sources and including descriptions of funding sources with links to further information and applications. Notably, Alder also directly communicated with each prospective resident about the financial assistance that would be available to them. As the first point of contact for most residents, clinical directors discussed the costs and available supports during the recruitment phase. One resident shared that the clinical director helped address her “financial worries” by providing information about financial aid:

One of my biggest concerns was financial aid. So [the clinical director] really laid it out as these [internal Alder] grants you can apply for and these other grants outside of Alder that would still help with tuition. And just finding resources—she helped me with that.

Alder’s clinical director and the Office of Student Services actively assisted residents in accessing supports. To ensure residents knew about and applied for the GSTG and other tuition supports, Alder’s Office of Student Services assigned each resident a student services advisor. These advisors scheduled one-on-one support sessions with each resident and followed up on whether residents had completed their grant applications, offering additional support as needed. As a result of this strategy, Alder’s CEO reported that as of 2022–23, 85% of the university’s residents had accessed the GSTG, with this number increasing to 94% in 2023–24.

Resources for Other Preparation-Related Costs

In addition to residency tuition, there are other hidden costs that add up for residents, and some of the programs also factored these extra costs into the aid they provided. Extra costs included prerequisite courses, fees for required exams, university fees, and other program and certification costs (e.g., nontuition program-related costs and costs related to credentialing).

Prerequisite Courses

Prerequisite courses are a hidden cost that can prevent many potential residents from even considering comprehensive teacher preparation programs. For example, Kern Urban required four foundational courses prior to admission into the residency program, but these courses were not figured into residency tuition. TRRE included these foundational courses as part of resident coursework and addressed the extra cost of these foundational courses by paying for them through its partner LEA, the Tulare County Office of Education. Alder partnered with a community college to provide cost-free courses for prospective

residents who might only need one or two additional courses to satisfy Subject Matter Competency requirements, which can be done through coursework in California thanks to legislation signed in 2021.⁸⁶ (See [Decreased Testing Requirements and Increased Testing Support](#).)

Exam Fees

When exams were unavoidable, programs provided direct financial support for costs related to testing. For example, at Alder, each resident could receive up to \$200 toward test registration fees. Kern Urban took direct support a step further by reimbursing all exam fees. In California, a state waiver of all fees for required credentialing examinations was available during the 2022–23 academic year (when this study was conducted), which temporarily eliminated the need for this assistance until 2024. However, during years when this waiver is not available, exam funding constitutes important support.

University Fees

Another significant hidden cost is university fees, which are due prior to course registration and can be a barrier to resident enrollment. University fees for the studied programs ranged from \$370 at Claremont⁸⁷ to almost \$950 at CSUB⁸⁸ per semester in 2022–23. When residents have to pay such fees for between 2 and 4 semesters, the fees can add up to thousands of dollars. Fees can be a significant burden, especially for residents who experience financial hardship. Alder recognized hidden university fees as a hardship for residents and set advertised tuition amounts as inclusive of fees so that cost of attendance would be transparent to potential candidates.

Other Program and Certification Costs

Programs also recognized that residents have additional preparation- and certification-related costs, such as course materials and fees for credentialing, background checks (e.g., Live Scan), exam registration, and tuberculosis tests and physicals. Although California’s Teacher Credential, Examination, and Performance Assessment Fee Waivers, which covered the cost of credential-related fees for teacher candidates, were available through 2024,⁸⁹ the financial burden associated with credentialing requirements remains significant. [Table 5](#) shows many of the additional costs residents incur as part of their preparation and certification. For example, in 2022–23 the state-required California Teaching Performance Assessment cost \$300,⁹⁰ and applying for a credential cost \$100.⁹¹ Kern Urban reimbursed residents for all fees associated with joining the program, including fees for tuberculosis tests, Live Scan fingerprinting and Certificate of Clearance, substitute teaching permits, liability insurance, transcript fees, health physicals, and SAT score verification, in addition to any required California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSETs), all of which can add up to more than \$600.⁹²

Table 5. Costs Beyond Tuition for Residents

Item	Amount
Prior to preparation	
Certificate of Clearance	\$50
California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSETs)	\$247–\$297
Department of Justice clearance	\$42
Health physical	Varies
Live Scan	\$10–\$116 (varies by location)
Tuberculosis test	\$17–\$59 (varies by location)
Transcript fees	\$10 (varies by institution)
SAT score verification	\$110
Substitute teaching permit	\$55
End of preparation	
California Teaching Performance Assessment/edTPA	\$300
Reading Instruction Competence Assessment	\$171
Initial preliminary credential	\$100
Total	\$1,310 (upper-range estimate; excludes health physical and the cost of assessment retakes for those who do not pass on the first attempt)

Sources: Bakersfield City School District. [Required paperwork for substitute teacher applicants](#) (accessed 07/12/2024); California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. (2023). [Fee schedule information \(CL-659\)](#) (accessed 07/12/2024); College Board. [SAT score verification](#) (accessed 07/12/2024); College Board. [Test fees](#) (accessed 01/22/2025); edTPA. [Fees and payment options](#) (accessed 07/12/2024); California Educator Credentialing Assessments. [Reading Instruction Competence Assessment \(RICA\)](#) (accessed 07/12/2024); State of California Department of Justice. [Live Scan locations](#).

LEA Contributions

Residency leaders viewed financial investment from LEA partners as critical to a sustainable residency model. Out of the five studied programs, four worked with LEAs that contributed to residency operations, both financially and with other resources. In each instance, LEAs drew on dollars from the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)—California’s school funding formula—which allows districts great flexibility in how they use state aid.⁹³ LCFF funds were most commonly used to pay resident stipends. LEA partner contributions ranged from \$10,000 to \$37,000 per resident. Several LEA partners (Kern Urban, Tri-County, TRRE, and [in some cases] Alder) also hosted coursework in LEA buildings, a practice that contributed to cost savings for the institution, enhanced residents’ familiarity with LEA facilities and staff, and, in some cases, eased residents’ financial and time costs associated with commuting to the campus.

Kern Urban is an exemplar of LEA partner-supported sustainable funding. When the private grant that funded Kern Urban’s start-up came to an end, Bakersfield City School District stepped in to continue financing the program by writing it into their Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP)—a document that California LEAs use to set goals, plan actions, and detail how LCFF funds will be used to achieve district goals—and apportioning LCFF funds. As of 2022–23, the district had invested between \$750,000 and \$1.2 million of LCFF funds into the continued operation of the residency. “As a district, we are invested, and this is the right model to grow teachers,” said the Bakersfield superintendent.⁹⁴ “The economics definitely is more costly,” continued the superintendent, “[but] the output of high-quality teachers in our classrooms is easily worth the monetary cost.”⁹⁵ Furthermore, research suggests the potential for cost savings from improved teacher retention, freeing up funds that could be reallocated toward residency preparation and decreasing the overall added cost of such programs.⁹⁶

LEAs have also been able to augment stipend budgets using their California Teacher Residency Grant Program awards. Monterey Peninsula Unified School District budgeted \$15,000 in living stipends for residents from their LCFF funds but then was able to use the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing’s Teacher Residency Grant not to offset that LCFF expenditure but to increase the resident stipend to \$37,000 for 5 years. The superintendent of Monterey Peninsula explained that the district was willing to make these investments because of the quality of the program, the district’s high rate of need, and principals consistently rating the residents as higher quality than candidates from other programs. The superintendent said, “All that was evidence to me that this is worth the investment, worth continuing.” The superintendent also shared that the district was willing to “invest [LCFF] funding because it aligns with our [school] board goals of recruiting and retaining high-quality diverse staff that reflect our student body” and because LCFF provides a source of ongoing funding that is not dependent on supplemental grant funds.

Across programs, LEA residency leaders shared the sense that the LEA’s gains from the residency made it worth the investment. Because residency graduates tend to be retained at high rates, an LEA’s investment has the potential to reduce turnover, allowing funds that would have otherwise gone toward recruiting and onboarding new teachers to be reallocated to the residency. The Monterey Peninsula superintendent communicated that for his district, investing in residencies is a “long-term strategic play. ... If done correctly, the investment is going to pay off, because in the long term you’re going to have less and less openings in hard-to-staff positions.” Well-developed data systems and regular analysis allowed program leaders to provide quantitative and qualitative evidence to help LEA partners understand residency benefits and helped program champions within the LEA advocate for ongoing funding.

Residency leaders across programs viewed cost-sharing with LEA partners as a key step toward sustainability. Historically, however, teacher preparation has been the purview of the institution of higher education, not the LEAs. The residency model, which requires LEAs to be reciprocal partners in preservice preparation, necessitates a paradigm shift in how the teacher preparation ecosystem is viewed. This perspective means that many LEAs and their leaders are not accustomed to thinking about or participating in preservice teacher preparation. Therefore, while LEA cost-sharing is a key component of sustainability, LEA leaders have to be convinced that an investment in preparing their own teachers is a worthwhile one that will produce returns.

As previously mentioned, all of the LEA leaders who participated in the current study expressed strong convictions that their investments in residency stipends were indeed “worth it,” as they connected such investments to reduced turnover among new teachers, effective teaching practices, and even longer retention of experienced teachers who served as mentors. In addition, LEA engagement, particularly if the LEA shared costs, provided additional leverage for LEAs to influence the content and structures of the program and to advocate for district-specific needs.

All of the LEA leaders who participated in the current study expressed strong convictions that their investments in residency stipends were indeed “worth it.”

All residencies had moved toward partnership models in which LEAs were expected to contribute at least a portion of residents’ stipends, which are the largest expense involved in the residency model. To motivate LEAs and sustain their willingness to invest in residents’ preparation, programs involved LEA partners in resident selection, tailored coursework and clinical preparation to the LEAs’ context, and regularly shared data on program outcomes. Data-sharing practices were particularly important and could help LEA partners understand how the residency was contributing to districts’ staffing goals (e.g., to increase teacher diversity, reduce turnover, or fill vacancies in hard-to-staff subject areas or schools).

Partnerships can support cost-sharing between LEAs and preparation programs by using Prepared To Teach’s 3 R’s framework for sustainable residency development. This framework includes (1) reallocating resources within existing budgets, (2) reducing program-related costs such as tuition and course materials, and (3) reinvesting savings from reduced turnover and onboarding costs into the residency partnership.⁹⁷ Prepared To Teach offers free online resources for LEAs interested in sustainably funding residencies, including guidance on LEA budget cost centers to consider,⁹⁸ innovative models for resident roles,⁹⁹ program cost planning,¹⁰⁰ and increasing financial support for residents.¹⁰¹

Characteristic 8: Ongoing Mentoring for Graduates

Another characteristic of effective residencies is that they provide ongoing mentoring for graduates as they transition from pre- to in-service teachers. Several programs recognized that the credentialing process could be difficult to manage during the busy and highly demanding residency year. Case study programs provided frequent reminders and communication about deadlines and requirements to residents to assist them in the credentialing process. In addition, programs supported residents in completing a teaching performance assessment, which is required in California, and strove to support residents during the hiring process. Programs acknowledged that the transition from preparation to lead teaching could be challenging and worked closely with local education agency (LEA) partners to facilitate “seamless” transitions into employment.

Hiring and Transition Support

The close partnership between educator preparation programs (EPPs) and LEAs facilitated residents’ hiring into open positions in partner LEAs and their transition into full employment. In most instances, program leads reported that residents did not require much support for securing positions due to their familiarity with district practices and staff, extensive clinical experience, credentials in high-need subject areas, service commitments to work in partner LEAs, and positive program reputations. For all of these reasons, when a resident’s placement school had an opening, that resident was often a top-tier prospect.

In instances when placement sites lacked openings, programs helped residents connect with available positions, either within the same LEA or in another partner LEA. The residency’s relationships with partners’ human resources departments facilitated connections with LEA staff involved in hiring. Furthermore, recommendations from LEA residency staff, who were often familiar with residents’ abilities, were given high credence in the hiring process. For example, a principal in an Alder partner district expressed faith in recommendations from her district’s clinical director: “[She’s] a former site principal ... and knows what I’m looking for.” As a result of these relationship-based systems, programs reported that most residents who are on track to complete their program and credentialing requirements in the spring receive an offer letter before the end of their program.

Another commonality across the studied partnerships was that LEA residency coordination was typically housed in human resources, often alongside induction or professional development, which created a continuum of support for residents as they transitioned from pre- to in-service roles. Placing residency administration within human resources has several strategic advantages. It positions the residency, organizationally, in proximity to recruitment, new teacher onboarding, and ongoing professional development. This strategy enables residency leads to collaborate closely with their department colleagues to forecast hiring needs to inform recruitment, incorporate onboarding into the resident experience and prevent unnecessary duplication of professional development, and build on what residents learn in their preparation with ongoing coaching or learning opportunities. This organizational strategy can also inform professional development plans for continuing teachers based on what residents or mentor teachers are learning in the residency and can even support a transition toward more sustainable hiring practices in the long term, especially if the LEA is using the residency partnership as a lever for districtwide changes.

Induction Support

Although induction support is one of the characteristics of high-quality residencies, induction can be difficult for programs to integrate into the resident experience. In California, induction has typically been provided by hiring LEAs without connections to teacher preparation programs, which can make for a disjointed transition between preparation and in-service induction. While two programs, Kern Urban and Claremont, experimented with novel approaches to induction that would build on graduates' in-program experiences, they ultimately moved away from these strategies. (See [Experiments in Induction Support](#).) However, these experiments showed that the intensive partnerships cultivated between EPPs and LEAs for residency preparation have the potential to be leveraged to develop greater coherence between preparation and induction support.

Although induction support seems to be the least prioritized partnership activity among these programs, it is an important area of growth, as research has shown that induction support can improve new teacher retention.¹⁰² Continued engagement with the teacher preparation program during induction can also reinforce the approaches and strategies residents learn as they continue developing their practice, bridging pre- and in-service experiences as well as serving as a feedback loop to inform residency program improvements.

Experiments in Induction Support

Teacher retention is supported by high-quality preservice preparation, but providing strong supports for beginning teachers through induction is another critical part of supporting retention. Both Kern Urban Teacher Residency (Kern Urban) and the Claremont Graduate University Teacher Education Program (Claremont) developed novel approaches to induction for residency graduates that were ultimately abandoned or de-emphasized. Nonetheless, their innovations provide examples of the ways in which residencies can leverage their educator preparation program (EPP)–local education agency (LEA) partnerships to customize induction support for residency graduates so that they have continuity between their pre- and in-service experiences.

Because Kern Urban residency graduates enter their first lead teaching job with significantly more clinical experience and familiarity with district norms and practices than the typical novice teacher, the residency experimented with offering an “early completion” option for induction. At Kern Urban, all program graduates are hired into Bakersfield City School District and transition into the district’s 2-year induction program. The program is facilitated by the Department of New Teacher Development—the same department that oversees the Kern Urban residency program—so graduates already have relationships with key induction staff. Because of the district staff’s familiarity with Kern Urban residents, the quality of the residents’ preparation, and the residents’ extensive clinical experience, the district was willing to grant graduates the opportunity to take an “early completion” option for induction, which was written into the partnership memorandum of understanding. The early completion option for induction allowed residency graduates the option to skip the first year of the induction program and proceed directly into the second.

Although the university initially advocated for this option as a benefit of residency participation, the program no longer encourages residents to take this route. During the 2023–24 school year, 3 out of 20 graduates from the most recent cohort of graduates opted for early completion. According to the coordinator of new teacher development for Bakersfield City School District, most residents benefited from and preferred the full 2 years of induction mentorship and inquiry that were embedded in the induction program. In some cases, graduates who had taken the early completion option later expressed that, in hindsight, they would have preferred an additional year of induction support.

Claremont took a different approach to induction, although in the context of a deep and highly collaborative partnership: The university itself provided an induction program. In the residency's earliest years, Claremont provided induction for all residency graduates who were hired into Alliance College-Ready Public Schools, a former LEA partner. Claremont's induction program was designed as an extension of the preparation program and developed inquiry cycles that built over time and focused on the program's Critical Social Justice Teaching Competencies. For each inquiry cycle, graduates would set goals around two focal Critical Social Justice Teaching Competencies and connect these goals to teaching practices they wanted to cultivate. A hiring principal described Claremont's induction support as making "a huge difference" and considered it to be an important factor in retaining new teachers. She explained:

[Claremont] knows who [the graduates] are before they come in as teachers. So I feel that induction is helpful as a school leader because ... you're still trying to build that relationship with the new teacher. Sometimes new teachers may feel uncomfortable on their initial classroom observations at the beginning of the year with their boss coming in, giving [them] feedback, and seeing [them] struggle. So having someone from Claremont be that confidant for the teacher helps put the resident at ease.

In addition, the principal noted that she maintained "open lines of communication with the [Claremont] folks" who could "tell me what the teacher is struggling with ... so that we can all work together and ... find out how to best support the teacher." She added, "Year 1 is hard, and we want to make sure we keep teachers in the profession."

Despite the innovative approach and positive outcomes of supporting resident graduates through induction, the program has phased out this support and instead shifted responsibility for induction to partner LEAs, which typically already provided free induction for their novice teachers. Given limited program capacity, "it didn't really make sense to run [an induction] program when districts already have one," explained the Claremont Fellows coordinator.

Still, the Claremont example in particular demonstrates the potential for EPPs and LEAs to continue to partner in supporting residents' development even after they graduate. Providing induction in partnership creates opportunities for more continuity and coherence between preservice preparation and in-service professional development, potentially easing the transition and improving teacher retention.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of case study interviews and program documents. (2024).

Characteristic 9: Proactive Whole Person Supports

The current study found that proactive whole person supports were key to resident success, which led to the addition of a ninth characteristic in the Learning Policy Institute's framework for high-quality resident programs. While stipends and tuition assistance are critical, residents' lives extend beyond their programs, and many have additional needs that often go unaddressed in preparation programs. These needs can present challenges that affect residents' ability to focus on their preparation.

Data from the case study programs point to four program factors supporting the whole person that contributed to resident success: identifying a clear “go-to” person who residents can call upon for help, ensuring residents' identities are represented in diverse faculty, developing strong program communication, and leveraging resources to provide 360-degree wraparound supports.

Identifying a Go-To Person

Many residents encounter challenges and require assistance during the residency year. Ensuring that residents know where to go when they need help is important, particularly for first-generation students, immigrants, or career changers who may have less experience—or less recent experience—with navigating higher education systems or who may be reticent to seek help for other reasons. Four programs (Alder, Kern Urban, Tri-County, and TRRE) addressed this issue by providing at least one designated person to serve as a “go-to” contact to provide direct support to residents. This designee was typically a program or cohort leader. Claremont, in contrast, adopted a distributed approach to support that charged all faculty with responsibility for providing whole person support to residents.

Although this role looked different from program to program, all go-to staff were deeply involved in the resident experience across the residency year and often had deep experience in partner local education agency (LEA) contexts. Go-to staff supported resident recruitment and provided ongoing support for resident seminar facilitation, clinical coaching, clinical placement coordination, and any other need that arose.

Unlike other programs, Claremont did not designate a go-to person in charge of all resident support and instead adopted a distributed model: All faculty and course instructors were expected to provide whole person supports for any resident. Residents and graduates expressed that they felt supported from all angles and described how faculty members shared their contact details with residents, encouraging them to reach out with questions and meeting with residents when they requested support. This distributed model reduced the demands on the program coordinator while simultaneously increasing the number of access points for residents seeking support, although no one individual had ultimate responsibility for meeting residents' needs. Other advantages of this model are that residents could choose the staff members to go to for help and could easily get face time with faculty during class meetings. Since this model also required all faculty to have the resources and knowledge needed to provide appropriate assistance, Claremont supported its faculty capacity through monthly Critical Practicum meetings and Clinical Academic meetings. (For more discussion of these monthly meetings, see [Aligning Practices the Claremont Way](#).)

Ensuring Diversity Among Course Instructors and Clinical Coaches

Just as a sense of belonging supports children's learning, adults also benefit from inclusive, culturally responsive learning environments.¹⁰³ One strategy for fostering a sense of belonging in preparation programs is to ensure that there is a diversity of backgrounds and cultures represented by program staff and faculty. Across the programs highlighted in this study, the staff and faculty who interacted with residents were a racially and culturally diverse group. This staffing diversity—which mirrored, to an extent, the racial and cultural diversity of residents—helped instructors, coaches, and other staff connect with residents, understand their experiences, and deliver high-quality learning experiences. Claremont's director of teacher education explained, "Our faculty reflect the communities, the populations that we serve. I think that's big and something that we're really proud of." Alder's dean expressed a similar perspective on the value of faculty diversity:

We are intentional about the diversity of our faculty both because it's important to have instructors who mirror our residents and also because we value the various perspectives that our faculty bring to the work of teaching. For some of our residents, their experience at Alder is the first time they have had a faculty of color or a faculty who shares their identities.

In multiple programs, residency coordinators viewed their personal backgrounds and identities as tools for connecting with residents. California State University, Monterey Bay's Tri-County coordinator recognized that his background as a person of color and immigrant helped him connect with residents, saying, "A majority of the students I have in class have some experience with the immigration process—I can empathize and really understand where they are coming from." He also got satisfaction from knowing that he could be a role model: "It's like, 'I've done it, and so can you.'" ¹⁰⁴ Similarly, the TRRE coordinator noted that her identity as a first-generation college graduate who grew up in the Central Valley—the area the residency serves—allowed her to understand the experiences and anticipate the needs of many similarly situated residents.

The opportunities to interact with and learn from diverse faculty and staff mattered to residents. At Alder, a recently recruited Latino/a resident reached out to the managing director of recruitment, who was also Latina, with the following message: "Seeing the impact you have through Alder as a Latina woman, I was reminded that I am on the correct path and chose the correct program as I am pursuing a teaching career through Alder. Thank you for providing the confirmation I needed as I embark on this journey!" A Claremont graduate shared that he was strongly influenced by an instructor who shared how his Indigenous roots informed his teaching practice and encouraged residents to "bring [their] whole self into the room as a teacher" and engage in ongoing reflection on their own identities and how they impact their teaching practice.

Developing Strong Program Communication

Residents also noted the importance of frequent program communication about credentialing milestones, program requirements, and available supports, especially given the intensity of their responsibilities during the residency year. Program communications helped disambiguate the credentialing process and keep residents on track for program completion and on-time credentialing. Reminders of timelines and deadlines, residents noted, helped them plan and prioritize their work. One Tri-County resident shared:

I would recommend the program simply because it facilitates everything for you. You're not alone in the whole process. They kind of give you deadlines, like, "Hey, by this time, you should be thinking about X, Y, and Z. By next month, you should think about these other things." It's just a really good way to hold yourself accountable and keep yourself on track. You have a good support system around you.

A TRRE resident expressed a similar sentiment:

They help us through the process when it comes to admissions, when it comes to keeping us updated on when things need to be submitted. And it's like, OK, I've got a checklist. I'm doing this, I'm doing that, and then I'm doing that. And it helps us keep track of things and [make] progress toward meeting our goals.

Residents and graduates from all of the case study programs mentioned that strong communication from the program, starting at recruitment and continuing through every phase of the program, was a key factor in their success.

Supporting the Whole Person

Residency programs made extensive whole person supports available to residents during their program year. Program staff were aware of how challenging the intensive program year could be for residents as they navigated coursework, clinical responsibilities, credentialing requirements, and personal and familial obligations all in tandem. Alder's director of student services pointed out, "[The residency] is really rigorous, and it can be really draining. We don't want them to be burned out before they get in the classroom."

With this in mind, programs designed structures of support that promoted residents' ability to fully engage with the program, manage their competing responsibilities during the residency year, access assistance as needed, and ultimately enter the teaching workforce credentialed and well equipped for success. Based on findings from the case study programs, critical supports include academic supports as well as 360-degree whole person supports that address residents' basic needs and emotional and mental well-being. They also help residents overcome challenges accessing transportation, child care, and other resources that are necessary for residents to focus on their preparation and learning.

Academic Supports

While program leads did their best to facilitate residents' steady progression through the program, challenges inevitably arose. Residents interviewed for this study expressed that program staff were highly responsive when support was needed, such as when residents encountered difficulties with coursework and clinical placements.

In coursework, program leads and other instructors served as a primary support. “Most of the professors that we have every semester are like, ‘If you need to contact me, if you have a question, go ahead,’” shared an Alder resident. Residents in multiple programs reported that instructors shared both phone numbers and email addresses with students and were highly responsive to outreach. It was a commonly shared sentiment that instructors “really went above and beyond,” as one Tri-County graduate put it, to support residents’ needs throughout the residency year. Instructors extended flexibility for coursework deadlines when needed and initiated conversations when concerned. One Claremont resident shared:

[Our instructors] get to know us ... so they know when something’s wrong. They reached out to me once when I was already a few months into my residency because they could sense that something was wrong, because of my demeanor in class, or my camera was off, or I just wasn’t participating as much as I usually did. So they were the ones to reach out and be like, “Let’s talk. I want to know how you’re doing.” And that was when I could tell them all those feelings I was having.

For this resident, her instructors’ caring attentiveness was itself a lesson about what it means to be a teacher. She said, “They’re definitely modeling the kind of educators that they hope we will be when we go into real work, and I feel like I carry that lesson into my school site.”

In addition to making themselves available to students, instructors—primarily program leads—carefully and proactively monitored residents’ academic progress and emotional affect. Aware that the residency year is a stressful time characterized by many competing responsibilities, programs developed progress-monitoring systems to proactively identify and support residents who might have difficulty completing their requirements or need additional supports. These systems varied in their levels of formality, ranging from informal monitoring of resident affect in course and cohort meetings to more formal strategically timed evaluations. Program leads monitored the reported observations of mentor teachers, clinical coaches, and clinical site principals in addition to course instructors’ and their own anecdotal observations. The studied programs then had follow-up processes and tools for supporting residents who needed extra help, such as a resident improvement plan or a midterm progress report and support plan.

Uniquely, Alder provided additional formalized structures for academic support. Given the number of residents served by the program, systematized academic supports streamlined the process of addressing common academic challenges, such as difficulties with graduate-level writing. During the summer prior to the residency year, Alder’s librarian hosted weekly sessions on graduate-level reading and writing that were mandatory for residents to attend. During these sessions, the librarian presented strategies for decoding scholarly texts and producing high-quality academic writing. Throughout the program year, the librarian and other members of the student services team continued to provide as-needed support by hosting optional informational webinars and workshops and offering personalized consultations. To supplement the staff’s limited capacity, the graduate school also contracted with Tutor.com to provide additional 24/7 academic writing and content support. Through this service, residents could submit coursework writing to receive feedback or schedule a call to discuss assignments.

Programs embedded explicit preparation for the state-required teaching performance assessment (TPA)—which at Alder is the edTPA—into program coursework and resident seminars. Some of the studied programs had dedicated courses that provided guidance; timeline recommendations; rubric explanations;

opportunities for residents to ask questions; peer feedback; and logistical support for residents as they prepared their TPA lesson plans, teaching videos, data analyses, and reflections. By chunking submission tasks and explicitly articulating assessment expectations, programs allowed residents to focus on the core work of thoughtfully designing, implementing, and reflecting on pedagogical instructional cycles.

Programs also utilized resident seminars as a space for TPA preparation. Residents affirmed the importance of having touchpoints at these meetings to develop their familiarity with TPA requirements and remind them of submission deadlines. However, residents who only received TPA support during resident seminars tended to desire more preparation than they received.

The high levels of support generally provided by programs may, in part, contribute to residents achieving higher TPA pass rates than candidates entering teaching through other pathways, as identified from the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing TPA records and teacher preparation program completer survey results.¹⁰⁵ However, another contributing factor may be that residents have ample opportunity to practice the cycles of planning, teaching, and assessing a lesson required by the TPA in informal ways over the course of their yearlong clinical placement.

360-Degree Wraparound Support

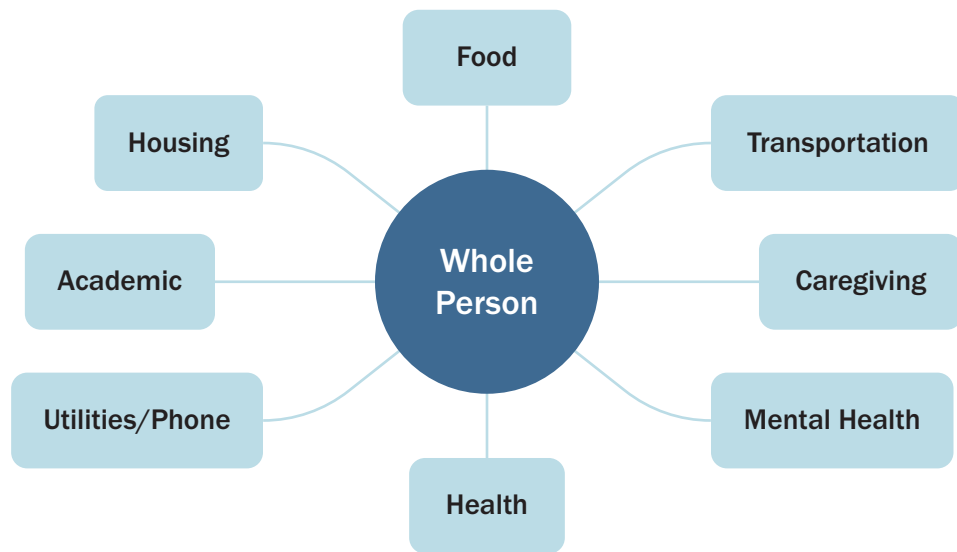
The research and evidence around the science of learning and development suggest that optimal learning requires attention to a learner as a whole person.¹⁰⁶ Supporting the whole person requires paying attention to housing, physical health, mental health, caregiving, food, transportation, and other basic needs in addition to academic challenges (see [Figure 3](#)). This imperative was underscored by the fact that even residents in the highest-paying programs communicated that their stipends did not match the cost of living in California and that they regularly experienced financial hardship during the residency year.

Supporting the whole person requires paying attention to housing, physical health, mental health, caregiving, food, transportation, and other basic needs in addition to academic challenges.

On WestEd's 2021 survey of residents in California Teacher Residency Grant Program–funded residencies, nearly 30% of residents reported experiencing food and/or housing insecurity.¹⁰⁷ African American residents disproportionately experienced financial hardship, with approximately 90% reporting difficulty paying bills. Compared with White residents, residents of color were also less likely to have access to health insurance.¹⁰⁸ With these findings in mind, providing whole person supports can more equitably enable residents to fully engage with their learning during the residency year.

These survey findings were reflected by the residents from our studied programs. The residents we interviewed expressed that finding housing they could afford on a residency stipend was one of their biggest hardships. “I don’t know how people do it,” shared one Claremont resident. “I’m very fortunate that I can live at home with my parents for free.” While some residents opted to live with their parents during the program year, many did not have this option. “Most of us are struggling to pay rent,” shared another Claremont resident. Beyond the financial support described previously and, for a subset of residents, the university student health services included in enrollment fees, residents had limited support to meet their housing, health care, and other basic needs.

Figure 3. Whole Person Support Considerations for Residency Programs



Source: Learning Policy Institute. (2025).

Such needs are often overlooked based on inaccurate assumptions and because residents may not feel comfortable asking for what they might consider special treatment. “You have to seek [support] out. [Program leaders and instructors] voice that our faculty and folks are available. But for me personally, I’m still learning how to ask for help when I need it,” disclosed one Claremont resident. To identify needs that might go unnoticed or unreported, such as food or housing insecurity, mental health challenges, transportation issues, or lack of access to child care, residencies need to implement proactive strategies. (See [Proactive Resident Supports at Alder](#).) Individualized advising regarding wraparound supports, similar to the robust financial aid advising discussed in [Characteristic 7: Financial Support for Residents](#), can help residency staff members identify and address residents’ unique support needs.

Proactive Resident Supports at Alder

The Alder Graduate School of Education Master’s and Credential Teacher Residency (Alder) stood out as the program doing the most to proactively identify and resolve areas of residents’ basic needs. Upon admission, each resident was assigned a student services advisor through Alder’s Office of Student Services (OSS). This person served as the resident’s point of contact within the OSS for the duration of their time at Alder and worked to make sure residents were aware of all available supports.

Residents filled out an intake survey that helped the advisor identify whether the resident might require help accessing housing, child care, health care, mental health services, food, or academic and testing support. Residents then attended a one-on-one check-in with their advisor, during which the advisor would discuss the items identified on the intake survey, inform the resident of

resources provided by Alder, and help the resident connect with resources available through external organizations. The overarching goal of these meetings was, according to Alder’s managing director of student services, to “identify any potential barriers and start developing a plan to mitigate them.”

For different areas of student need, the OSS has identified specific external resources that could provide support. For instance, the OSS connected students without health care to low-cost insurance through Covered California and free clinics where they could receive medical, mental health, and dental services. And the OSS helped students experiencing food insecurity—approximately 46% of Alder’s student population—enroll in CalFresh (known federally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and assisted residents with income documentation.

Aware that scarcity of affordable housing constitutes a significant challenge to many residents, Alder provided resources and supports designed to help connect residents with affordable options, including resource sheets with apartment-hunting tips and lists of regional housing resources, such as CHISPA Housing in Salinas, CA, which provides housing for low-income families. Residents could also complete a housing supports form that alerted the OSS to individual housing needs and could be used to connect residents with potential roommates. Alder also had community partner organizations such as the Central Valley Low Income Housing Corporation in Stockton that could provide emergency rent assistance to prevent residents from losing their housing. This example also demonstrates how residency programs can leverage existing community resources to provide more comprehensive whole person supports.

Alder’s approach was proactive on two fronts: It aimed to identify potential challenges as early as possible, and it had a ready set of resources for different areas of resident need. This approach allowed the OSS to act quickly to extend support. As a result, residents described the OSS as highly responsive and helpful. As one resident shared, “They’ve been quick to respond. Within the day, depending if I send it in the morning or by the afternoon, I’ll have an answer or I’ll have resources of where to go next.”

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of case study interviews and program documents. (2024).

Characteristic 10: Ongoing Capacity-Building for the Residency Program

Findings from the current study led to the addition of a 10th characteristic to the Learning Policy Institute's (LPI's) framework for high-quality residencies. This characteristic focuses on ensuring there is ongoing capacity-building. Prior work on high-quality residencies identified data-driven continuous improvement as a foundational component of successful residency programs.¹⁰⁹ In LPI's original set of eight characteristics, routine data sharing and joint problem-solving were subsumed as a part of strong partnerships between local education agencies (LEAs) and educator preparation programs (EPPs). However, the current study points to additional program practices related to building program capacity through multiple strategies, including not just data sharing with partner LEAs, but ongoing joint data collection and analysis for continuous improvement; internal coordination within the EPP's institution of higher education; professional development for program staff, faculty, and leaders; and participation in technical assistance support. These additional findings warranted the addition of an explicit characteristic that could account for all of these practices.

Regular Data Collection and Analysis

Case study programs all focused on continuous learning and improvement, processes that were supported by systematic data collection throughout the residency year and beyond. Program leaders noted that a key success factor for data-driven continuous improvement was formally systemizing a data collection cycle rather than taking an ad hoc approach. The programs that had been in operation the longest—Kern Urban and Alder—had the most explicit and sophisticated data practices, which included regular cycles of data collection, analysis, and continuous improvement each year.

Feedback and data were collected in numerous forms. During the residency year, the program kept close tabs on residents' development in their clinical placements through ongoing feedback from mentor teachers, midyear surveys from site principals, and formal observation data collected by clinical coaches. Informal, qualitative data also informed continuous improvement. "Honestly, a lot of information just comes from having conversations with mentors and residents and site principals," shared Bakersfield City School District's Kern Urban-affiliated coordinator of new teacher development.

If data sources suggested that residents or mentor teachers required additional support in a given area, program leads did not hesitate to course-correct midyear. At the conclusion of the program, residents completed an end-of-year National Center for Teacher Residencies survey and the exit survey from the California State University Chancellor's Office to provide feedback on their experiences, which the program also leveraged to inform its continuous improvement efforts.

Program leadership continued to analyze residents' outcomes after they left the program, relying on partner LEAs to track and communicate hiring, teaching effectiveness, and retention data for program completers. The Kern Urban coordinator was particularly enthusiastic about the utility of "tracking anything and everything about your completers," including, among other things, program completion rates, completers' race and ethnicity, how many attempts of the credentialing exams they made, and how many residents completed the program with credential in hand: "Those are the pieces that are going to help you identify areas of concern or trends or gaps" that might not otherwise be evident to program stakeholders.

The coordinator noted that collecting this data also allowed Kern Urban to “do our best storytelling of what we have done and what we can do and why we should sustain this program.” The data from these diverse sources were evaluated in an ongoing fashion by program leadership, and findings were discussed in depth at partnership meetings.

Similarly, Alder routinely collected and analyzed data for continuous improvement and conducted and disseminated research about the program. Data collection methods and timing were documented in the program’s annual data cycle calendar (see [Table 6](#)), and findings were included in an Annual Program Assessment Report that was presented to the board and made publicly available online.¹¹⁰

Table 6. Summary of Alder’s Annual Data Cycle Calendar

Category	Description	Instrument or metric	Summer (July–Aug)	Fall (Sep–Nov)	Winter (Dec–Jan)	Spring (Feb–June)
Recruitment and selection	Resident demographics	Alder application	X			
		Student Services Intake Survey	X			
Curriculum and learning environment	Program quality and relevance for residents	Course evaluations	X	X		X
		Alder resident survey			X	X
		NCTR resident survey				X
		Completion rates (for previous academic year)	X			
Resident effectiveness	Resident demonstration of learning	Mentor and principal evaluations			X	X
		NCTR principal survey				X
		Master’s oral exam				X
		Alder resident evaluations				X
		edTPA				X

Category	Description	Instrument or metric	Summer (July–Aug)	Fall (Sep–Nov)	Winter (Dec–Jan)	Spring (Feb–June)
Graduate effectiveness and retention	Hiring rates, effectiveness, and retention	Graduate hiring	X			
		Graduate effectiveness ^a		X		
		Graduate retention				X
Mentor experience	Program quality for mentors	Alder mentor survey			X	X
		NCTR mentor survey				X
Alder internal staff survey	Organizational infrastructure and culture	Staff survey	X		X	
		DEI survey		X		

Note: DEI = diversity, equity, and inclusion; NCTR = National Center for Teacher Residencies.

^a Graduate effectiveness is assessed using evaluations by hiring principals.

Source: Alder Graduate School of Education. (2023). *Annual data cycle*.

Programs made data-driven programming tweaks during the residency to course-correct in response to resident or mentor feedback, and they implemented more extensive programming modifications between cohorts. The Kern Urban coordinator explained that regardless of how long the residency has been in operation, “you have to keep improving and changing.” For example, she continued, “It can’t just be, ‘We already made a phase-in for Year 1 and it’s going to work in Year 7.’” Kern Urban graduates who returned to the program as mentor teachers expressed amazement at how many changes had been implemented since their time as residents. One observed, “Every year they tweak things based on feedback, which is amazing. ... This program has come so far.”

Within-Institution Coordination

Another strategy for building residency program capacity is to implement internal coordination with other teacher preparation pathways and offices at the institution of higher education (IHE). Three of the studied programs (Alder, Claremont, and Tri-County) were situated within institutions that had adopted a residency-style approach to teacher preparation across all credentialing programs. At these institutions, every teacher candidate completed a yearlong coteaching experience, although at California State University, Monterey Bay, not every candidate received the residency stipend that was available to Tri-County residency candidates.

At Claremont, funded residents might receive different stipends based on their funding source (e.g., Claremont Fellows, Native American Fellows, Strategic Staffing Fellows), but candidates were all intermingled across funded residency, unfunded/part-time residency, and internship pathways. For IHEs that adopted this model, there were increased opportunities for programs to share resources and

develop core processes and practices to support program management and the cohesion of candidates’ preparation experiences. For example, Claremont’s residency program coordinator and clinical placement coordinator supported all candidates across credential types and funding sources.

One downside of this approach, however, was that the residency cohort’s integration with cohorts from other programs had the potential to dilute the degree to which each residency could tailor preparation to the needs and culture of LEA partners. Programs addressed this issue by hosting regular resident seminars for individual program cohorts, during which residents could engage with content and discussion relevant to their specific program focus and placement context.

The residency design at California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB), preserved the unique identity of each of its seven residency partnerships while providing a support structure to help align and coordinate practices across programs. (See [Table 2](#).) Although partnership coordinators managed residency operations independently for the most part, they had opportunities to learn from and seek support from role-alike colleagues who led other CSUB residencies. To support ongoing residency development, the university convened Residency Consortium Meetings each month, which provided opportunities for coordinators to connect, celebrate what was working well, align promising practices, help each other with puzzles of practice, share resources, and learn from each other.

One key strategy that leaders used to address the issue of limited staff support was to develop relationships with institutional staff outside of the residency who could provide support. Residency coordinators had opportunities to draw on their university’s existing student support infrastructure and mobilize the capacity of nonresidency IHE staff in support of the residency program. Similarly, residency leaders could tap LEA offices and staff to support the program. [Table 7](#) lists some of the IHE- and LEA-based infrastructure that can provide additional capacity and support for the residency. The TRRE coordinator shared, “There’s a whole team, a whole village, really” that she works with on the CSUB campus, including contacts in the admissions and financial aid offices.

Table 7. Potential Sources of Additional Support for Residency Programs

IHE-based supports	LEA-based supports
• EPP department and/or program • EPP clinical placement office • Recruitment office • Admissions office • Financial aid office • Registrar’s office • Student support office • Academic advisors • Graduate writing center	• Human resources team • New teacher onboarding team • Induction and professional development team • Finance team/Business office

Note: EPP = educator preparation program; IHE = institution of higher education; LEA = local education agency.
Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of case study interviews and program documents. (2024).

Professional Development

Overall, professional development for clinical coaches, program leaders, and course instructors was less of a focus for case study programs compared with mentor teacher professional development. However, residency faculty and staff communicated that they benefited from participating in a community of practice, just as residents and mentors did.

The availability of ongoing professional learning for clinical coaches was uneven across the studied programs. Programs with a smaller number of coaches offered few formal learning opportunities for coaches. Programs with larger numbers of coaches tended to invest in their ongoing learning. At Tri-County, residency clinical coaches participated in the same professional learning opportunities as clinical coaches who work with candidates in other preparation pathways. This approach allowed the university to facilitate regular, formal opportunities for learning, most notably through a monthly Coaching Collaborative. Tri-County coaches expressed appreciation for these opportunities for ongoing learning and collaboration.

Professional development for program leaders and course instructors was limited, and Alder and Claremont were the only programs to require the instructors to engage in ongoing professional learning. Claremont held two monthly meetings that engaged program leaders and course instructors—along with clinical coaches, mentor teachers, and residents—in shared collaboration and learning focused on the program’s Critical Social Justice Teaching Competencies. (See [Aligning Practices the Claremont Way](#).) Alder’s entire staff participated in professional development sessions and book studies that focused on antiracism and issues of equity. Such learning opportunities not only supported individual development and learning but also helped align purpose and practice across the program, supporting consistency and coherence across residents’ experiences.

Technical Assistance Support

Finally, most case study programs participated in some form of ongoing technical assistance or collaborative network that provided support for continuous learning and program improvement. Support partners included organizations such as the California Educator Preparation Innovation Collaborative (CalEPIC), Education First, the National Center for Teacher Residencies, the Residency Lab, and TNTP (formerly The New Teacher Project). Engaging with these and other partners enabled program leaders to see examples of promising practices from other residency programs, develop more robust recruitment strategies,¹¹¹ learn about new innovations in educator preparation,¹¹² gain insights into state policy,¹¹³ explore sustainable funding models,¹¹⁴ receive grant-writing support,¹¹⁵ improve LEA partnerships,¹¹⁶ access direct coaching,¹¹⁷ and build community.¹¹⁸ Many tools and resources from these and other technical assistance providers are publicly available online.

While many support opportunities require fees, California programs now have access to free supports through the Statewide Residency Technical Assistance Center (SRTAC). (See [Teacher Residencies in California](#) for more on SRTAC.) Going forward, state-funded support infrastructures such as SRTAC will be invaluable as EPPs scale up residencies across the nation, particularly for smaller EPPs and LEAs that may have less institutional capacity to sustain high-quality residency programming.

Characteristic 11: Explicit Focus on Promoting Equity

Findings from the current study also led to the addition of an 11th characteristic of high-quality residency programs: an explicit focus on promoting equity. The paid residency model has been touted as a strategy for improving access to the profession for those who have been historically excluded from comprehensive educator preparation. It also aims to reduce teacher turnover, which disproportionately impacts students of color.¹¹⁹ However, outcomes that advance equitable access to high-quality preparation or improve opportunities for transitional kindergarten (TK)–12 students of color are not guaranteed, as teacher residency programs can vary widely in quality and characteristics. The need for intentionality in advancing equity is acknowledged in the Residency Lab’s 10 characteristics of effective residency programs, the first of which is that “equity and justice are defined and advanced at all levels of residency work.”¹²⁰

The current study highlighted the importance of intentionally centering equity as a residency program goal to drive program design that promotes equity in the following ways:

- by expanding access to high-quality, comprehensive educator preparation; and
- by integrating content that prepares educators who promote equity for students and families.

The case study programs had explicit equity orientations in their mission and vision statements that guided program practices to minimize common barriers throughout every phase of a resident’s experience and to intentionally develop curricula to prepare residents to enact equity-focused teaching practices for their TK–12 students.

Equity-Oriented Mission and Vision

All case study programs had an emphasis on promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion to advance social justice, as demonstrated in their vision and mission statements as well as in their course content. All case study educator preparation programs (EPPs) explicitly named equity and justice as part of their vision and mission. Programs aimed to prepare educators who are “transformational”¹²¹ and “culturally sustaining”¹²² in service of making “the world better and more just”¹²³ and “more inclusive”¹²⁴ and promoting “equity, excellence, and social justice.”¹²⁵

This equity orientation was the foundation of programmatic decisions and LEA partnerships. For example, the managing director of strategy and partnerships at Alder shared that Alder had learned to be more intentional with LEA partners in aligning values and goals. She explained, “Our learning outcomes ... are very much grounded in social justice and culturally, developmentally appropriate education. And if an LEA is not ready for that, then we are not a good partner for them.” The Monterey Peninsula Unified School District superintendent recalled that Alder was “very up-front with who they are and what they believe in. They’re not just looking to partner with anyone. They’re looking to partner with like-minded leadership and organizations.”

Minimizing Common Barriers in Teacher Preparation for Historically Marginalized People

Guided by their emphasis on equity, the programs studied continuously worked to minimize common barriers that can prevent residency candidates from historically excluded groups from accessing and completing their high-quality, comprehensive preparation programs. Case study programs employed multiple strategies beyond providing stipends to reduce barriers, including streamlined applications, performance-based interviews, and application support;

reduced testing requirements and additional testing support; more feasible clinical placement schedules that took coursework requirements into consideration; and integration of course content into fewer courses that led to a master's degree as part of the residency.

Case study programs employed multiple strategies beyond providing stipends to reduce barriers.

Innovative Admissions Process

Potential teacher candidates can be deterred from even applying to a comprehensive preparation program if the application requirements are too extensive. To address this potential barrier, some case study programs streamlined their application process to reduce the up-front burden on applicants. Some programs also created innovative interview processes in which applicants participated in a small-group discussion about an assigned reading or planned and implemented a lesson. All case study programs provided extensive outreach and support for applicants. (See [Reenvisioned Admissions Process](#).)

Admissions support was especially strong for Tri-County residents who transferred from the partner 2-year college, Hartnell. Typically, even with state-mandated transfer agreements between institutions, transferring from a 2-year college to a university is often a daunting task for students. This presents a significant barrier, preventing many students from making the transition.¹²⁶ For Hartnell students transferring into the Tri-County residency program, however, the program provided robust, individualized supports to help candidates make the transition. Addressing the barriers associated with transfer enabled Tri-County to recruit significant numbers of students from Hartnell. (See [Tri-County's Recruitment Pipeline Into a 2+2 Pathway](#).)

Decreased Testing Requirements and Increased Testing Support

Other strategies case study programs used included minimizing the number of tests that residents took for program qualification and providing low- or no-cost test preparation support. Historically, all California educators have been required to demonstrate they meet Basic Skills Requirement and Subject Matter Competency by passing the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST) and the California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET), respectively. As of 2021, California legislation allows candidates to demonstrate their competency in these areas in a number of different ways, including through coursework, in lieu of taking standardized exams, which can be a significant barrier for prospective teachers.¹²⁷ Furthermore, in 2024 California legislation removed the demonstration of basic skills proficiency as a separate requirement for teacher credentialing, in recognition of the fact that a baccalaureate degree or higher from an accredited institution demonstrates this proficiency.¹²⁸

To ensure residents did not take unnecessary exams, the Alder credential department routinely reviewed all residents' transcripts to determine whether Basic Skills and Subject Matter Competency requirements

had been met through coursework. Alder built upon this practice by providing opportunities for residents to complete coursework that would meet these requirements. (See [Alder Reduces Testing Barriers Through Partnership](#).) For residents who were not able to meet the subject matter requirements through coursework and needed to take the CSET, the studied programs provided residents with access to test preparation. No- or low-cost exam preparation resources included study books, access to free virtual tutoring and an online database of test preparation materials and practice tests, and negotiated discounts for in-person and online test preparation programs.¹²⁹

Alder Reduces Testing Barriers Through Partnership

Testing can be a major barrier for candidates who are multilingual, have testing anxiety, or have had less practice using test-taking strategies. As such, testing requirements can prevent many prospective teachers from entering a teacher preparation program. Policies that allow for the demonstration of Subject Matter Competency through coursework can provide access to preparation for such prospective candidates. Alder Graduate School of Education Master's and Credential Teacher Residency (Alder) seized the opportunity that California's 2021 policy change afforded, going beyond transcript review to provide applicants with the courses they needed to take advantage of the option to establish Subject Matter Competency through coursework.

In 2024, Alder launched a partnership with Hartnell College to provide cost-free courses for prospective residents who might only need one or two additional courses to satisfy Subject Matter Competency requirements, precluding the need for these residents to take the exam. In the first semester of the partnership, Alder enrolled nearly 100 candidates in various courses, providing support for those who needed assistance navigating the institution of higher education systems. Alder's managing director of student services shared, "From selecting the course to assisting with enrolling, paying for the course, tutoring, and providing resources while they are taking it, we provide comprehensive support to ensure success." The course instructor was from the Alder team, which made it easier to collaborate in monitoring student progress and assisting those who needed additional support. The managing director anticipated that about 50% of Alder applicants could benefit from having the option to take a course or two and thus bypass the exam. In the first semester of implementation, about 60% of prospective candidates who had not yet met their Basic Skills or Subject Matter Competency requirements needed just one course, and about 25% needed two courses, with 98% of enrollees successfully completing their courses.

Source: Personal communication with Iván Ibarra Mora, Managing Director of Student Services at Alder Graduate School of Education. (2024, May 17).

Feasible Clinical Experience Schedules

Recognizing the intensity of a yearlong residency experience, the case study programs worked to create clinical experience schedules that were feasible for their residents. In a time of widespread teacher shortages, teacher residencies meet the real need to quickly and effectively prepare teachers to meet partner LEAs' staffing needs. They help meet these needs by structuring intensive programs in which residents simultaneously complete coursework, engage in a yearlong coteaching experience, and navigate additional credentialing requirements.

Finding a balance between program content and preparation timelines represented a challenge across the programs studied. Residents interviewed for this study repeatedly described feeling overwhelmed by the often competing responsibilities they juggled during the residency year. One Kern Urban resident summed up the general sentiment by saying, “The hardest part about this program is that it’s extremely rigorous. It’s so hard to do all of this all at once. It can be very overwhelming.” Programs addressed this tension by developing clinical experience schedules with coursework and resident wellness in mind.

Several case study programs (Alder, Kern Urban, and TRRE) attempted to reduce resident stress by setting aside 1 day during the school week for residents to attend classes. Residents engaged in concentrated coursework on designated days, in lieu of their clinical placements, rather than taking courses in the evenings after a full day of teaching. (See [Creating a Feasible Schedule at TRRE](#).) This practice kept residents’ evenings relatively free, allowing them to use that time to plan lessons, complete assignments, spend time with family, or rest and recuperate.

Creating a Feasible Schedule at TRRE

The Teacher Residency for Rural Education (TRRE) clinical placement and coursework schedule was designed with both resident well-being and the needs of partnering districts in mind. TRRE residents attended their clinical placement 3 days each week, from Monday through Wednesday, and attended classes as a cohort each Thursday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Tulare County Office of Education. Every Friday was set aside as a “free” day that residents could use however they wanted. One option was to substitute teach in partner districts. This opportunity allowed residents to make additional money and gain experience in solo teaching. By offering this option, the program also helped districts meet their pressing need for substitute teachers, which was a central reason why the program adopted its 3-day placement schedule. However, residents were not required to substitute teach on Fridays and could instead use that day to work on their coursework or credentialing requirements, attend to other matters, or simply take a break.

The decision to make Friday an optional opportunity for substitute teaching was informed by a desire to promote resident wellness. The TRRE executive director at the Tulare County Office of Education explained, “I’ve seen so many models out there where they do classes every day in the evenings, or sometimes Saturdays, and I think that it’s counterproductive sometimes.” Residents noted with appreciation that program leaders emphasized that substitute teaching was optional and that coursework and credentialing work should take precedence. One resident shared:

They told us right off the bat, like, “Don’t feel like you have to sub every week if you’re overwhelmed, if you’re struggling with [teaching performance assessments], if you have classwork you need to do. [If that’s the case,] take Fridays off, don’t sub.” So there’s always been a lot of support for our own choices if we want to sub or not sub on Fridays.

Reflecting on the program as a whole, a TRRE graduate recalled that as a result of the program’s scheduling decisions, “You felt like that was a good balance, and you didn’t get burned out.”

Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of program documents and interviews. (2024).

Streamlined Courses and Integrated Master's Degree

Another way in which case study residencies reduced barriers was by streamlining their programs and integrating a master's degree into the program. Tri-County stood out among the studied residency programs by leveraging the institution's 2+2 pathway. This pathway allowed candidates to transfer seamlessly from a 2-year college and complete their bachelor's degree and credential preparation in 2 additional years, reducing program completion time by an entire year. (See [Tri-County's Recruitment Pipeline Into a 2+2 Pathway](#).) The streamlined 2+2 design also reduced tuition costs and enabled residents to enter the workforce sooner, which benefited not only the residents but also partner LEAs that needed to fill vacancies.

Most of the case study programs provided residents with the opportunity to earn a master's degree, either as part of the core program or by adding an additional semester of coursework. In 2022, smaller proportions of people who identified as Latino/a, Black, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander than those who identified as White attained master's degrees.¹³⁰ The inclusion of a master's degree in residency programs served two purposes: (1) It created more equitable access to an advanced degree for candidates who might not otherwise have been able to afford or make the time for a separate degree program, and (2) it allowed graduates to enter teaching at a higher point on their LEA's salary scale, thus elevating their earning potential. The difference this makes is nontrivial: According to Alder's CEO, the program's graduates nearly double their pre-program income, on average, when they are hired as a certificated teacher with a master's degree.

Alder and Claremont both designed a coursework sequence that fully incorporated the degree requirements of a Master of Arts in Education into the residency sequence. As a result, the programs' curricula set up all residents to graduate with their master's degree in addition to their teaching credential. Alder streamlined credential and graduate-level course content into a program that did not require residents to take any additional courses.

For Alder, building the degree completely into the yearlong residency program allowed residents to avoid the time, energy, tuition, fees, and extra expenses associated with additional coursework, which—particularly after an intensive residency year—may deter degree completion even for residents who originally intended to take additional courses. Furthermore, fully integrated master's-level coursework also preserves the summer months between program completion and the beginning of completers' first year of lead teaching as a time when they can recuperate from and reflect on their intensive residency program year.

Claremont's flexible program was also designed to be completed during the yearlong residency, with the master's degree fully integrated within the program for Education Specialist credential candidates. Although the core courses were fully integrated, Multiple Subject and Single Subject credential candidates were required to take three elective courses, with the option to transfer in up to six units toward this requirement. Acknowledging the intensity of clinical experience, residents had time to complete their culminating activity for their master's degree during the summer after their clinical placements ended. Claremont also offered an 18-month option for candidates who preferred to spread out their coursework over an additional semester before having to deal with the demands of a clinical placement. One downside of this option is the added expense associated with another semester of coursework.

Other case study programs gave residents the option to add on a master's degree after they completed their credential preparation. These programs designed their credentialing courses to meet graduate-level requirements, which allowed course credits to be applied toward a Master of Arts in Education. To complete the degree, residents had to complete additional coursework, typically in the semester following the residency year. Although additional semesters were required, this design still reduced barriers by giving residents graduate credit for residency program courses and precluding the need to apply separately to a master's program.

Preparing Teachers to Enact Equity-Focused Practices

In addition to providing more equitable access to high-quality comprehensive preparation for prospective teachers, all case study residencies emphasized equity-based pedagogy and practices in their programming content. Course content across programs included an explicit focus on issues around K–12 student diversity, equity, and inclusion; an emphasis on culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy; restorative practices; and educators as agents of change and social justice.

Alder's and Claremont's programs included courses that explicitly focused on exploring issues around social justice and using action research to promote equity, including exploring residents' identity, positionality, power, and privilege. Course readings included texts that explicitly focused on issues of equity and were written by scholars of color (e.g., Django Paris, bell hooks, Christopher Emdin, Bettina Love). At Claremont, residents took a four-part course series (Teaching and Learning Process I–IV) designed to develop residents' understanding of positive classroom environments and strengthen their application of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy as they progressed through the program. The course series covered topics such as hidden curricula, funds of knowledge, Indigenous pedagogies, restorative practices, and how to create lessons that incorporate students' cultural and linguistic assets.¹³¹

At Kern Urban and TRRE, a foundational course (EDTE 4100: Teaching English Language and Special Populations) focused on working with the various “sociocultural, academic, cognitive, linguistic, and individual needs of all students in inclusive classrooms.” The course covered principles of bilingual discourse and the integration of “culturally conducive and equitable instructional and assessment differentiation.”¹³² Similarly, Tri-County required a course (ED 612/628: Elementary/Secondary Pedagogy for Linguistically Diverse Students) that “contextualizes the education of students from culturally/linguistically diverse backgrounds within historical, social, and political factors” and “connects teaching with the background of students and schooling to social justice issues.”¹³³ Methods courses also incorporated topics around equity. For example, in Tri-County's social studies and arts methods course (ED 615), residents examined their own cultural identities and biases and “explore[d] pedagogy and content knowledge about the history of diverse cultural groups, focusing on historically marginalized and disenfranchised communities.”¹³⁴

Tackling Ongoing Challenges

The case study residency programs, though exemplary, were not without challenges. Ongoing challenges were similar across programs and consistent with previous research from WestEd's early research on residencies funded by California's Teacher Residency Grant Program (TRGP). Case study programs varied in how they experienced these challenges and in the strategies programs applied to address them. This section outlines five commonly documented challenges that programs may encounter in enacting the 11 characteristics of high-quality residencies and strategies that these case study programs implemented to help address these challenges in their local contexts.

Adequate Support for the Residency

Formative evaluation research on the California residency programs receiving TRGP funding has shown that most programs lack the internal capacity to develop and sustain robust partnerships that adequately support the residency.¹³⁵ Case study programs confirmed that internal capacity was a challenge. With the exception of Alder (which is a stand-alone graduate school of education), all of the residencies in the current study expressed the desire for more staffing and support, particularly on the educator preparation program (EPP) side. Residency staff capacity, at both EPPs and local education agencies (LEAs), is crucial for maintaining high quality in residency implementation as well as ensuring program stability and continuity. Staff capacity includes both adequate staffing and investing in continuous professional learning for residency staff.

Residencies need dedicated staff time (i.e., allocated full-time equivalent staff) on both the EPP and LEA sides to effectively and efficiently manage the program. Residency leaders have limited capacity but many responsibilities, including ensuring that residents and mentors are sufficiently supported, courses and clinical experiences are tightly integrated, program logistics are as seamless as possible, and the LEA–EPP partnership is stable and healthy. In addition, some residency leaders in this study had multiple roles as course instructors and clinical coaches.

Some program leaders expressed that inadequate staffing can make residency leadership unmanageable and unsustainable, noting that the workload allocations they received for program coordination did not adequately account for the actual required work hours. Even at Claremont, which used a distributed leadership model that involved multiple faculty, capacity was stretched. One Claremont faculty member admitted, “It’s very time and energy consuming to provide [such a high level] of support. ... I’m happy to do it. We’re all very committed to doing it, but it’s a lot.”

Given the highly relational work of maintaining a residency partnership, the possibility of staff turnover is an ever-present threat to ongoing residency operations. In programs like Kern Urban and TRRE, where responsibilities for partnership maintenance and day-to-day residency operations were concentrated on the EPP side within the role of a single residency coordinator, it seemed likely that the program would have difficulty sustaining operations if this key individual were to leave the university. The risk to the programs appeared to be amplified by the fact that the coordinators of both residencies were lecturers, who are more likely than tenured or tenure-track faculty to leave.¹³⁶ (See [Promoting Equity for Non–Tenure Track Residency Staff](#).)

When turnover is unavoidable, having multiple representatives from both the EPP and LEA on the residency leadership team promotes program awareness and continuity despite leadership or staff turnover. To ensure program longevity, it is crucial to distribute responsibility across more than one person on both the EPP and LEA sides. Each person should intimately know the program, have relationships with partners, and have the ability to step in to provide programmatic support. Distributed responsibilities can also help create systems that are resilient to turnover.

For example, on the LEA side, when Kern Urban's longtime district program specialist left his role, other individuals in the LEA's Department of New Teacher Development—who, importantly, had a portion of their hours allocated toward Kern Urban—stepped in to train a replacement and take on key responsibilities while the new staff member learned her role. Even in partnerships that include multiple EPP and LEA representatives, such as Tri-County, simultaneously losing more than one team member can severely impede program continuity. (See [California State University, Monterey Bay](#).)

When staff depart with enough notice, an effective strategy is to allow for overlap of outgoing and incoming staff. For example, one of Alder's partner LEAs took on the expense of bringing on a new cohort leader a year in advance to allow for planning and learning. The LEA's superintendent shared, "It was an expense on our part, but we really wanted to ensure that it was successful, so we invested in that, which I think was really worth the investment."

Investing in program staff also includes providing ongoing opportunities for professional development and learning. As described previously, professional development and participation in technical assistance are crucial for continuous improvement and program capacity-building. (See [Professional Development and Technical Assistance Support](#).) "I don't really have many opportunities [for my own professional learning]," a program leader explained, further expressing, "I've been out of the classroom for 10 years, and I was an academic coach, but [that was] a long time ago. So [I need support for] even down to the basics of 'Am I up to date with my pedagogy?'"

This leader shared that she had a desire to "connect with other residencies," but limited capacity and opportunity were barriers. In addition, she disclosed that, as a non-tenure track faculty, "I can't travel. ... There's no money for us to travel." This lack of resources impedes professional learning and networking, leading to isolation and further reinforcing inequities among residency staff. One low-cost solution to these challenges is to include all residency faculty in meetings or professional development opportunities within the EPP or LEA.

Promoting Equity for Non-Tenure Track Residency Staff

A common theme across the programs was a heavy dependence on non-tenure track full-time lecturers for leadership positions. For example, the residency coordinators for Kern Urban Teacher Residency (Kern Urban), Teacher Residency for Rural Education (TRRE), and Tri-County Teacher Residency Program (Tri-County) were all lecturers, and, across residencies, a large proportion of course instructors and coaches were also lecturers or part-time adjuncts. Lecturers and adjuncts (even those with doctorate degrees) are often paid at much lower rates than tenure-track faculty for the same work of instructing and coaching, and they are more likely to be people of color, which has equity implications.

For example, within the California State University system, the average 2022 salary of full-time academic year (10-month) lecturers was \$65,553, which is a little more than two thirds of the average assistant professor (the lowest rank for tenure-track faculty) salary of \$91,298. The average salary for 12-month lecturers was more comparable, at \$94,825 compared with an average of \$106,272 for 12-month assistant professors. Moreover, as reported by multiple interviewees, lecturers, adjuncts, and even some full-time clinical (nontenure) faculty are frequently excluded from faculty benefits such as health insurance, societal regard, job security, program influence, professional development opportunities, and research support.

Claremont has worked to change the institutional status quo regarding adjunct instructors and coaches by enacting its commitment to community building at the faculty level. The program has practices that create an organizational context in which individual assets are valued and trust and community can grow. For example, Claremont includes all part-time course instructors and clinical coaches in faculty meetings and professional development. (See [Aligning Practices the Claremont Way](#).) Claremont's adjunct instructors reported feeling that everyone's voice and contributions are given recognition in a nonhierarchical way. "I really believe that they have a flat model of leadership," emphasized one course instructor. "They really allowed me, as an adjunct, to have so much voice. They gave me a seat at the table." One clinical faculty advisor reflected, "I'm a little piece of the puzzle ... but I feel valued. I feel important, and I feel seen and heard, and if I had something to say, they would listen, and they would take my thoughts into consideration."

Sources: American Federation of Teachers. (2023). *An army of temps: AFT contingent faculty quality of work/life report 2022*; California State University. (n.d.). *CSU faculty, fall 2023*; Learning Policy Institute analysis of program documents and interviews. (2024).

Resident Recruitment and Cohorting

Strong partnerships form the foundation for LEAs and EPPs to collaborate on all aspects of the residency, including recruiting candidates and building strong cohort communities. Previous research has found that candidate recruitment was a challenge for many programs but that the strength of a partnership was significantly correlated with whether a program met its recruitment goals.¹³⁷ In most of these strong case study partnerships, LEA and EPP partners shared responsibility for recruitment. Partner LEAs targeted recruitment efforts by reaching out to existing noncertificated staff such as paraeducators and after-school staff who were already working in and committed to the LEAs. EPPs partnered with 2-year colleges and undergraduate programs as well as institutional recruitment and admissions offices to increase recruitment.

Case study programs' recruitment goals aimed to build cohorts with enough residents to create a cohort feel, but not so many that residents felt lost in the crowd. Across programs, residents identified their cohort as a key source of support both during and after the residency year, and community building was essential to these relationships. Study participants emphasized that building community did not happen by virtue of residents being in the same space, whether virtual or in person, but that creating a sense of community and belonging required intentional and strategic effort. All case study programs held regular

cohort-based meetings (e.g., resident seminars) to help promote relationships and provide opportunities to participate in community-building activities or games (e.g., ropes course), field trips or community events (e.g., local museum exhibits), and professional events (e.g., conferences).

When residents had limited opportunities to connect with fellow cohort members, such as in programs in which residents took coursework virtually or with nonresident colleagues, programs found it more challenging to ensure that all residents felt connected to the cohort community. In such cases, programs incorporated in-class discussion prompts, collaborative activities and assignments, and small-group time to help residents get to know one another in addition to cohort-based meetings.

The LEA partners also played an important role in planning intentional cohort-building. LEA partners released residents from their clinical placements for participation in regular cohort meetings such as resident seminars and activities such as professional conferences. Additionally, LEA partners' willingness and ability to cluster residents at clinical placement sites was a key practice from the residents' perspective. Most case study programs still found clustering residents to be a challenge but were able to avoid placing solo residents by keeping residents in pairs or triads at their placement sites.

Program Cohesion and Integrating Coursework and Clinical Experience

Programs also used collaboration as a strategy to increase program cohesion and connections between coursework and clinical experiences. Despite the importance and outsize impact of mentor teachers in candidate preparation,¹³⁸ WestEd's early research on California's TRGP-funded residencies has found that many mentors reported that they had not received adequate communication, support, professional development, or feedback from programs.¹³⁹ Furthermore, even though research shows that the alignment between coursework and clinical practice is critical to residents' development of teaching practices,¹⁴⁰ WestEd found that mentors, clinical coaches, and residents rated the perceived alignment between coursework and clinical experiences less favorably than other program components.¹⁴¹

Case study programs created opportunities that allowed for collaboration between differently positioned residency staff—namely, academic faculty and course instructors, clinical faculty and staff, and EPP and LEA representatives. Regular touchpoints between these different residency roles supported alignment among courses as well as connections between courses and clinical practice, and they provided opportunities to realign and recalibrate courses and clinical experiences in response to emergent inconsistencies.

Creating opportunities for course instructors to reflect on course content supported the development of a coherent coursework sequence that aligned with program goals and competencies. Programs also provided opportunities for course instructors (including adjunct instructors), clinical coaches, and mentor teachers to meet and work together. Finally, programs supported the alignment of mentor teachers' practices by providing ongoing professional development, with great emphasis on cultivating mentors' ability to provide feedback to residents that was consistent with program coursework and clinical coaching. All five study programs built in mentor teacher meetings as part of their program structures.

Residency Funding and Resources

Dependence on grant funding is a common challenge among residency programs and can make program sustainability beyond grant terms difficult. Research points to financial sustainability as a key challenge for paid teacher residency programs, which often close when grant funding ends.¹⁴² However, WestEd's research has demonstrated that many TRGP-funded residency programs have not yet broadened funding sources or employed strategies to support financial sustainability.¹⁴³ Even among these exemplary case study programs, all used a significant amount of grant funding to support resident stipends and other expenses. However, case study programs also tapped into existing LEA, EPP, and community resources as they moved toward more sustainable funding models that are not reliant on grant funds.

Partner LEAs contributed significant funding for case study programs. These investments were not limited to the allocation of grant funds received by TRGP-funded LEAs: Four out of five residencies partnered with LEAs that drew on Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) funds—their own local district dollars—to provide resident living stipends or allocate staff toward residency management. LEA representatives shared that these investments were worthwhile from their perspective because they were investments in their own future employees. They viewed their residency graduates as highly capable teachers who were well prepared to meet the needs of the LEA's students from the very first day they took charge of their own classrooms.

Residency-based preparation was also, for some LEA representatives, a long-term strategy for lowering an LEA's turnover-related costs that had the potential to pay for itself via the savings an LEA accrued over time. LEAs can reallocate and reinvest the dollars they would have used for paraeducators, substitute teachers, or recruitment and onboarding due to turnover.¹⁴⁴

Case study EPPs tapped into existing institutional resources such as recruitment, financial aid, and student support offices. By cultivating relationships with staff across campus and working with them to build a shared understanding of the challenges that residents face, program leaders used existing infrastructure to ensure that residents were receiving appropriate levels of support across all aspects of their program experience. (See [Table 7.](#)) Such cross-campus collaborations helped shore up program capacity to provide resident and program supports while requiring minimal additional funding.

Finally, Alder provided an example of how to leverage existing community resources to enhance the supports available to residents with little to no additional costs. Alder leveraged state- and community-level resources such as CalFresh (i.e., the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), affordable insurance, and low-cost child care, among other support services, by curating regional guides that identified available supports. This strategy helped Alder residents access resources and services that the residency did not have the capacity to provide directly. (See [Proactive Resident Supports at Alder.](#))

Financial planning is a crucial component of sustainability and ensuring the longevity of a residency. Case study programs described active and ongoing processes for seeking and securing funding. Alder, as an institution, monitored and pursued public and private funding opportunities and supported each of its LEA partners in identifying and braiding together funding sources—including their LCFF and other public and private funding sources—that would allow them to fund resident stipends each year.

Financial planning is a crucial component of sustainability and ensuring the longevity of a residency.

Claremont and TRRE—which both developed their programs with sizable federal Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grants that were still active at the time of this study—had begun the process of planning a transition to sustainable funding models years before their TQP grant periods were scheduled to end. Without a plan, programs run the risk that they may experience gaps in funding that result in temporary—as in the case of the Tri-County residency—or even permanent closure. The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing provides an online tool that includes financial resources for teacher candidates and a database of federal, state, and grant funding that can be used to support teacher preparation, as well as funding scenarios from real residency programs that illustrate strategies to maximize program funding.¹⁴⁵

Adequate Supports for Residents

Although the availability of a resident stipend enabled resident participation, previous research showed that residents in paid residencies still commonly experienced financial hardship and other challenges leading up to and during the program year, which could inhibit their full engagement with residency-year learning opportunities. Findings from the formative evaluation of California’s TRGP residencies have shown that most programs are not yet offering livable stipends¹⁴⁶ and that many residents experience financial challenges related to food, housing, and health.¹⁴⁷ Case study programs minimized common barriers and enacted practices to address the anticipated academic, credentialing, financial, social, and emotional needs of residents starting with the application process, through the residency year, and beyond.

Programs increased access for prospective residents by streamlining their application process, de-emphasizing traditional admissions metrics in favor of performance-based tasks, and providing up-front robust financial aid advising. (See [Reenvisioned Admissions Process](#).) Resident supports started during the recruitment and application phases with continued outreach and coaching for those who had little experience with lesson planning and implementation or interviewing. Programs also reduced barriers by helping residents fulfill state requirements through coursework rather than standardized exams, by streamlining coursework, and by providing access to master’s degrees through the integration of graduate coursework and requirements into the residency.

Relationships were the foundation to providing proactive, whole person supports. During the program, having an explicit go-to person was appreciated by residents because they always knew where to go to find help. In addition, rather than waiting for challenges to arise, residency staff members who could proactively check in with residents through informal conversations, surveys, formative assessments, or formal advising sessions helped surface issues that faculty could address before problems evolved into crises. Alder provided the most robust supports, including access to free mental health counseling and information on other community-based services. Individualized advising was key to ensuring that residents were aware of and could access available supports such as CalFresh. The need to provide such advising aligns with previous research showing that only 27% of eligible graduate students participated in the CalFresh program due to the difficulty of navigating the system or lack of outreach.¹⁴⁸

Summary of Findings: What Matters and What Works

The studied residencies adopted different strategies in their partnership structures, program designs, and the supports they offered to residents. Across programs, however, several practices—which reflect the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) and Pathways Alliance understandings of the eight characteristics of high-quality residencies—emerged as particular promoters of success. Findings from the current study point to three additional characteristics that also incorporate practices of effective residency programs that were originally identified by the Residency Lab in 2019.¹⁴⁹

These characteristics and the practices associated with each provide a framework for promoting equity in high-quality teacher preparation and, ultimately, for the students that residents teach. The characteristics increase access to preparation for candidates who historically have been excluded from the teaching profession; provide guidelines for high-quality, clinically based experiences; identify supports to help ensure residents successfully complete their programs; and promote collaborative, community-based solutions to local education agency (LEA) staffing needs.

Eight Characteristics of High-Quality Teacher Residencies

Characteristic 1: Strong LEA–EPP Partnerships

These partnerships include the following:

- **Shared Vision and Goals.** Teacher residencies are “grounded in a shared vision for quality teacher preparation coconstructed with leadership from participating preparation programs and schools or school systems.”¹⁵⁰ Institution for higher education and LEA partners, across programs, articulated highly aligned understandings of their residencies’ goals—namely, that programs prepare highly effective educators, help diversify the teacher workforce, and promote culturally responsive and inclusive practices in schools, as well as other program-specific values and emphases. Shared vision and goals were primarily cultivated in two ways. Programs either coconstructed the residency vision and goal with their partner(s) from the very start, or, for programs that partnered with multiple LEAs, they sought out partners whose priorities aligned with those of the program.
- **Dedicated and Sustainable Staffing With Clear Roles and Responsibilities.** In instances when partnerships failed, the most frequent cause was that LEAs or EPPs lacked the staffing capacity necessary to sustain regular collaboration. Allocating full or partial full-time equivalent (FTE) staff within the LEA or EPP provided a means of incorporating residency management, which can be demanding, into the official duties of one or more staff. Locating LEA-side residency staffing within the LEA’s talent office helped bridge residents’ transition from the program into full-time employment and induction in several places. For smaller LEAs, which in many cases lack staffing capacity, county office of education–led consortia (e.g., Tri-County, TRRE) or combined cohorts (Alder) created an opportunity for residency participation that involved a less intensive staffing commitment. Similarly, smaller EPPs can distribute residency responsibilities across faculty who take on different roles to support the program (Claremont). The programs we studied divided the work of residency management between and within partners in different configurations. Regardless of the specific tasks taken on by partners or staff members, having clear and collaboratively negotiated roles

and responsibilities was key. Documentation of agreed-upon responsibilities, broken down by role, was helpful to programs, particularly for navigating partnership conflicts, and it could be used to reestablish clear expectations for each partner's engagement.

- **Regular and Frequent Meeting Times and Communication.** The coconstruction and alignment of goals and practices takes time, and, consequently, residency partnership involves a more intensive and sustained commitment on behalf of LEA partners than that required for traditional student-teacher placement. This heightened engagement allowed for the development of authentic, mutually beneficial partnerships. Programs maintained strong, collaborative relationships with their LEA partners by regularly meeting, in many cases weekly, which allowed for ongoing reflection on the alignment between program vision and goals, design, outcomes, continuous improvement efforts, and funding opportunities. Participants joined as needed depending on meeting agendas but included representatives from curriculum and instruction, human resources, business, and teacher development departments. Despite weekly meetings, program leaders expressed that they found it necessary to communicate often outside of meetings as part of the daily work of running the program.

Characteristic 2: Selectively Recruited Diverse Candidates

Programs implemented the following recruitment strategies to meet specific district hiring needs, typically in fields where there were shortages:

- **Targeted Recruitment for a Good Fit for the Resident, Program, and Partner LEA.** Data informed programs' recruitment targets and strategies. Programs tailored their recruitment based on the staffing needs of partner LEAs, recruiting residents for specific credential pathways such as STEM or Bilingual Authorization. In addition, given their goal of preparing teachers who would stay in partner LEAs, programs tended to focus their recruitment efforts on individuals already living and/or working in the communities that these LEAs served. Programs had different strategies for attracting these individuals: Alder reached out to substitute teachers, paraeducators, instructional aides, after-school support providers, and other classified staff working in partner LEAs; Tri-County recruited from a local community college; and TRRE advertised its program at local businesses and tables at community events. Other venues or outlets could include multilingual newspapers and radio stations, international grocery stores, popular community restaurants, and churches.
- **Ongoing Communication and Outreach to Prospective Applicants.** Programs engaged in ongoing outreach to prospective applicants beyond initial contact. Program leaders, particularly at newer programs, found that it was necessary to make initial contact with a large number of individuals in order to fill a cohort. For example, TRRE leads reported that for every 40 hits on an online recruiting platform, one person went on to submit an application. Claremont residency leaders shared that they found a 9:1 ratio of applicants to matriculated residents. Thus, these programs engaged in continued outreach to prospective applicants to encourage them to follow through and submit a completed application.
- **Reenvisioned Admissions Process.** Programs designed their admissions processes to rely less on traditional metrics such as test scores in favor of performance tasks such as interviews and demonstration lessons. These tasks were designed to elicit applicant competencies that program leads believed were central to successful program completion and future teaching effectiveness.

In addition, these tasks gave applicants opportunities to demonstrate strengths such as having a growth mindset or the ability to use feedback constructively. These interactions also provided an opportunity for programs to communicate core values of the residency. Furthermore, involving partner LEAs in candidate selection was valuable for considering their perspectives on the goodness of fit between the candidate and the LEA that would likely be the candidate's future employer. Finally, programs provided individualized supports for applicants in submitting their materials, providing what Claremont called "white-glove service" to ensure that the application process itself was not a barrier to program access. Alder went a step further by providing coaching on interviewing and developing demonstration lessons to help level the playing field for applicants without such experience. Notably, the reenvisioning of the admissions process and the provision of supports did not compromise programs' selectivity. Instead, these practices removed common barriers that might otherwise have prevented strong candidates from accessing high-quality preparation.

Characteristic 3: Full-Year Teaching Experience Alongside an Expert Mentor Teacher

This experience can provide residents with the following benefits:

- **Exposure to the Full Arc of a School Year.** Aligning resident clinical placements with the partner LEAs' academic calendars allowed residents to experience the full year just as they would as a new teacher. Residents often met their mentors before the start of the school year and joined them in preparing the classroom for students' arrival. Staying in their clinical placements until the end of the LEA school year also allowed residents to experience the celebrations and goodbyes that come with a full year. These experiences help ensure that residents know what to expect as they begin their first year as teachers of record. Residents typically worked with the same mentor for the whole year, except in one program that required residents to switch placements midyear so they would gain exposure to more than one school and classroom. Although in both instances residents experienced the full arc of the school year, additional research may help clarify the relative benefits and trade-offs of the single- versus two-placement clinical experience model.
- **Guided Gradual Release of Responsibility in Residents' Clinical Experience.** Program "phase-in" schedules helped guide residents' integration into their placement classrooms by establishing clear, yet flexible, expectations for residents' progressive undertaking of coteaching responsibilities. These phase-in schedules provided guidance and a scaffold not only for residents but also for their mentors, coaches, and course instructors so that they shared a common understanding of expectations for clinical practice.
- **High-Quality Feedback for Residents as They Develop Their Pedagogical Practice.** From the beginning of the school year, residents apprenticed under their mentors to plan and implement instruction, build relationships with and among students, and engage in the multitude of professional duties required of a teacher. Mentors observed and provided daily feedback to residents as they took on more instructional responsibilities over the course of the year. In addition to classroom mentors, clinical coaches monitored residents' developing classroom practice. Programs employed frameworks, observation protocols, and feedback templates explicitly aligned to state standards and program-level prioritized competencies to provide consistent feedback tied to explicit knowledge, skills, and dispositions that residents were expected to develop and demonstrate.

Characteristic 4: Expert Mentor Teachers Who Coteach With Residents

This characteristic includes the following components:

- **Recruitment and Selection of High-Quality Mentors Who Are Thoughtfully Matched With Residents.** EPPs and LEAs worked in partnership to recruit and select mentor teachers who demonstrated the values and practices prioritized by programs and could provide strong mentorship to residents. A common strategy for mentor recruitment and selection was to reach out to teachers who were recommended by other mentors or school or district leaders. Mentors were more responsive to requests through personal connections than to a generic request from a stranger. Another strategic approach was to reach out to graduates who were already familiar with the program's goals and expectations and understood the intensity of residency preparation. Both of these approaches had the added benefit of access to information about mentors' teaching styles and personalities. This information was used by programs to match mentors and residents.
- **Compensation and Incentives for Mentor Teachers in Recognition of Their Critical Role in Preparing Residents.** Mentoring a resident requires more time, engagement, and effort than hosting a traditional student teacher. Although mentors expressed that both they and their students benefited from hosting a resident, programs recognized the importance of providing additional compensation and incentives for mentors. In addition to an average stipend of approximately \$3,000, mentors could tap residents as substitute teachers and provide their residents with access to unique networking and professional learning opportunities.
- **Professional Development and Regular Communication That Support Mentor Teachers in Their Work With Residents.** Residencies require mentors to engage deeply with program content, integrate residents into classroom life as full coteachers, provide robust coaching and feedback, and help familiarize residents with the LEA's systems and culture. Ongoing professional development for mentor teachers supported growth in their capacity as clinical educators. Programs required residency mentors to attend professional learning sessions, typically monthly, to provide support tailored to mentors' needs as well as protected time for mentors to gain clarity on program expectations, build community, share puzzles of practice, and receive feedback from others. Between meetings, programs kept mentors informed through email and by providing repositories of online resources.

Characteristic 5: Integrated Coursework and Clinical Practice

Programs integrated coursework about teaching and learning that was tightly integrated with clinical practice through the following approaches:

- **Well-Integrated Coursework and Clinical Experiences Within a Cohesive Program Curriculum.** Strong LEA–EPP partnerships allow for the creation of a coherent curriculum that aligns and connects coursework and clinical work, just as teaching hospitals seek to do in medicine. Residencies supported alignment within and between these two program components in numerous ways. Programs often used a set of core competencies or frameworks to inform, guide, and align courses and clinical experiences. Core program tenets formed the basis of program design, partnership, and continuous improvement. In addition, course instructors intentionally designed course content and assignments to be highly relevant to and immediately applicable in residents' clinical placements.

Finally, programs established meeting structures to promote communication and collaboration that supported program cohesion. One common and effective strategy was to provide opportunities for instructional and clinical staff to collaborate. Another strategy was to regularly convene mentors for professional learning that helped them understand residents' coursework and align their mentorship and feedback practices with program emphases. Residency seminars could also support alignment by creating a space in which program coordinators could monitor and facilitate residents' reflections on their clinical experiences and help them connect these experiences with course content.

- **Programming Designed to Meet the Needs of Partner LEAs.** EPPs collaborated with their LEA partners to design programs that tailored the residents' experience to incorporate LEA structures, initiatives, and immediate needs. For example, Alder changed residents' clinical schedules so that residents could participate in LEA-sponsored professional development. Claremont designed innovative clinical models that allowed residents to serve as paraeducators or substitute teachers at specified times to meet partner LEAs' staffing needs. Kern Urban incorporated partner LEA curricula and expectations into coursework and assignments, inviting district representatives to present or coteach in residency courses.
- **Program Structures and Schedules That Are Feasible for Residents.** Effective integration of coursework and clinical experiences requires a more holistic approach to program design that takes into account the combined demands on residents. Residents often reported feeling overwhelmed by the intensity of their programs. Recognizing resident burnout as a challenge, programs worked to alleviate unnecessary pressures and streamline requirements. One common way programs addressed resident burnout was by designing schedules that allowed time for residents to engage in coursework by stacking several courses on a day when residents were not at their clinical placements. Another approach was to provide breaks for residents by building in a free day or scheduling half-day clinical placements. Additionally, some programs streamlined, organized, and integrated course content into fewer courses; for example, Alder integrated credential and advanced graduate content rather than adding on additional courses for a master's degree. An alternative approach was to give residents the option to take master's courses after they had completed their clinical experiences.

Characteristic 6: Cohorts of Residents Placed in Schools That Model Good Practices With Diverse Learners

Such cohorts can be developed by ensuring the following:

- **Intentional Community Building.** Cohorts were identified by residents as a key source of support during and beyond the residency year. A sense of community within the cohort could be encouraged through maintaining small cohorts of 25 or fewer residents, shared coursework, regular cohort meetings (i.e., resident seminars), and other shared experiences such as professional learning opportunities and community-building events. Notably, it was not enough to bring residents together; programs engaged residents in intentional community-building activities that helped them examine and share personal stories and perspectives in "safe," "supportive," and "collaborative" spaces, according to the residents' feedback. Cohort relationships provided an additional layer of community to residents in their first years of teaching, particularly when they were hired for the same LEA or school site as other members of their own or previous program cohorts.

- **Clusters of Residents Placed at School Sites.** Placing groups of residents at the same clinical sites amplified community and strengthened relationships among residents. Sharing clinical placement sites with other cohort members allowed residents—and their mentors—to regularly engage in thought partnership, collaborate on coursework, and lean on each other for support. Programs aimed to place at least two residents at each school site so all residents could have site-based peer support.

Characteristic 7: Financial Support for Residents

In exchange for a 3- to 5-year teaching commitment, programs could provide residents with the following:

- **Significant Financial Supports.** Stipends allowed residents to say yes to the program and made it so that they did not have to work a second job during the residency year. Programs also reported that increases to resident stipends attracted larger pools of candidates. Programs created other opportunities for income (e.g., substitute teaching, working part time in high-need district roles), which had the additional benefit of meeting LEA partners' immediate staffing needs. Programs also employed innovative strategies such as negotiating tuition reductions or combining credential and graduate coursework to reduce the number of classes that candidates need to earn a master's degree.
- **Robust and Proactive Financial Aid Advising.** Programs were able to further enhance affordability by ensuring residents were aware of other available financial supports, such as institutional, state, and federal scholarships or grants for teacher preparation. Proactive financial aid advising started during the recruitment phase and continued through program enrollment. Programs ensured that recruiters were familiar with available financial aid, which residents reported influenced their decisions to apply. Programs also provided assistance with submitting applications for scholarships and grants such as the Golden State Teacher Grant, Cal Grant Teaching Credential Program, and federal Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grants.
- **Additional Resources to Cover Other Program-Related Costs.** Credentialing expenses can be difficult to manage for already cash-strapped residents. Programs adopted a number of different support strategies, which included reviewing resident transcripts to help them avoid unnecessary test-taking, allocating funding to help residents cover credential-related expenses, and providing no-cost access to test preparation materials.
- **Financial Sustainability Through Blending and Braiding of Funds, With EPPs and LEAs Sharing Costs.** Residency partnerships relied on consistent funding to sustain program operations. Programs drew on three primary sources of funding: state grants, federal grants, and LEA (i.e., Local Control Funding Formula [LCFF]) funds. In many instances, EPPs and LEAs worked together to secure grants to sustain program operations, namely because different grants were available to different partners. For instance, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) Teacher Residency Grant Program awards grants to LEAs, rather than to EPPs, to develop residency preparation pathways, and thus LEAs held responsibilities for these funding streams in these instances. While state and federal grants provided important resources, all programs aimed to transition to more stable and sustainable funding sources, namely by securing LEAs' investment of LCFF funds in the residency pathway.

Characteristic 8: Ongoing Mentoring and Support for Graduates

This support included the following:

- **Guidance Through the Credentialing Process.** Programs provided significant support to residents as they navigated the credentialing process, such as by establishing timelines, issuing reminders, and guiding residents' preparation for the teaching performance assessment.
- **Support for the Transition Into Full-Time Employment, Including Induction.** Program staff worked with staff in partner LEAs to identify openings suitable for residents and frequently supported residents as they crafted application materials and prepared demonstration lessons. After hiring, programs ensured that residents connected with an induction program, whether provided by the LEA or EPP. At the LEA, residency management was typically housed in the same departments as human resources, new teacher induction, and/or professional development, which could help connect and streamline the transition from pre- to in-service teacher development.

Three Additional Characteristics of High-Quality Teacher Residencies

In addition to the previous eight characteristics, this study identifies three additional practices, not articulated in previous literature, that supported resident success.

Characteristic 9: Proactive Whole Person Supports

Such supports included the following:

- **A Go-To Person for All Residency-Related Needs.** Residents benefited from having a clear go-to person they could contact for academic, clinical, and personal support, although all program faculty and coaches tended to be equipped to help or triage when needed.
- **Strong Program Communication and Support Infrastructure.** Residency staff, namely program coordinators, communicated intensively with residents and extended support on an as-needed basis throughout the residency year. Residents expressed that regular program communication helped them manage their intensive and often competing responsibilities toward coursework, clinical coteaching, preparation for credentialing, and extracurricular obligations.
- **Diversity Among Course Instructors and Clinical Coaches.** The residency programs we studied, and residency programs more generally, prepared a more racially diverse set of candidates than other preparation pathways. The programs' work in creating preparation experiences that met the needs of a racially diverse student population was supported by the presence of diverse groups of course instructors and clinical coaches. Just as programs aimed to prepare teachers who would reflect the diversity of the communities they served, the programs themselves were often operated by faculty and staff whose identities mirrored those of their residents. In addition to operationalizing program commitments to equity and representation, the overlap in backgrounds and identities between program staff and residents facilitated connection and allowed program staff to anticipate the needs of their similarly situated residents during the program year.

- **360-Degree Wraparound Support.** Residents benefited when programs considered their needs outside of the program during the residency year, namely their access to housing, child care, reliable transportation, adequate food, and health and wellness care. While most programs handled residents' need for support in these areas on a case-by-case basis, Alder proactively identified residents' needs and developed a system to link residents with relevant resources. Alder tapped into community and state resources and programs to supplement the direct supports it provided to residents. For example, Alder assisted residents in accessing CalFresh (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits and low-cost options for insurance (Covered California) and phone service (California LifeLine). Alder also identified free health, mental health, and dental clinics for its residents, among other regional community resources.

Characteristic 10: Ongoing Development of Program Capacity

Programs used the following strategies to continue building capacity:

- **Regular Data Collection and Analysis.** Programs engaged in ongoing data collection and analysis, which allowed them to articulate the outcomes and value of the residency program to partner LEAs, potential partners, EPP leadership, and funders. Discussion of program data for the purposes of continuous improvement in alignment with the residency's vision and goals was a regular feature of partnership meetings.
- **Coordination With Other EPP Pathways and/or Campus Resources.** Programs positioned within institutions that offered other preparation pathways had opportunities to share learning and resources. Developing relationships with other campus resources—for instance, the campus recruiting, financial aid, and admissions offices—served as a means of expanding program capacity without expanding the staff.
- **Technical Assistance Support.** Programs worked with numerous technical support providers—including the National Center for Teacher Residencies, the Residency Lab, Education First, and Prepared To Teach—to develop their internal capacity to align vision and goals, engage in data-driven continuous improvement, recruit more effectively, and plan for financial sustainability.

Characteristic 11: Explicit Focus on Promoting Equity for Both Residents and the Students They Teach

Programs focused on promoting equity in the following ways:

- **Equity-Oriented Mission and Vision.** Programs articulated a commitment to making high-quality preparation accessible for candidates from groups that have historically been excluded from the teaching profession, with the goal of diversifying the teaching profession to better match student demographics. Notably, advancing equity and justice “at all levels of residency work” has been identified as an essential characteristic of effective residency programs by the Residency Lab since 2019.¹⁵¹
- **Program Design That Minimized Common Barriers.** The residencies designed and continuously retooled their program practices to facilitate access and support residents through program completion. Programs identified and responded to common barriers—for instance, by making

modifications to program application and admissions procedures, implementing financial supports beyond the stipend, designing manageable program plans and coursework sequences, and ensuring all residents knew how to access support—and embraced the responsibility of crafting programs that would promote the long-term success of each and every candidate they enrolled.

- **Content and Program Objectives That Prepared Teachers to Enact Equity-Focused Practices.** Program coursework and clinical experience requirements emphasized diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as the development of teaching practices rooted in antibias and that promote social justice. For example, Alder’s courses explicitly focused on issues of equity and centered the work of scholars of color. In Tri-County’s social studies and arts methods course, residents examined their own cultural identities and biases and had opportunities to explore disciplinary pedagogies from a sociocultural perspective that focused on historically marginalized and disenfranchised communities. Claremont used clinical observation protocols aligned to their Critical Social Justice Teaching Competencies, which helped ensure that residents could apply the competencies to their own practice.

How Programs Addressed Common Challenges

The following summaries identify local partnership practices that addressed commonly documented challenges that residency programs may encounter in enacting the 11 characteristics.

- **Invest in strengthening stable partnerships and program staff.** Lessons learned from the study programs point to the critical nature of the LEA–EPP partnership and the shared responsibility for effective and efficient program management. LEAs and EPPs can deepen their partnerships through sustained and ongoing collaboration and explicit written agreements that outline roles, responsibilities, and expectations for each partner. Even in partnerships that involve an intermediary such as a county office of education, LEA representatives expressed a need for direct collaboration and communication with EPPs. Program practices that supported partnership maintenance, program efficiency, and residency continuity included formally dedicating staff workload at both the LEA and the EPP to partnership and program management; having more than one staff member supporting the residency within both the LEA and the EPP; pooling multiple smaller LEAs with fewer vacancies into combined cohorts; and forming robust partnerships with existing institutional entities such as financial aid, admissions, campus recruitment, and human resources offices.
- **Cultivate robust, collaborative recruitment and cohorting strategies.** LEAs and EPPs each had unique affordances around recruitment: LEA staff could conduct outreach to the LEA’s existing noncertificated staff and refer them to the residency as a route toward their credential, and EPPs could connect with students in other university programs. Other strategies included placing ads on job boards or using Google advertisements, analyzing recruitment and application trends, working with institution of higher education–based advisors and recruiters, and advocating for designated advisors and recruitment officers. Programs recruited residents into cohorts and proactively worked to intentionally foster connections and peer support within cohorts.
- **Build close partnerships between EPP and LEA leadership, mentors, course instructors, and clinical coaches to tighten program cohesion and connections between coursework and clinical experiences.** Programs used core values, goals, skills, and frameworks to ground their partnership

and programming work. Partners supported program cohesion by centering clinical practice; ensuring that course content, assignments, and assessments were highly relevant and connected to clinical experiences; including LEA-specific content such as curricula or special initiatives and resources in courses; and coteaching with LEA representatives. Programs also provided structures and dedicated spaces for course instructors, clinical coaches, and mentors to align content, as well as tailored professional development days and communities of practice for mentors. Connections between coursework and practice can be extended and sustained through collaborative induction programs that integrate preparation program values, goals, and frameworks.

- **Leverage existing LEA and IHE resources in support of the residency.** In nearly all of the teacher residencies included in this study, LEAs made meaningful financial investments in residents' preparation. LEAs can tap into existing district dollars to support their residencies by reallocating and reinvesting the funding they would have used for paraeducators, substitute teachers, or recruitment and onboarding due to turnover.¹⁵² Residency programs can also leverage EPPs' institution-based resources by closely collaborating with recruitment, admissions, financial aid, student support, advising, and other campus offices. Programs can explore innovative strategies such as negotiating tuition reductions, and they can leverage existing state- and community-level services and resources by ensuring that residents are aware of them as potential sources of support. Programs can engage in ongoing and anticipatory financial planning to ensure program continuity and longevity. The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing provides an online tool that includes financial resources for teacher candidates and a database of federal, state, and grant funding that can be used to support teacher preparation, as well as funding scenarios from real residency programs that illustrate strategies to maximize program funding.¹⁵³
- **Reduce barriers and provide robust and proactive supports for residents that address the whole person.** The intensity of residency preparation demands strong supports for residents to help ensure successful program completion. Programs removed barriers by streamlining the application process, de-emphasizing traditional admissions metrics in favor of performance-based tasks, providing robust up-front financial aid advising, leveraging 2+2 models or integrating master's degrees, ensuring that residents had a go-to person for help, and proactively checking in with residents throughout their time in the program. Programs also provided whole person wraparound supports and individualized advising to assist residents with transportation, child care, health and mental health services, food, and housing needs.

Recommendations

State and federal investments in residency pathways have provided essential support for the initiation, growth, and continuous improvement of the programs we studied and the residents who participated in them. Given that residencies have shown promise in helping districts solve shortages, preparing effective teachers, recruiting residents from diverse backgrounds, and making the teaching profession more accessible to candidates from historically excluded groups, this study offers the following state- and federal-level recommendations for supporting high-quality residency pathways.

Recommendations for California Policymakers

- **Maintain funding for the California Teacher Residency Grant Program through and beyond the 2026–27 school year (when funding is due to expire).** State grants provide critical seed funding to plan, launch, or expand residencies while enabling continued attention to ensuring that both educator preparation programs (EPPs) and local education agencies (LEAs) can build effective capacity for management, work toward sustainable funding models, and offer candidates stipends that adequately support their living expenses during the residency year. For the programs studied, these grants provided essential support by allowing LEAs to experience the effectiveness of the residency model as a talent pipeline. The availability of grant funds enabled programs to secure adequate EPP and partner LEA staffing, which facilitated the delivery of well-integrated preparation and adequate support to residents and mentor teachers. With strong foundations firmly established, residency partners were able to begin planning toward a financially sustainable program future. Grant-funded stipends were also important recruitment tools: Programs reported that higher stipends increased demand for the residency and resulted in larger pools of applicants from which programs could select the best candidates.

Since this study was conducted, California has recognized the importance of this grant program for expanding high-quality residency-based preparation by increasing the funds available to grantees. The 2023–24 state budget increased the per-resident grant award from \$25,000 to \$40,000 and required, for the first time, a minimum resident stipend of \$20,000. Other states go even further. New Mexico, for example, requires resident stipends of \$35,000 and provides \$50,000 for program coordinators at each approved residency program.¹⁵⁴ Continued state funding will be important to help address program challenges, including resident food and housing insecurity.

- **Continue to provide financial aid for prospective teachers, including residents, who will teach in high-need communities.** The Golden State Teacher Grant Program, which provides \$20,000 in tuition support for students enrolled in a California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC)–approved teacher preparation program, is due to expire in 2025–26, with funds expected to run out in 2024–25. This grant has been described as a “game changer” for teacher recruitment and has decreased the debt load for residency graduates. Renewing this program—with adjustments for inflation—or creating an alternative reliable source of financial aid for candidates, such as a guaranteed forgivable loan tied to service, can support continued access for the diverse set of candidates that residencies tend to serve. In addition, continuing to allow the extension of the Cal Grant Teaching Credential Program to subsidize teacher preparation provides an important resource for residents. Financial aid could also cover costs related to program application, such as application fees, background checks (i.e., Live Scans), exam registration, and tuberculosis tests and physicals.

- **Support residencies in establishing apprenticeship funding streams.** In 2022, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) approved the first registered teacher apprenticeship program in Tennessee. Since then, with DOL encouragement, 28 states have launched apprenticeships into teaching.¹⁵⁵ These programs allow candidates to earn while they learn, as they receive pay while they gain teaching skills under the guidance of a mentor teacher and take coursework to earn their teaching credential. With state leadership, a residency program could be structured as a teacher apprenticeship, as outlined in DOL-approved national guideline standards, thereby enabling these programs to potentially leverage federal and state workforce development funding. Due to already stretched local capacity, programs need support to develop seamless pathways and navigate the systems to register programs as apprenticeships and access available funding. The state might also consider dedicating a portion of state apprenticeship funding or providing additional incentives for teacher preparation apprenticeship pathways.
- **Continue to fund and develop thoughtful technical assistance that helps residencies design sustainable, high-quality models.** In 2023, California launched a Statewide Residency Technical Assistance Center (SRTAC) to support the scaling and sustainability of residencies.¹⁵⁶ The new center can help programs across the state learn from the successful models described in the current study and develop sustainable approaches for both candidates and programs, such as by strengthening financial aid advising or designing 2+2 programs. SRTAC has huge potential to support capacity-building for residencies, particularly in key areas such as partnership development, sustainable funding, program management, data systems, coursework and clinical alignment, and support for residents. Developing relationships with residency programs can be the foundation for facilitating meaningful program transformation over time.

One way that SRTAC could support residency capacity-building is to coordinate with existing technical assistance providers such as the National Center for Teacher Residencies, the Residency Lab, Education First, Prepared To Teach, and US PREP, among others, to match programs with appropriate technical assistance programs. SRTAC can also provide grant-writing supports, particularly for smaller districts that may have limited staff capacity; develop robust tools that synthesize recommendations for strengthening residencies; create template documents that programs can modify to fit their context; provide vetted clinical observation rubrics aligned to state standards, which could help ease the burden on programs to identify or develop their own protocols; and document and widely disseminate program outcomes. For example, guidance around how to create residency consortia or cohorts for smaller and rural LEA partners, effective strategies for community-building or online courses, Teaching Performance Expectation-aligned clinical observation tools, or a statewide residency dashboard based on the one created by WestEd that monitors program effectiveness in addressing staffing shortages and diversifying the teacher workforce could all be valuable supports, particularly for smaller and early-stage programs.

The SRTAC can also connect program leaders with existing tools, such as the CTC's Teacher Candidate Funding Explorer, which provides a database of state and federal grants and additional resources (e.g., CalFresh, child care resources available through the California Department of Social Services) that can be leveraged by teacher preparation candidates to increase program affordability.¹⁵⁷ Ensuring that program leaders are aware of this database and other tools will help

them connect residents with the full suite of grants and benefits for which they are eligible and promote programs' awareness of existing resources that can supplement the direct financial support and university services they provide to their residents.

States can do a great deal to strengthen their teaching workforce with support for residencies. As of 2024, 23 states, including the District of Columbia, had created or supported such programs in state-level policy.¹⁵⁸ There is also a role for federal policymakers to play in ensuring that these models spread and that prospective teachers, generally, can afford to access high-quality preservice preparation and stay in the teaching profession.

Recommendations for Federal Policymakers

- **Expand funding for the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) Grant Program.** TQP grants provided important sources of start-up funding for several studied residencies and for many more across the country. By supporting programs through their early years, these grants gave program leads time to develop programming and plan a transition to more stable and sustainable financial models. Expanded funding for TQP grants can help more residencies similarly launch, develop, and expand their programming. Furthermore, by providing technical assistance to grantees on how to sustain residencies, especially in states that do not offer statewide financial aid resources to residency candidates, the program could contribute to the sustainability of the programs developed with TQP grant monies and increase the long-term impact of these federal investments.
- **Upgrade the TEACH Grant to cover the full cost of tuition.** For prospective teachers to be able to afford comprehensive preparation, they need adequate financial support. The federal Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant currently provides grants of up to \$4,000 to students completing coursework to begin a career in teaching, in exchange for a 4-year commitment to teach in a high-need field or at a school or education service agency that serves students from low-income households. Increasing the grant amount to cover the full cost of pre- or postbaccalaureate teacher preparation can increase the attractiveness and feasibility of preservice teacher preparation programs, including teacher residencies, particularly for diverse candidates.
- **Cover teachers' monthly loan payments until their debt is retired.** Existing federal loan forgiveness programs (e.g., Public Service Loan Forgiveness, Teacher Loan Forgiveness) require teachers to shoulder monthly payments for years with salaries that are lower than those of similarly educated professionals, especially in the first few years of teaching. These programs could instead be structured such that teachers' federal loan payments are covered by the federal government as long as they remain in the classroom until loans are fully repaid, a policy that could serve as both a recruitment and retention incentive.

Conclusion

Teacher residencies represent an opportunity to rethink teacher preparation in ways that can improve access to high-quality preparation for candidates who have historically been excluded from the teaching profession, enhance teachers' Day 1 readiness to provide high-quality instruction and positive learning experiences as a teacher of record, and address the staffing needs of local education agencies (LEAs) by preparing candidates who are credentialed in high-need areas and tend to remain in teaching. However, these programs are complex; they require careful design and implementation in order to harvest the full scope of potential benefits. Although the evidence base on the practices that matter most for successful programs continues to grow, building strong programs nonetheless requires significant time and ongoing iteration.

In particular, the robust partnership between an EPP and LEA(s) that is central to the residency model takes significant work to develop and maintain and requires a type of collaboration that is typically unfamiliar to both types of organizations. The idea that LEAs have a role to play in preservice preparation is, in a certain sense, a paradigm shift that upsets long-standing norms and divisions of responsibilities. Inviting LEAs in as authentic partners in preparation requires new approaches to collaboration and engagement. When partnership is done well, residents—the future employees of partner LEAs—stand to benefit from preparation that is more coherent and better resourced and that more aptly prepares them for their future careers.

State and federal investments can encourage the uptake of the residency-based preparation and help programs to maximize their impact. Investments that allocate funding toward the launch, development, and expansion of teacher residencies can encourage the adoption of effective practices and afford program leaders the necessary time and resources to establish firm program foundations. Further investments in capacity-building—such as the provision of technical assistance—can support programs' implementation of the practices that contribute to program effectiveness and their ongoing continuous improvement.

Finally, high-quality preparation options mean little if prospective candidates cannot access them. State and federal investments can help remove the financial barriers that stand between candidates and residency-based preparation through, for instance, grant stipulations that require funded programs to provide living stipends that adequately support candidates' cost of living during the residency year, tuition assistance programs that help candidates cover the cost of attendance, and any other interventions that ease the burden undertaken by candidates as they pursue their teaching credentials. Investment in the growth and development of residency-based teacher preparation ultimately strengthens the capacity of the state and federal teacher workforce, which has the potential to pay dividends not only for the residents but also for the students they will teach.

Appendix A: Study Participants

Participants included 122 individuals in various roles across the five residencies. Program leaders, other program staff, course instructors, and clinical coaches who participated in the current study are listed alphabetically by program, along with their role title at the time of the interview. Notably, all role titles reflect the positions held by participants at the time our interviews were conducted during the 2022–23 academic year; several have moved into different positions since then. Resident, graduate, and mentor teacher participants were invaluable to the current study but have not been mentioned by name to protect confidentiality.

Alder Graduate School of Education

- Lena Anthony, Director of the Aspire Bay Residency at Alder Graduate School of Education (GSE)
- Rita Burks, Principal at Dual Language Academy of the Monterey Peninsula in Monterey Peninsula Unified School District
- Alex Caram, Managing Director of Strategy and Partnerships at Alder GSE
- Alexandria Creer Kahn, Senior Director of Academic Programs at Alder GSE
- PK Diffenbaugh, Superintendent at Monterey Peninsula Unified School District
- Troya Ellis, Child Development Faculty at Alder GSE
- Katie Holz, Academic Program Associate in Social Studies at Alder GSE
- Sarah Hudson, Clinical Faculty Director of Monterey Peninsula Unified School District Teacher Residency at Alder GSE
- Iván Ibarra Mora, Director of Student Services at Alder GSE
- Heather Kirkpatrick, President and Chief Executive Officer at Alder GSE
- Thomas Newton II, Principal at Monterey High School in Monterey Peninsula Unified School District
- David Steele, STEM Education Faculty at Alder GSE
- Shayna Sullivan, Dean at Alder GSE
- 5 current residents
- 1 program graduate
- 3 mentor teachers

California State University, Bakersfield—Kern Urban Teacher Residency (Kern Urban)

- Bre Evans-Santiago, Associate Professor and Chair of Teacher Education at California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB)
- Holly Gonzales, Kern Urban Residency Coordinator at CSUB
- Mike Havens, Director of New Teacher Development at Bakersfield City School District
- Bryan Maddern, Lecturer at CSUB
- James Rodriguez, Dean of Social Sciences and Education at CSUB

- Tara Rojas, part-time Lecturer at CSUB
- Valerie Saylor, Coordinator of New Teacher Development at Bakersfield City School District
- Jennifer Scheidle, Clinical Coach at CSUB
- 5 current residents
- 5 program graduates
- 6 mentor teachers (Four mentor teachers were also program graduates, but the focus of their interviews was mentorship, so they are only counted in this group.)

California State University, Bakersfield—Teacher Residency for Rural Education (TRRE)

- Serena Arias, Director of Recruitment and Hiring and TRRE Coordinator at Visalia Unified School District (VUSD)
- Adriana Cervantes-González, TRRE Residency Coordinator at CSUB
- Bre Evans-Santiago, Associate Professor and Chair of Teacher Education at CSUB
- Marvin Lopez, Executive Director of the California Center on Teaching Careers at Tulare County Office of Education
- Shannon Moore, Teacher on Special Assignment and former TRRE Coordinator at VUSD
- Chai Phannaphob, former Lecturer and University Supervisor at CSUB
- James Rodriguez, Dean of Social Sciences and Education at CSUB
- 12 current residents
- 1 program graduate
- 6 mentor teachers

California State University, Monterey Bay—Tri-County Teacher Residency Program (Tri-County)

- Linda Barrera, Principal at Los Padres Elementary in Salinas City Elementary School District (SCESD)
- Cathi Draper Rodriguez, Professor and Interim Dean of the College of Education at CSUMB
- Terri Dye, former Assistant Superintendent of Special Education at Monterey County Office of Education
- Antonio Gallardo, Lecturer and Clinical Supervisor at CSUMB
- Suzanne Garcia-Mateus, Assistant Professor and Bilingual Authorization Coordinator at CSUMB
- Hilda Huerta, Principal at Roosevelt Elementary in SCESD
- Dennis Kombe, Associate Professor and Tri-County Coordinator at CSUMB
- Susana Mancera-Juárez, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources for SCESD
- Carlos Mariscal, Clinical Coach for the Tri-County Residency at CSUMB
- Brigid Perhach, Director of Professional Development at North Monterey County Unified School District

- Ashley Selck, Clinical Practice Database Coordinator at CSUMB
- Jennifer Suttie, Residency Coordinator for the Tri-County Residency at Monterey County Office of Education
- Nina Michele White, Clinical Coach for the Tri-County Residency at CSUMB
- 7 current residents
- 4 program graduates
- 8 mentor teachers

Claremont Graduate University

- Leena Bakshi, Academic Instructor at Claremont
- Oscar Barajas, former Staffing Manager at Alliance College-Ready Public Schools
- Claudia Bermúdez, Clinical Assistant Professor and Coordinator at Claremont Graduate University
- Andre Chenfeng, Academic Instructor at Claremont Graduate University
- Challen David, Clinical Faculty Advisor at Claremont
- DeLacy Ganley, Dean of the School of Educational Studies at Claremont
- Rebecca Hatkoff, former Claremont Fellows Coordinator at Claremont, Director of Teacher Education
- Kim Megyesi-Brem, Clinical Faculty Advisory at Claremont
- Eddie Partida, Director of Teacher Education at Claremont
- Maryam Qureshi, former Assistant Director of Admissions at Claremont Graduate University
- Elizabeth Ramos, Academic Instructor at Claremont
- Christine Rodriguez, Academic Instructor at Claremont
- Kristen Woo, former Principal at Alliance Marc and Eva Stern Math and Science School
- 5 current residents
- 1 program graduate
- 3 mentor teachers

Appendix B: Methodology

This qualitative study applied a multiple case study approach¹⁵⁹ using data from five residency programs at four institutions of higher education, drawing from more than 150 documents and 120 interviews and focus groups. Documents included course syllabi, program handbooks, evaluation reports, clinical observation rubrics, memoranda of understanding, and other program documents. Interview and focus group participants included a wide range of interest holders, such as current residents, residency graduates, mentor teachers, clinical coaches, course instructors, hosting or hiring principals, residency program leaders, teacher preparation program administrators, and local education agency (LEA) administrators. Transcriptions were iteratively coded using open coding to identify emergent codes and a priori categories derived from prior research.

Program selection began with a comprehensive list of all known teacher residency programs in California. First, top-rated and effective residency programs were identified using either recommendations from state-level informants or residency data from the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) Credential Program Completer Survey, publicly available information about each program, and additional information gathered through a brief questionnaire. Potential programs for the study were then examined for alignment with a set of site selection criteria that included the research-based characteristics of high-quality residencies.¹⁶⁰ (See [Site Selection Criteria](#).) Finally, geographic location, institution type (e.g., public or private), course modalities (e.g., online asynchronous, online synchronous, in person), and credentialing area (e.g., bilingual, special education) were considered in order to select a set of residencies that included variability and captured the diversity of programs across the state. Programs described in more than one prior Learning Policy Institute study were excluded from the current study.

Site Selection Criteria

Evidence of high quality and program effectiveness:

- accredited by the CTC, and
- received a 4.0 minimum overall rating on CTC Credential Program Completer Survey.

Demonstrated the following features of high-quality residencies based on review of publicly available information and additional information gathered through a brief questionnaire:¹⁶¹

- consisted of strong partnerships between local education agencies (LEAs), teacher preparation programs, and sometimes other entities;
- tightly integrated coursework about teaching and learning with classroom practice;
- included a full year of residency teaching alongside an accomplished mentor teacher;
- recruited diverse candidates for specific district instructional and hiring needs, often in shortage areas;
- provided financial support, often in exchange for residents' commitment to teach in the district for a minimum number of years;
- placed cohorts of residents in “teaching schools” that model evidence-based practices with diverse learners; and

- offered ongoing mentoring and support for residency graduates after they enter the teaching workforce.

Evidence of longevity and impact:

- enrolled at least 20 residents in the 2022–23 academic year;
- had enrolled at least three cohorts;
- demonstrated high partner LEA hiring and retention rates for residency completers; and
- had partner LEAs that served large proportions of Title I schools.

Diversity of program characteristics:

- locale (i.e., rural, suburban, urban);¹⁶²
- credentials offered (i.e., Multiple Subject, Single Subject, Education Specialist, Bilingual, STEM); and
- coursework format (i.e., online, hybrid, in person).

Endnotes

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