



Educating for Equity

Alder Graduate School's Teacher Residency

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Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

The Alder Teacher Residency began in 2010 as an in-house new teacher preparation program for Aspire Public Schools, a California charter network, and has since evolved into an independent graduate school of education and the largest residency preparation pathway in California. During the 2022–23 academic year, Alder enrolled 325 residents, who were grouped into regional cohorts, and partnered with 47 local education agencies (LEAs) across California, including public school districts, public charter schools, county offices of education, and a Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). The university featured multiple subject, single subject (math, science, social studies, English, and world languages), and education specialist credentialing pathways and had developed a coursework sequence that allowed all residents to attain a Master of Arts in Education in addition to their teaching credential.

Through our research, we found that the program maintained a high standard of teacher preparation and produced teachers who were consistently well-equipped to enter the profession. On average, Alder residents assigned high ratings to the program, with 97% of graduates rating the program as effective or very effective on the 2022–23 California Commission on Teacher Credentialing completer survey. 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 school leaders as more effective than other first-year teachers working in the same schools. Alder residency graduates exhibited consistently higher retention rates than teachers prepared through other pathways: On average, 57% of Alder graduates were still working in the same LEA after 3 years as of 2023, compared with only 33% of new teachers in those LEAs who were prepared through other pathways.

Driven by a focus on equity and the goal to build a more racially diverse teaching workforce, Alder had almost doubled the proportion of enrolled residents who identify as members of historically underrepresented groups, from 45% in 2010–11 to 83% in 2022–23. Alder promoted equity by applying a “high-touch, whole adult” approach to support residents throughout their time in the program. By incorporating strong supports throughout the program, Alder recognized and attempted to address systemic inequities that might have prevented some candidates from developing specific skills due to a lack of opportunity. Alder viewed this high-touch, supportive approach as key to preparing the diverse pool of educators they recruit and bring into the profession.

Case Study Methods

The case study presented in this report was conducted in 2023 and was guided by the overarching question “How do successful residencies do their work?” It is part of a larger multiple-case study of five California teacher residency programs across four different institutions of higher education, conducted with the goal of documenting the details of their program infrastructure; program design; recruitment strategies; resident, mentor teacher, and graduate supports; partnership; leadership; and financial sustainability. By understanding the details of how these residencies developed and operated their programming, we are able to share insights that can inform the design and continuous improvement of residency programs across the country.

Overview of Residency Features

Program Design. Residency coursework began during the summer, before residents started engaging in their clinical placements, which allowed the residents to build relationships with their cohorts, become acquainted with reflective practice, learn the basic principles of inclusion and asset-based teaching, and take a subject-specific methods class before they entered their placement classrooms. In the fall and spring semesters, residents took synchronous and asynchronous online coursework that accommodated their clinical placement schedules. Course objectives and content were aligned to four Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs): (1) asset-based community and cultural responsiveness; (2) developmentally appropriate, whole child, and inclusive practices; (3) pedagogical content knowledge; and (4) critical, reflective, and research-based orientations to teaching. The integration of these PLOs into each course allowed residents to see and experience similar concepts across courses, which helped reinforce learning and encouraged residents to reflect on their clinical experiences in relation to the PLOs throughout the residency year.

During the fall and spring semesters of the residency year, residents spent 4 days per week in clinical experience at a school site specially selected to host residents. Alder guided partners' selection of placement sites with a set of criteria that helped ensure that these sites met school demographic requirements, had appropriately qualified principals or site leaders who were committed to the program, and could identify and select highly qualified mentors. Alder provided multiple structures and resources to help integrate residents into a mentor teacher's classroom as coteachers in a sequenced and supportive manner, and the clinical schedule was designed to afford residents opportunities to coplan with their mentor teacher and participate in grade-level team meetings and school-based professional development opportunities. In addition to their core coursework, residents attended a full-day in-person seminar 3 times per month that was designed to help bridge clinical practice and coteaching with academic coursework.

Recruitment and Admissions Process. Alder focused on recruiting candidates who have been historically marginalized—including candidates of color and candidates from less affluent communities—into the teaching profession, typically drawing on individuals who were already working in Alder partner schools as substitute teachers, paraprofessionals, instructional aides, after-school support providers, and other classified staff. To lower barriers to application, the university developed admissions requirements that minimized the number of documents applicants must submit up front and did not require candidates to have already met the basic skills and subject matter requirements for licensure. Admissions also involved an interview process in which candidates deliver a lesson plan and receive feedback, then have the opportunity to revise and deliver the lesson again. The support and feedback aspects of the interview helped level the playing field and built equity into the admissions process by allowing applicants with less background experience in planning and implementing lessons to demonstrate their ability and willingness to incorporate coaching and feedback to improve their work.

Resident Supports. Residents received support to cover living expenses through stipends provided by Alder's LEA partners. Acknowledging that residents may nonetheless experience financial hardship during the residency year, Alder provided a robust suite of supports through the Office of Student Services. The office proactively worked to identify the specific challenges faced by Alder residents, both through surveys and one-on-one conversations, and it connected students with financial, food, housing, health care,

academic, social, and hiring supports according to their specific needs. This proactive approach has been shaped by the institution's mission to create pathways into the teaching profession for populations that have been historically marginalized and for a student population whose financial precarity constitutes a potential barrier to their ability to access and complete a graduate-level degree.

Partnerships. Over the years, Alder has built a word-of-mouth reputation, and, as California's state grant program has created more interest in residencies, Alder is regularly approached by LEAs that are interested in starting a residency. This increased interest has allowed Alder to be more intentional about the LEAs they partner with and to spend more energy on the alignment of their values and goals as well as financial sustainability. Each partnership was managed by a clinical director, an LEA employee who was also a clinical faculty member at Alder. The clinical director ensured alignment between both sides of the partnership and oversaw most day-to-day residency operations. Alder leadership met at least annually with each partner LEA superintendent or executive director to present LEA-specific data on the impact of the residency. This annual check-in meeting grounded the partnership with a review of Alder's mission, vision, and values and how they align with partner LEA goals. This process of making LEA-specific residency impacts explicit and connecting them to the LEA's goals was critical to ongoing partnership and cohesion.

Organizational Structure and Culture. At Alder, a key organizational value is collaboration. The Alder team was a tightly knit and highly coordinated group in which each member's perspective and experience were valued. Multiple regular meetings, each with a different purpose, created regular opportunities to build relationships and make cohesive decisions throughout the organization. Each internal team met regularly, typically weekly, and cross-team collaborations were also scheduled to ensure a coordinated and supportive experience for residents throughout the program. Meetings also included two in-person retreats each year, monthly optional town-hall style meetings, monthly professional development meetings focused on equity, and an equity-focused book club in which all Alder personnel participated. These structures helped promote a collaborative culture and strengthen values-driven coordination, cohesion, and consistency across the organization.

Continuous Improvement. Alder routinely collected and analyzed data as part of its effort to continuously improve. Data collection and analysis were done throughout the year using various data sources including those from LEA partners, the National Center for Teacher Residencies, and Alder-created surveys. These activities were documented in Alder's Annual Data Cycle Calendar and findings were reported in an Annual Program Assessment Report that is presented to Alder's Board of Directors and publicly available online.

Financial Model. Alder's financial model combined short-term grants, tuition, community resources, and LEA contributions. Thirty percent of Alder's budget came from both private and public grant funding. Through 2022–23, Alder has obtained approximately \$14 million in Teacher Quality Partnership (2020, 2022) and \$19 million in Supporting Effective Educator Development (2018, 2020) funding, with roughly half of these funds going to LEA partners as subgrantees. Alder encouraged all LEA partners to apply for grants through the California Teacher Residency Grant Program (TRGP). In addition to TRGP funding, LEA partners used local control funding formula dollars to fund Alder resident and mentor stipends and supplement the clinical director's compensation. In 2022–23, Alder was 50% funded through tuition, and it expected to reach its target of 70% to 80% tuition funding by 2026–27. The university did not aim to become fully reliant on student tuition because it intended to keep tuition rates low enough to be able to recruit and enroll candidates from diverse backgrounds.

Introduction

In 2022–23, the Alder Teacher Residency was a 1-year teacher preparation program offered by the Alder Graduate School of Education (Alder), a nonprofit, private institution accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC). Over 3 semesters, Alder residents earned a preliminary Multiple Subject (elementary), Single Subject (secondary), or Education Specialist (special education) credential and a Master of Arts in Education.

The Alder residency stood 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 residency preparation pathway in California and one of the larger teacher preparation programs in the state. As of 2022–23, the residency partnered with 47 local education agencies (LEAs) across California, including public school districts, public charter schools, county offices of education, and a Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). The program nonetheless maintains a high standard of teacher preparation and produces teachers who are consistently well-equipped to enter the profession. On average, Alder residents assigned high ratings to the program, with 97% of graduates rating the program as effective or very effective on the 2022–23 CTC completer survey. Overall, 95% of Alder graduates have been hired as full-time teachers following their residency year, and 90% of Alder graduates have been rated by their school leaders as more effective than other first-year teachers working in the same schools.¹ “They’re more well-rounded,” said one principal. “It’s not just about the academics; they’re definitely understanding the whole student, the whole child.”

Alder residency graduates exhibited consistently higher retention rates than teachers prepared through other pathways. The program reported that, on average, 57% of Alder graduates were still working in the same LEA after 3 years as of 2023, compared with only 33% of new teachers in those LEAs who were prepared through other pathways.² Furthermore, the program attracted a diverse student body that reflected the communities served by partner LEAs. As of 2022–23, 83% of residents identified as members of racial and ethnic groups that have historically been excluded from the teaching profession,³ 69% were first-generation college graduates, and 54% were Pell Grant recipients.⁴

Consistent with its mission to recruit and educate “excellent teachers and leaders who reflect our schools’ communities,”⁵ Alder emphasized a whole child approach based on incorporating the science of learning and development, building strong connections to culture and community, and practicing critical examination of inequities in schooling. According to Heather Kirkpatrick, Alder’s President and CEO, Alder’s commitment to “identity, diversity, equity, and inclusion is deep in its DNA” and is one of the reasons why Alder is so successful in serving communities of color. In addition to its equity and whole child focus, Alder had six explicit core values: hope, compassion, courage, knowledge, collaboration, and excellence. Together, these values and foci serve as a

Alder emphasized a whole child approach based on incorporating the science of learning and development, building strong connections to culture and community, and practicing critical examination of inequities in schooling.

unifying framework that informed all aspects of Alder’s residency, including the program requirements, resident admissions process, resident supports, partnerships, and internal organizational culture. In more detail, the school’s core values are:

1. **Hope** represents faith in what could be, which was demonstrated in Alder’s focus on candidate potential during the admissions process and through program support structures.
2. **Compassion** focuses on empathy and understanding and undergirded Alder’s commitment to providing residents with the supports they need to be successful.
3. **Courage** at Alder means speaking up and standing for equity and justice, which can be seen in the evolution of how Alder worked to explicitly communicate its equity stance to partners.
4. **Knowledge** represents Alder’s commitment to learning from research and theory as well as the lived experiences of teacher candidates, mentors, principals, and students. This value was demonstrated through high program expectations and the systematic and ongoing processes of feedback and data collection to ensure continuous improvement.
5. **Collaboration** emphasizes working together toward shared goals and was reified in Alder’s close relationships with LEA partners and its ongoing efforts to ensure meaningful discourse, such as by sharing almost one quarter of tuition dollars with partners to provide a full-time residency support role.
6. **Excellence** drove Alder’s continual efforts to improve program outcomes and prepare excellent teachers.

In this report, we present a case study of the Alder Teacher Residency that was guided by the overarching question “How do successful residencies do their work?” This case is part of a larger multiple-case study of five California teacher residency programs across four different institutions of higher education (IHEs), with each case study conducted with the goal of documenting the details of program infrastructure; program design; recruitment strategies; resident, mentor teacher, and graduate supports; partnership; leadership; and financial sustainability. By understanding the details of how these residencies developed and operated their programming, we are able to share insights that can inform the design and continuous improvement of residency programs across the country.⁶

For each program, we drew data from program documents as well as interviews and focus groups with a wide range of constituents, 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. Transcriptions have been coded iteratively, both with attention to categories derived from prior research and to themes that emerged in the case study data. In particular, we focused our analytical attention on the following areas:

- 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?

Background

The Alder Teacher Residency began in 2010 as an in-house new teacher preparation program for Aspire Public Schools, a California charter network, and it has evolved into an independent graduate school of education. Aspire developed the residency program in response to staffing needs and feedback from principals. In particular, two Aspire principals reported that they found that novice teachers were often not prepared to handle the everyday challenges of the teaching profession, which consequently led to more turnover. Based on this puzzle of practice, Heather Kirkpatrick, Alder President and CEO, developed a vision for a yearlong apprenticeship-like experience that would allow a preservice teacher candidate to learn alongside an effective mentor teacher using a coteaching and gradual release model.

The residency launched its first cohort in 2010 as a 5-year pilot program at Aspire in partnership with the University of the Pacific. By the end of Pilot Year 3, 63 out of 66 graduates had been hired at Aspire, 45% of whom were members of historically underrepresented groups. In 2015, Aspire University was established as an independent graduate school and was renamed Alder Graduate School of Education in 2017.

Since its inaugural cohort of 18 residents in 2010–11, Alder’s enrollment has increased steadily, eventually enrolling 325 residents in 2022–23. Driven by a focus on equity and the goal of building a more racially diverse teaching workforce, Alder had almost doubled the proportion of enrolled residents who identify as members of historically underrepresented groups, from 45% in 2010–11 to 83% in 2022–23.⁷

In 2022–23, Alder operated 20 residency cohorts in partnership with 47 local education agencies (LEAs) across California in the San Francisco Bay, Central Valley, Central Coast, Inland Empire, and Los Angeles areas. LEAs partnered with Alder to launch a residency within and for their school systems, with each partner hosting a cohort of between 12 and 25 residents. Smaller LEAs, which may not have the capacity to host a full cohort of residents, had the opportunity to partner with other nearby LEAs to host a “combined cohort” of residents. Partners selected the credential program(s) offered to their cohort in accordance with their hiring needs. Whereas some cohorts recruited residents in multiple credential areas, others focused on one type of credential (often special education). [Table 1](#) provides a summary of the Alder Teacher Residency program.

Alder promoted equity by applying a “high-touch, whole adult” approach to support residents throughout their time in the program. By incorporating strong supports throughout the program, Alder recognized and attempted to address systemic inequities that might have prevented some candidates from developing specific skills due to a lack of opportunity. Alder viewed this high-touch, supportive approach as key to preparing the diverse pool of educators that it recruits and brings into the profession.

Alder promoted equity by applying a “high-touch, whole adult” approach to support residents throughout their time in the program.

Table 1. Alder Teacher Residency Summary

Program length	1 year (June to June)
Credentials offered	Multiple Subject (K–8) Single Subject (6–12): math, science, social studies, English, world languages Education Specialist: mild/moderate needs
Master’s degree	Master of Arts in Education
2022–23 program cost	Tuition: \$20,500 Books and supplies: \$600 ^a Tests/Certification fees: \$1,439 ^b Housing/Food/Transportation/Miscellaneous: \$22,644 ^c
Financial supports for residents	Living stipend: \$12,000–\$37,000 Grants: up to \$34,000 (need-based) Scholarships: up to \$10,000 (need-based) Exam preparation and registration fee assistance: \$450
2022–23 full-time resident enrollment	325
2022–23 racial demographics of residents	12.6% identify as Black; 56.0% as Hispanic or Latino/a; 8.9% as Asian, American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander; 5.5% as multiracial; and 16.9% as White ^d
Clinical experience	4 days per week from June to June
Program completion rate (2010–2023)	2-year completion: 81.3%; 1-year completion: 74.0% ^e
Full-time employment of program graduates (2010–2023)	95% (82% in partner local education agencies where they had completed clinical experience) ^f
1-year retention of 2022 program graduates in the same school	84% (compared with 69% of peers hired in the same year) ^g
3-year retention of program graduates teaching in 2022	65% (compared with 43% of peers hired in the same year) ^h

^a Internal Alder estimate.

^b Includes California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST), California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET), Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA), edTPA, U.S. Constitution Exam, 30-Day Substitute Teaching Permit, Preliminary Credential, Certificate of Clearance, CPR certification, tuberculosis test, and Live Scan.

^c Based on the 2022–23 [California Student Aid Commission Student Expense Budget](#).

- ^d Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). [Alder School of Education completion rates](#) (accessed 09/01/2023).
- ^e Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). [Alder School of Education completion rates](#) (accessed 09/01/2023).
- ^f The overall partner hire rate decreased due to a dip in 2020–21, during the COVID-19 pandemic. In all other years, partner hire rate ranged from 77% to 100%. See Alder Graduate School of Education. (2022). [Teacher residency at Alder GSE annual program assessment report 2021–2022](#).
- ^g Alder Graduate School of Education. (2022). [Teacher residency at Alder GSE annual program assessment report 2021–2022](#).
- ^h Alder Graduate School of Education. (2024). [Impact](#) (accessed 10/01/2021).

Program Design

The Alder Teacher Residency prepares its residents to earn a California Preliminary Credential for teaching and a Master of Arts in Education with a concentration in either Teaching or Special Education. The yearlong program began in the summer and continued through the fall and spring terms. Alder's coursework and clinical experiences were built around its Program Learning Outcomes and Student Learning Outcomes,⁸ in addition to the California Teaching Performance Expectations⁹ and Program Standards.¹⁰ The Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) were based on Alder's core values and the expectation for "all graduates to be excellent teachers who are transformative scholar-practitioners."¹¹ The four PLOs that are emphasized in the residency program are (1) asset-based community and cultural responsiveness; (2) developmentally appropriate, whole child, and inclusive practices; (3) pedagogical content knowledge; and (4) critical, reflective, and research-based orientations to teaching.¹²

Program Structure

Each of the Single Subject (secondary) and Multiple Subject (elementary) credential pathways required a total of 34 units of coursework, while the Education Specialist (special education) credential pathway required 37 units. Depending on the pathway, residents generally enrolled in a total of 9 to 12 units per semester. In each pathway, courses were taught using a combination of in-person, synchronous online, and asynchronous online formats.¹³ In-person courses were held at a designated local education agency (LEA) site in the same region where residents attended their clinical placements. [Table 2](#) provides a summary of the Alder Teacher Residency program of study for the three credential pathways.

In alignment with its commitment to collaboration, partnership, responsiveness, and excellence, Alder has adjusted the structure and scheduling of coursework and clinical experiences over time in response to feedback from partners, instructors, mentors, and residents. Coursework began with four (for Multiple Subject and Education Specialist credentials) or five (for Single Subject credentials) courses in the summer. Residents met for in-person coursework 3 full days per week for about 7 weeks, with an additional 8 hours of synchronous online instruction.

Through this summer session, residents bonded with others in their cohort, became acquainted with reflective practice, were introduced to principles of inclusion and asset-based teaching, and took a subject-specific methods class before beginning their clinical placements. Residents expressed the importance of their summer coursework in particular for setting up an orientation that, as they entered their clinical placements in the fall, encouraged them to "see the student as a whole" by becoming curious about how a student's cultural and personal background shapes classroom engagement.

In the fall and spring semesters, residents took synchronous and asynchronous online coursework that accommodated their clinical placement schedules. All residents cotaught 4 days per week and attended a full-day in-person seminar 3 times per month. This seminar was designed to help bridge clinical practice and coteaching with academic coursework. (See [Clinical Experience](#) for more information on Resident Seminar.) Additionally, residents are pulled out of their clinical placement to complete 10 "course intensives," full-day sessions for concentrated coursework, across the fall and spring.¹⁴ Alder President and CEO Heather Kirkpatrick reported that Alder residents took about 70% of their coursework in person.

During the fall and spring semesters, residents cotaught with their mentor teachers, typically on Monday through Wednesday and Friday (see [Figure 1](#)). The schedule was designed to allow residents to participate, alongside their mentor, in grade-level team meetings and school-based professional development opportunities, which, in Alder’s partner LEAs, typically took place on Fridays.¹⁵ In addition to creating access to opportunities for professional learning and collaboration, the clinical schedule provided residents with sufficient time to coplan with their mentor teacher, communicate with parents, and engage in teacher duties outside of the classroom, which gave them a highly immersive experience at the school site. Residents’ clinical experiences were supplemented by a sequence of cohesively designed courses. Residents across all regions took the same courses each semester, allowing residents from different cohorts to mingle with colleagues pursuing the same credential.

Table 2. Alder Teacher Residency Program Course Requirements

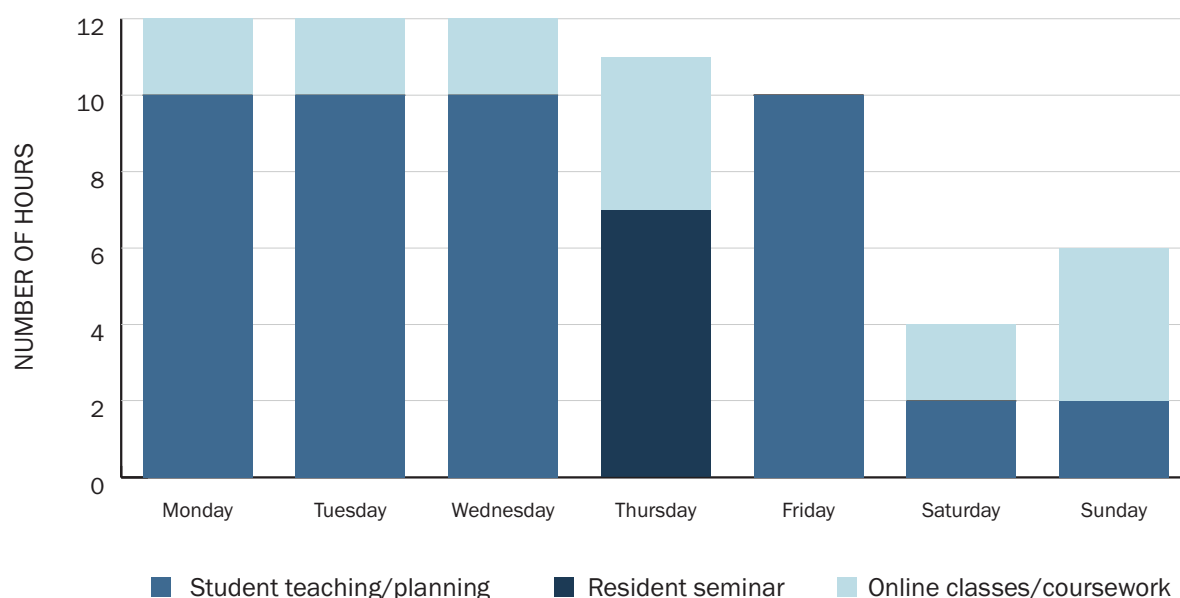
Courses	Single Subject credential	Multiple Subject credential	Education Specialist credential
Summer term			
ED200: Identity and Teaching	•	•	•
ED220: Resident Seminar 1	•	•	•
SPED200: Foundations of Inclusive Education	•	•	•
ED230: Elementary Literacy and Content Methods 1		•	•
ED240–280 ^a : Principles of Teaching Subjects in Secondary	•		
ED235: Disciplinary Literacy in the Secondary Classroom	•		
Fall term			
ED224: Residency Fieldwork 1	•	•	•
ED221: Resident Seminar 2	•	•	•
ED205: Language Use in Multilingual Classrooms	•	•	•
ED210: Child and Adolescent Development and Learning Theory	•	•	•
ED231: Elementary Literacy and Content Methods 2		•	•

Courses	Single Subject credential	Multiple Subject credential	Education Specialist credential
ED241–281 ^a : Subject-Specific Planning, Assessment, and Instructional Strategies 1	•		
SPED201: Positive Behavior Support			•
Spring term			
ED225: Residency Fieldwork 2	•	•	•
ED222: Resident Seminar 3	•	•	•
ED290: Action Research	•	•	•
ED232: Elementary Literacy and Content Methods 3		•	
ED233: Elementary Literacy and Content Methods 4		•	
ED242–282 ^a : Subject-Specific Planning, Assessment, and Instructional Strategies 2	•		
SPED202: The Art of Case Management and Collaboration			•
SPED203: Instructional Methods for Mild/Moderate			•

^a Separate courses based on Single Subject content area.

Source: Adapted from Alder Graduate School of Education. (2021). *Alder Graduate School of Education course scope and sequence*.

Figure 1. Typical Alder Resident Weekly Schedule



Source: Adapted from Alder Graduate School of Education. (2021). *Alder Graduate School of Education student handbook and catalog, 2022–2023*.

Alder Course Highlights

Alder had several courses that were required for all residents, regardless of licensure pathway, and that were central to its focus on whole child and equity-promoting pedagogy. In these courses, instructors taught and modeled whole child and equity-based approaches for residents. Course objectives and content were aligned to the four Program Learning Outcomes: (1) asset-based community and cultural responsiveness; (2) developmentally appropriate, whole child, and inclusive practices; (3) pedagogical content knowledge; and (4) critical, reflective, and research-based orientations to teaching.¹⁶ The integration of these PLOs into each course allowed residents to see and experience similar concepts across courses, which helped reinforce learning and encouraged residents to reflect on their clinical experiences in relation to the PLOs throughout their residency year.

Residents valued what they learned through coursework. One resident expressed the following:

Every course is directly linked to what we can be doing inside the classroom. So, 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.

One resident shared that the coursework was not only relevant and applicable to the practice of teaching but also “helped me to develop as a person.” Another resident added, “Throughout every semester, it's about diversity and how to represent your diversity and respond to someone else's point of view.” She continued:

I grew up very close-minded, so the courses were mind-blowing. I had a lot to learn. ... [The courses] have really helped me open up to different backgrounds and helped me to be able to respond in a professional way to backgrounds that I'm new to. Seeing the student as a whole,

seeing their background and how their background shapes the student they are, [enables me to be a responsive teacher]. And when you identify that, then you are more likely to be successful in helping the student.

In addition to the content, the pedagogy of the courses helped residents construct their knowledge in personal and meaningful ways. One resident explained:

The model was something that was different from any other academic experience I had in the past. Just the fact that you had to create your own knowledge through reflection and sharing. ... Everything that is happening during the program is [based on] reflection. So you are living the experience of going through the program and learning the same way that you can teach in your classroom. ... We don't have a lecture and [someone telling you] these are the most important things. Now you have to apply it, build it, discuss it, and discover it so you build the knowledge.

"The way Alder sets up the classes, you have to interact, and it shows you how to do it in your own classroom. They set up that model," agreed another resident. For these residents, personally experiencing collaborative and active learning as students helped them adopt such approaches in their own teaching. Additionally, residents were encouraged to relate their coursework and clinical learnings. Many course assessments asked residents to pull in the details of their specific clinical contexts and apply theory to analyze their experiences.

For residents, personally experiencing collaborative and active learning as students helped them adopt such approaches in their own teaching.

Each course (except ED290: Action Research) met in person or synchronously online. Brief descriptions of some of these key courses follow, along with reflections from residents.

Asset-Based Community and Cultural Responsiveness

ED200: Identity and Teaching was a foundational course taken in the summer term by residents just beginning the program. It "focused on issues of identity, bias, and positionality, and explores the complex relationships within and among local, state, and national levels of public instruction," as well as introduced residents to the "historical, legal, and social issues that affect diverse educational settings."¹⁷ Residents were directed to consider their own identities, the identities of the students and families they serve, and the local and community contexts of their schools through "reflective practice," a fundamental skill valued throughout their residency that is first introduced in this course.

One resident remembered considering questions such as "How are you bringing your students' identities into the curriculum, or how are you bringing identities of people that you are not familiar with into the curriculum?" A different resident explained, "One of the biggest things [I learned to do in my teaching] is about how curriculum is taught. Who's telling the story? Who's missing? Who's not there? How is it relevant for our students?" She continued, "I can see how meaningful it is when you tell stories that are relevant to them and how disconnected or boring it is when it's not like that."

For another resident, the class helped her reflect on her own background and experiences:

I come from Mexico City, [where we don't have] so much diversity in terms of race. ... And this program has a very big focus on how race impacts everything in the classroom. And I didn't have those references before. I think that is very helpful because I was totally ignorant about that point.

The development of residents' capacity as reflective practitioners, with particular attention to issues of identity and representation, early in the residency year prepared them to enter their clinical placement with a critical and reflective orientation toward their teaching.

Developmentally Appropriate, Whole Child, and Inclusive Practices

Taken in the fall, ED210: Child and Adolescent Development and Learning Theory (Developmental Science in the 21st Century, Theoretical Models for Early Childhood and Adolescence) “focused on the principles of child/adolescent development and learning as occurring in family, school, and community contexts.”¹⁸ In alignment with Alder’s emphasis on whole child pedagogy, the course examined students from academic, cognitive, psychological, linguistic, and social perspectives, with the intention of understanding the importance of schooling in developmental and learning processes. Residents leveraged whole child approaches to make thoughtful and intentional pedagogical decisions to support healthy development and student learning. Key course topics included schools as contexts for development; cognitive development; learning theories; motivation; language development; social and emotional development; moral development; peers and friendships; identity development; ethnoracial identity; gender identity; sexual identity; family, culture, and social class; inclusive and responsive pedagogical approaches; and development of positive and supportive relationships with students.¹⁹

Residents were expected to apply what they learned in this course by completing a case study of one of their students. The case study included conversations with and observations of the student and their family on topics about their school experience, such as academics, understanding of identity, similarities and differences of people, and the roles of peers and friendships. Residents were required to complete a shadow day (a full day of observation) with their case study student and a family or home visit. Residents captured their reflections from these activities in logs, and the culmination of all activities and learning was written up in a case study synthesis.²⁰

Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Multiple Subject and Education Specialist residents took a series of four elementary literacy and content methods courses in which they learned the “theory, principles, knowledge, and skills”²¹ undergirding effective instructional practices for diverse student populations. Each course in the sequence focused on a different content area (social studies, literacy, math, or science). Through engagement in these courses, residents developed “deep understandings of state-adopted standards and frameworks”²² that guide subject-specific instruction; learned how to utilize “developmentally appropriate diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments to plan instruction”²³; and practiced subject-specific and research-based instructional practices. For example, one resident shared that coursework covered phonics and phonological awareness and that it “was really helpful to get some background on how [to support] a student who is struggling with sounding out words.” Moreover, residents learned a variety of teaching strategies so that,

as one resident explained, if they “try this route and if that route didn’t work, let’s try this [other] one” so they would have tools to “figure out which one fits” based on what they knew about their students. This way, residents were prepared to meet students where they are and provide tailored instruction.

For Single Subject residents, subject-specific courses called Principles of Teaching in Secondary and Planning, Assessment, and Instructional Strategies I and II provided core disciplinary content knowledge. In the former, residents engaged with “content-specific theory and instructional practices,”²⁴ developed expertise in subject-area content standards, and learned how to “design aligned, rigorous assessments” that benefit all learners. In the two-course subject-specific Planning, Assessment, and Instructional Strategies sequence, residents continued to develop their repertoire of instructional and assessment strategies but with a more intentional focus on utilizing backward design to create and modify unit plans. Residents also were supported in critically assessing the “affordances and constraints”²⁵ of different instructional approaches, and course content was maintained “in conversation with discussions of residents’ identities as educators”²⁶ and their experiences in the field. All Single Subject residents took an additional course called Disciplinary Literacy in the Secondary Classroom in which they learned to “analyze and evaluate effective literacy skills and strategies in teaching reading, writing, listening, and speaking to [grade] 6–12 students.”²⁷ The course emphasized the importance of integrating reading and language arts “throughout the curriculum” and across disciplines.

Critical, Reflective, and Research-Based Orientations to Teaching

Residents completed ED290: Action Research in the spring term. As part of this course, they learned how to engage in valid and ethical research, and they designed and conducted semester-long action research in their respective clinical settings. Action research can be a “vehicle for systematically addressing questions about teaching and learning in the classroom,”²⁸ and it engaged residents in inquiry to improve their own practice. Residents’ research must address a puzzle of practice to better meet the needs of their students. Residents reviewed relevant research in the field; developed a research question; took baseline notes about the state of this topic in their classroom; experimented with a specific, relevant classroom-level intervention; and collected data to evaluate whether their intervention effectively mitigated the dilemma at hand. Residents were also asked to share their findings with the rest of their school faculty.²⁹ One resident described this process as “helpful because if you ... can identify a dilemma, a problem in your classroom, and you find the way to back it up, then you can present something to help with the problem.” In other words, this resident recognized the value of making data- and evidence-based decisions in their everyday practice.

Demonstration of Learning

Alder required three capstone assessments of resident learning: two related to the teaching credential and a culminating examination for the master’s degree. For the teaching credential, residents were required to pass a state-approved teaching performance assessment, which at Alder is the edTPA. (See [Resident Supports](#) for information on edTPA support.) In addition to the edTPA, the Alder Resident Evaluation (ARE) is an assessment of clinical practice. Residents were evaluated 3 times over the course of the year based on their progress and growth since their previous evaluation. Each evaluation included a debrief meeting during which residents have the opportunity to set goals for improvement. (See [Feedback and Assessment of Clinical Practice](#) for more on the ARE.)

For the master's degree, residents complete the master's oral examination to demonstrate their learning. Residents were expected to synthesize and connect the theories and content they learned in their coursework with classroom applications from their clinical experiences.

Clinical Experience

Residents spend 4 days each week in clinical experience at a school site specially selected to host residents. Alder guided partners' selection of placement sites with a set of criteria that helped ensure these sites met school demographic requirements, had appropriately qualified principals or site leaders who were committed to the program, and could identify and select highly qualified mentors (see [Table 3](#)). Clinical directors worked with partner LEAs to identify sites interested in hosting a resident, informally assessed school sites for additional placement considerations (e.g., leadership stability and positive working conditions for teachers), and discussed expectations for resident support with site leaders. Whenever possible, residents were placed in pairs or clusters at school sites but, as of 2022–23, Alder did not yet use a professional development school model in which a single school site hosts a large group of residents.

Table 3. Alder Site Selection Criteria

Criteria	Description
Mentor qualifications	• Holds a clear credential that corresponds to the credential sought by the resident • Is recommended by their school leader as an excellent teacher with the capacity to work as a mentor for the program • Has at least 3 years of experience, preferably within the local education agency • Has been identified as excellent within their program and district
School demographics	• Meets at least one of the following criteria: - At least 50% of students eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch - Significant English learner population - 50% of students are students of color
Principal/School leader qualifications	• Is highly qualified (e.g., holds a California Administrative Services Credential or is certified as highly qualified per the local education agency) • Has committed to the Alder site leader agreement • Has a vision of excellent teaching and structures to support preservice teachers during the residency year

Sources: Alder Graduate School of Education. (2022). *Alder GSE clinical placement criteria*; Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *Alder GSE mentor guidance* (accessed 09/01/2022).

Alder provided multiple structures and resources to integrate residents into a mentor teacher's classroom as coteachers in a sequenced and supportive manner. For example, residents were expected to teach at least one component of the school day starting on the first day of school to help students recognize the resident as a coteacher. Gradual release documents for each month of the school year provided suggested activities, responsibilities, and foci for residents, mentor teachers, and clinical directors. (See [Clinical Director: LEA-IHE Boundary-Spanner](#) for a description of the role of a clinical director.) Mentor teachers and residents were encouraged to customize the gradual release model to meet individual needs and contexts.

The gradual release model and program structures provided residents with scaffolds and multiple opportunities to build their professional skills and identities as educators. For example, residents received an LEA email and system log-in to help them become familiar with the district's digital infrastructure and to access student records. Residents also interacted with families and caregivers alongside mentor teachers at student conferences, Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, and school events, as well as on digital platforms such as ClassDojo and Parent Square. One Education Specialist resident shared, "I'm constantly contacting parents. ... Parents are worried, and they want to know how their child is doing in their IEP goals and how we are helping them." The technology tools helped residents communicate and schedule meetings with families more effectively: "You can send messages to families, and it'll translate them to Spanish for Spanish-speaking families," added the resident.

Furthermore, residents had ample opportunity to engage and collaborate with other staff within the school community. One resident described her experience of collaborating with a "pretty great" special education team at her placement site:

We meet every Wednesday, since it's a short day for us. The kids go home early, so we have our meetings after school. All members of our [special education] department at our site get together, and if we need to bring in any admin or any general education teacher, they're always willing to come in.

Opportunities to experience and practice the professional responsibilities of a teacher, both including and extending beyond classroom instruction, allowed residents to understand and prepare for the lead teaching roles they will take on following program completion.

Alder's model also included elements designed to develop residents' instructional practice. For example, the program required residents to share all lesson plans with their mentors before leading instruction. Residents and mentors spent at least 2 hour-long time blocks per week in Sacred Meeting Time (SMT) reviewing lesson plans, coplanning future instruction, setting goals, discussing student artifacts, and debriefing on implementation. Every week, mentors documented their residents' growth in a formal observation form in SchoolMint Grow. (See [Feedback and Assessment of Clinical Practice](#) for additional details.) In addition, the gradual release model built in a "takeover day"—a full day when the resident independently leads instruction—at least once per month throughout the fall semester. Takeover days served the dual function of freeing up mentors' time to attend Mentor Seminar while also scaffolding residents' readiness for full takeover weeks during the spring semester.

Integrating Coursework With Clinical Experiences Through Residency Seminars

Each semester, residents participated in Resident Seminar, which took place in person once per week for 3 weeks of every month (mentor teachers meet in their own Mentor Seminar during the fourth week). Seminar goals aligned with California's Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs) and Alder Graduate School of Education's Program Learning Outcomes and Student Learning Outcomes³⁰ and generally served to bridge residents' coursework and clinical experiences, which became increasingly demanding as more instructional responsibilities were released to residents over time. In Resident Seminar, residents identified discontinuities between educational trends, policies, and their classroom experiences; collaboratively analyzed and solved problems around classroom incidents; and learned, developed, and practiced a sequence of high-leverage classroom techniques. The clinical director, who taught Resident Seminar, knew what skills, dispositions, and knowledge were valued by their employer (the partner LEA) and designed the course with activities that supported development in these areas. For example, the clinical director at Monterey Peninsula Unified School District (MPUSD) discussed Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) in a Resident Seminar to increase residents' understanding of this program that was utilized throughout their district. Seminars also exposed residents to LEA partners' rubrics and frameworks for instructional effectiveness, such as the TNTP Core Teaching Rubric.³¹ Resident Seminar provided a dedicated space for residents to share openly about their classroom experiences with their peers. One 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." Numerous residents said that Resident Seminar provided them with indispensable support.

Clinical Director: LEA-IHE Boundary-Spanner

The clinical faculty partner director (clinical director) might "arguably be the most important position in our model, because they serve so many purposes," said Shayna Sullivan, Dean of the Alder Graduate School of Education. Alder supported each cohort of local education agencies (LEAs) to select and hire a clinical director, typically from within their school system, to support their cohort of residents. The high value Alder placed on the role was demonstrated by the fact that it shared almost 25% of tuition dollars with partners to help fund the role. This person had four fundamental responsibilities: (1) serving as the bridge between the Alder Graduate School of Education (GSE) and the partner LEA; (2) recruiting, selecting, and matching residents and mentors; (3) supporting principals, mentors, and residents; and (4) providing support for the edTPA and other assessments required of preservice teachers in the credentialing process. Senior Director of Academic Programs Alexandria Creer Kahn called the clinical director role "the keystone" to each residency partnership.

Clinical directors were employees of the partner LEA, but their positions were funded primarily by Alder's pass-through of tuition dollars to the LEA, an arrangement that helped protect clinical directors' time and resources to support the residency full time. As the main liaison between Alder GSE and the partner LEA(s), the clinical director was knowledgeable about the mission and vision of both organizations and worked to ensure a positive resident and mentor experience. Clinical directors were often longtime LEA employees or former site administrators with management

experience and deep operational and cultural familiarity with the LEA. Although clinical directors were technically LEA employees, they were also considered Alder faculty and thus participated in GSE committees, meetings, and retreats.

Clinical directors hosted information sessions to recruit residency candidates through personal outreach, shepherded them through the application process, and participated in their interviews. Annually, the clinical director worked closely with LEA administrators to identify mentors in the authorization areas sought by each resident in their cohort, a process made easier because of the clinical director's existing relationships with their LEA. This insider knowledge also contributed to a clinical director's ability to make optimal resident–mentor matches.

Much of the work of a clinical director concerned teaching and coaching. Clinical directors taught the Resident and Mentor Seminars (see [Alder Course Highlights](#) for more information), observed and debriefed with residents every 2 to 3 weeks, and acted as the primary go-between for residents and their mentors. Classroom observation visits served the dual purpose of allowing clinical directors to engage in dialogue with residents about their practice while also creating opportunities to coach mentors on how to give feedback. When tensions arose in the clinical setting, clinical directors worked to ascertain the root of the challenge and helped residents and mentors develop productive solutions. For example, the clinical director stepped in to help negotiate placement incompatibility or miscommunication between a resident and mentor. Clinical directors were a one-stop shop for whatever residents need, and they collaborated closely with Alder's Office of Student Services, library, and financial aid office.

During the program, clinical directors also communicated with and supported residents, mentors, and their site principals through orientation meetings and by sending regular reminders of deadlines, logistics, and expectations. They supported residents in meeting their testing requirements and facilitated residents' transitions into the Continuing Cohort when necessary (see [Academic Supports](#) for more information). This support included maintaining a test data tracker to identify residents who might need extra support, connecting residents with tutors when necessary, coordinating study days, and engaging in testing support plan meetings. At the end of the residency year, clinical directors assisted administrators and human resources with the hiring of residency graduates in their LEA. Thomas Newton, Principal in the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District, expressed faith in the recommendations offered by his district's clinical director: "[She's] a former site principal ... and knows what I'm looking for."

Clinical directors were supported by the regional director of their geographic region (i.e., San Francisco Bay Area, Central Valley, and Southern California). These individuals hosted weekly meetings with the clinical directors in their region and cycled through a series of different meeting formats and focal topics over the course of each month. For example, the monthly management-themed meeting addressed administrative and logistical questions and issues. In contrast, the monthly communities of practice meeting provided a space for clinical directors to solve problems with colleagues around coaching and planning Resident Seminars.

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

Feedback and Assessment of Clinical Practice

During the residency year, residents spent 4 full days each week coteaching in a mentor teacher's classroom, during which time mentor teachers provided ongoing feedback and support (see [Mentor Teachers as Clinical Educators](#)). Residents received feedback from their mentors throughout the day and were observed regularly, both informally and formally, by other individuals at their site and the Alder team. For example, site principals informally observed residents at least twice per semester. The clinical director conducted the formal observations required for the teaching credential,³² observing each resident every 2 to 3 weeks. After each observation, the clinical director first “huddled” with the mentor to discuss their observation notes, then continued to observe as the mentor shared that feedback with the resident. Heather Kirkpatrick, President and CEO of Alder, explained the shift from the clinical director providing feedback directly to the resident:

What we learned was, it's so much more powerful if ... the feedback goes to the mentor, and then the mentor to the resident, because that mentor is having such an outsized effect ... it's like a million times more powerful.

Mentor Teachers as Clinical Educators

Alder considered mentor teachers to be the “foundation of our residency model.” Clinical directors worked with the principals of partner schools to nominate mentor teachers and pair residents with mentors in their credentialing area who were a good fit. To support good-fit matches, Alder's mentor–resident matching process involved more than a clinical director matching names on a spreadsheet. Residents completed a personality quiz, which the clinical director used to find several potential mentor matches. Residents then had a virtual meeting with each potential mentor and had the opportunity to observe the potential mentor in the classroom. Meeting and observing the mentors gave residents a chance to not only observe a mentor's teaching style but also see if they connected on a personal level. One resident described her experience:

I got the chance to go and observe three mentors. The way I chose my mentor as my number-one choice was the way the mentor approached me as I walked in the classroom. ... It was that warm welcome that [made me think], “OK, I want to be here.” I'm not saying that the other teachers are bad teachers, but it was that warm welcome that [helped me choose my mentor].

Alder's clinical directors supported all school partners in a rigorous mentor selection process that required an application and strong recommendations from site leaders. Using a mentor guidance document adapted from the National Center for Teacher Residencies' Black Educator Initiative work and tailored to the Alder context, clinical directors connected with local education agency (LEA) leadership and prospective mentors about essential competencies beyond the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) requirements for mentorship that help preservice teachers of marginalized identities thrive and align with Alder program values. Key competencies included:

- committing to equity and inclusion and the enactment of high-quality instruction;
- initiating, developing, and maintaining effective relationships with residents that center around a whole adult approach for resident development;

- utilizing coaching, feedback, and goal-setting to develop residents' skills; and
- developing strong equity-focused practices in their residents.

Mentors received a stipend from their respective LEAs for their yearlong work with an Alder resident, ranging from \$2,000 to \$5,000 depending on the LEA. The Monterey Peninsula Unified School District mentor stipend (\$5,000) was supplemented by a CTC Teacher Residency Grant in the 2022–23 year. Superintendent PK Diffenbaugh noted that this was “a much higher stipend than what we’ve [offered] in the past because it’s a bigger commitment. ... This is not the sign-off-on-documents type of mentor. This is a much higher level of investment.”

Mentors were evaluated annually and participated in ongoing professional learning to develop the mentoring competencies. Like residents, mentors attended their own Mentor Seminar, a monthly mandatory in-person professional development session hosted by Alder clinical faculty. Mentor Seminar occurred during the school day, and the resident took over instruction in the mentor’s absence. These meetings brought together mentor teachers in the same LEA to discuss how to better integrate Alder’s coursework and the state performance requirements into their residents’ clinical experiences, among other topics. They met in smaller groups to solve site-specific issues, elevate lessons learned, and share best practices.

Alder mentors were also expected to engage in further self-guided learning and development outside of the Mentor Seminar, particularly during the takeover days and weeks during which residents independently led classroom instruction. Suggested areas of focus included studying effective coaching approaches, participating in action research, attending meetings with policymakers, learning another language, or attending webinars on technology integration. This commitment to their ongoing development appears to have a strong effect on teacher retention and growth in the profession, according to data from Alder’s annual end-of-year Mentor Feedback Survey.

Residents described mentors as a critical part of their learning and residency experience. One resident explained, “My mentor has always been there. Any question I have, she is always responding.” She continued, “She’s been very helpful and is always checking up on me.” Another resident shared:

My mentor has been super supportive. He’s always there, available, and he’ll text me to see if I need anything. One of the biggest ways that I’ve learned from him is just observing him. The first couple weeks when we had behavioral issues, he’d pull the student out, and I just would watch him very quickly defuse the situation and was able to see the way he did it. It was really student-focused, which I thought was really interesting.

Sources: Alder Graduate School of Education. (2024). [Mentor professional education program](#); Learning Policy Institute analysis of program documents and interviews. (2024).

Residents also received feedback from a program supervisor, a content specialist employed in the resident’s LEA and recommended by the clinical director. Program supervisors were hired by Alder as part-time and seasonal adjunct faculty on an as-needed basis, depending on the number of residents in each content area. Program supervisors conducted at least six on-site observations of their residents’ teaching during the spring semester and participated in the May resident evaluation session. They

provided in-depth feedback to the resident as an LEA representative and senior colleague with expertise in the same subject area and/or grade level as the resident. Supervisors also offered timely support for residents as they fulfilled their subject-specific teaching performance assessment requirements. All supervisors participated in an orientation, attended two professional development sessions led by Alder faculty, and communicated closely with the clinical director to ensure that the feedback they gave residents aligned with the residency's materials, values, and approach.

When the clinical director's content expertise matched the resident's credential area, the clinical director may serve as the resident's program supervisor, which eliminated the need for an additional observer. For example, MPUSD's clinical director was a credentialed education specialist. According to Alder's Senior Director of Academic Programs, Alexandra Creer Kahn, this individual's "unique credentials, experience, and qualifications" positioned them as "clinical faculty, fieldwork coursework instructor, supervisor, and program supervisor" for candidates seeking teaching authorizations in special education. Clinical directors' deep understanding of Alder's approach to preparation and their relationships with key Alder and LEA staff allowed for the delivery of coaching and feedback that integrated into other program elements. Furthermore, the clinical director had the opportunity to modify the focus in the Resident Seminar in response to their observations of residents' clinical practice and based on the gradual release model.

The clinical assessment process, called the Alder Resident Evaluation (ARE), was educative and designed to help scaffold residents' growth. Three formal ARE observations took place in November, February, and May on takeover days when residents taught on their own. Clinical directors attended all three ARE sessions, while mentor teachers attended the first session, site principals attended the second session, and program supervisors attended the third session.

The mandatory classroom observations and ARE sessions gave site administrators opportunities to provide early feedback to future employees and colleagues. For one experienced mentor who has supported numerous preservice and novice teachers, Alder's ARE meetings stand out: "The principal, [the clinical director], and I ... all work together to decide where [the resident is] on the continuum and what [their] goals would be. That kind of collaboration, involving every stakeholder, is really valuable."

Finally, Alder used a documentation platform called SchoolMint Grow to facilitate and record observations and coaching feedback transparently and collaboratively among a resident and their entire support team. Residents' lesson plans, notes, videos, bell schedules, seating charts, and feedback, as well as their students' Individualized Education Programs, were all uploaded to the platform. Formal and informal feedback from observations, including ARE session documentation, was accessible through the platform as well.

Recruitment and Admissions Process

Alder's strong commitment to providing high-touch support and promoting equity was demonstrated in various ways throughout the recruitment and admissions process.

Recruitment

Alder focused on recruiting candidates who have been historically marginalized into the teaching profession, including candidates of color and candidates from less affluent communities. By including a master's degree in the residency program, Alder further elevated the earning potential of graduates who might not otherwise have access to an advanced degree program. According to Heather Kirkpatrick, Alder President and CEO, on average, residents nearly double their pre-program income once they graduate and are hired as certified teachers with master's degrees. According to Kirkpatrick, this is a powerful workforce development pathway that not only supports an income earnings leap but also shifts generational wealth. She described Alder's residency program as, at its core, community workforce development:

On average, residents nearly double their pre-program income once they graduate and are hired as certified teachers with master's degrees.

[T]his has to be deeply understood about the residency model, particularly if you care about equity, diversity, and inclusion. Because the people who are going to diversify your local [transitional kindergarten]–12 school systems are the people who live in those communities, [and the challenge is] figuring out how to invite them in and set them up for success to be excellent teachers.

Accordingly, during its recruitment, Alder had a special focus on individuals already working in local schools, such as substitute teachers, paraprofessionals, instructional aides, after-school support providers, and other classified staff. One resident shared how this intentionality in program design and the recruitment process made a career in teaching accessible for her: "I wanted to become a teacher, but the process was pretty hard, so I spent 2 years working in the Bay Area at an elementary school doing literacy intervention." This resident was drawn to Alder because it offered her the ability to earn a credential and a master's degree in 1 year while working "hands-on in one classroom the whole year."

Alder's outreach took place in a variety of ways but was typically coordinated by the local education agency's (LEA) clinical director, an individual who served as a bridge between Alder and the LEA. (See [Clinical Director: LEA–IHE Boundary-Spanner](#) for further description of this role.) Clinical directors shared informational flyers or informational QR codes with substitute teachers and other classified staff that they met while visiting school sites. Program information was also circulated in professional spaces outside of school; for example, one Alder graduate first heard about the program while participating in a grant-funded group for classified employees interested in furthering their education.

In other cases, the clinical director may receive a list of potential candidates for outreach, or classified staff in Alder-affiliated LEAs may refer colleagues who have expressed interest in pursuing certification to the clinical director, as was the case for one resident who had only recently moved back to her hometown of Monterey when she first heard about the program.

I started working as an instructional aide for a special education class, and I just, you know, communicated with the staff to let them know about my future goals. ... They connected me with ... the Alder director here at [Monterey Peninsula Unified School District], so I got in contact with her. She explained what Alder was and what they do. And so ... one thing led to another, and then I was doing the application and just communicating back and forth with the [clinical director].

After the initial outreach, the clinical director typically served as the point of contact for interested candidates³³ and helped individuals understand that they have the ability, both intellectually and financially, to complete the program and become a teacher. The same resident who heard about the program after returning to her hometown of Monterey noted that, as she considered the program, her “biggest concern was financial aid.” Her school’s clinical director explained available grant and scholarship opportunities that could make the program more affordable. The resident shared that the clinical director’s willingness to support her through her deliberation and application “really sold me on the program.” Alder recruiters provide support, in a variety of capacities, to clinical directors during all phases of recruitment, enacting Alder’s signature high-touch, equity-centered approach.

Alder focused on recruiting people from the communities surrounding the schools where they partner and aimed to “really help [prospective residents] through the application process.” This approach to recruitment and admissions helped Alder achieve a high acceptance rate. Alder has intentionally revamped its admissions process over time to remove common barriers and to elicit applicant competencies that are central to successful program completion. This intentionality can be seen in the requirements for application, which included a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited institution completed by the end of June prior to beginning the program; eligibility to work in the United States; and a preferred GPA of 3.0 or higher for the last 60 semester units or 90 quarter units.³⁴ Applicants with a GPA between 2.0 and 3.0 could still be considered for admission depending on their individual circumstances, an accommodation that acknowledged the challenge of balancing school with other responsibilities, particularly during times of hardship, and the understanding that GPA is not a measure of an applicant’s potential.

Admissions Process

The admissions process began with an online residency application that required a résumé and a personal statement of between 250 and 500 words. As discussed earlier, the requirements of this basic application removed the barriers of having to obtain and submit multiple documents or composing a long essay in English, making this initial step and entry into the applicant pool much less of a hurdle. Based on these materials, applicants were screened, with careful attention given to their writing and motivation, and then were invited to participate in an interview that was conducted jointly with representatives from both Alder and the partner LEA.

In Step 2, the interview, applicants discussed an article they read prior to the interview that examined a critical issue related to race and then delivered a demonstration lesson. Both of these components align with Alder's core values and mission. The article discussion helped the Alder team gauge an applicant's willingness to engage in challenging conversations around themes of anti-racism, anti-bias, identity, and equity, and it also signaled to applicants that equity-focused content is a defining characteristic of the program.

Alder's demonstration lesson, a common part of the application process for teacher residencies, was unique because it built in a feedback aspect: Applicants delivered their lesson, received feedback, revised their lesson, and then delivered the lesson a second time. Kirkpatrick explained the importance of seeing how an applicant responds to feedback: "One of the aspects of a residency is they are getting so much feedback, and if people can't handle feedback, they're not going to be happy in the program." One resident shared that planning and implementing the demonstration lesson was "really scary." She explained, "I didn't feel confident in my English ... and I'm from a very different background in marketing and advertisement. I didn't know how to do [a lesson plan]. It was hard, even with help ... and it was hard to get the feedback." But residents recognized that the process was designed to "see if you are teachable, if you [are] coachable."

For applicants who have limited experience with lesson planning, and in line with its high-touch approach, Alder provided coaching around the design and implementation of the initial demonstration lesson. Coaching could also include sharing information on how to interview effectively. This coaching helped ensure that applicants felt well prepared for their interview day. The support and feedback aspects of the interview could level the playing field and built equity into the admissions process by allowing applicants who have less background experience in planning and implementing lessons to demonstrate their ability and willingness to incorporate coaching and feedback to improve. The offering of support and feedback also signaled a growth mindset approach that recognized that the status of such skills at program entry does not reflect an applicant's potential to be an excellent teacher.

In Step 3, once applicants were selected for conditional acceptance based on the interview process, they then submitted their undergraduate transcripts for admission to the graduate school. This process, which may seem backward to many, was intended to further reduce barriers. Traditionally, applicants spend time and money requesting and submitting official transcripts on the front end of the process, before they get to the interview phase. In Alder's model, applicants were told about the admission requirements before they applied to the residency and engaged in an interview, but they were not required to submit transcripts until after they know they have been accepted. In addition, the clinical director may assist applicants in navigating the process of obtaining official transcripts. This additional assistance could be critical for some residents, as getting access to transcripts can be a significant barrier as shared by one resident: "The hard part for me during the application was getting a transcript from my bachelor's college," which extended the time it took for her to submit a complete application.

This process not only provided support and more time for applicants to collect the necessary documentation but also could save applicants money if they determined that the program was not a good fit based on the interview experience. Furthermore, this approach tacitly upends the traditional privileging of prior academic achievement in program admissions, a practice that tends to favor socioeconomically advantaged individuals. Instead, the application process focused first on applicants' equity orientation, growth mindset, and the ability to use feedback productively.

Resident Supports

Once residents were enrolled, Alder provided a suite of supports to ensure residents had everything they needed to graduate. Alder’s “high-touch, whole adult” mentality has been shaped by the institution’s mission to create pathways into the teaching profession for populations that have been historically marginalized. In accordance with this mission, the residency pathway served a racially and socioeconomically diverse student body. Alder recognized that the financial precarity experienced by many of its residents—more than half of whom are Pell Grant recipients and first-generation college graduates—constituted a potential barrier to their ability to access and complete a graduate-level degree.

Iván Ibarra Mora, Managing Director of Student Services at Alder, explained, “[The residency] is really rigorous, and it can be really draining. We don’t want [residents] to be burned out before they get in the classroom.” With the goal of minimizing barriers to the greatest extent possible, Alder has invested heavily in its Office of Student Services (OSS). The OSS, in collaboration with each cohort’s clinical director, proactively worked to address the specific challenges faced by Alder residents and connected students with a robust network of supports, including financial, food, housing, health care, academic, social, and hiring supports. (See [Clinical Director: LEA–IHE Boundary-Spanner](#).) For example, 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.

Once residents were aware of these supports, the OSS could offer assistance with accessing them.

Upon admission to Alder, each resident was assigned a Student Services advisor through the OSS. This advisor served as the resident’s point of contact within the OSS for the duration of the resident’s 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 time their advisor discussed the potential needs identified by the intake survey, informed residents of resources provided by Alder, and helped connect residents with resources available through external organizations (see [Table 5](#)).

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.

For all residents, part of this meeting was spent checking the status of their financial aid and ensuring that they were aware of all available aid options. If residents were eligible for grants or scholarships, the OSS helped them with the application processes. The overarching goal of these meetings, Ibarra Mora shared, was always to “identify any potential barriers and to start developing a plan to mitigate them.” Follow-up meetings were scheduled on an as-needed basis.

Current residents have described the OSS, particularly the financial aid branch, as highly responsive and helpful: “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.” [Table 5](#) provides a summary of supports offered by Alder or through referrals to community-based organizations.

Stipend and Other Financial Support

The cost to attend for Alder’s residency pathway for the 2022–23 school year was estimated at \$56,710.³⁵ This figure included tuition and fees (\$21,930; the only portion that Alder collects directly); books and supplies (\$600); food, housing, transportation, and miscellaneous personal expenses (\$32,741); and all credential-related testing costs, application fees, and tuberculosis test/fingerprinting (Live Scan) fees (\$1,439). During the 2022–23 academic year, 96% of residents accessed some form of financial aid through grants, scholarships, and loans.

Alder estimated that approximately 70% of students received need-based tuition support from the Graduate School of Education in amounts that typically ranged from \$3,000 to \$10,000. Residents had access to additional tuition support through Golden State Teacher Grants (up to \$20,000); the Cal Grant Teaching Credential Program (1-year renewal of undergraduate Cal Grant); federal Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grants (up to \$5,658); external scholarships; and federal loans (up to \$55,000). California’s Golden State Teacher Grants, in particular, have been a game changer for Alder’s residents. According to Alder President and CEO Heather Kirkpatrick, the grant has increased “[residents’] ability to say yes to joining the program” and allowed them to graduate with a lower debt load. Between 2018–19 and 2022–2023, 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 taken fell from \$27,000 to \$10,000. Alder’s OSS ensured that residents applied for all of the state grants and other financial aid for which they were eligible. Ibarra Mora reported that as of 2022–2023, 85% of Alder residents accessed Golden State Teacher Grants. A contributing factor to this high rate of uptake may be the one-on-one support provided through OSS to make sure that residents complete the grant application.

Residents receive support to cover living expenses through stipends provided by Alder’s LEA partners. Depending on the LEA, stipends range from \$12,000 to \$37,000. (See [LEA Contributions](#) for more information on stipends.³⁶) Residents and former residents described the stipend as key to their decision to attend Alder. One program graduate shared, “I have a family of four, so it was really important that I still had something and that I was still able to contribute to my household. That was an important factor in my decision-making.” PK Diffenbaugh, Monterey Peninsula Unified School District Superintendent, emphasized that “if you’re not able to offer a stipend, that’s going to cut off so many of the prospective teachers who you really want: your aides, your after-school providers. ... So I think the stipend is really important.” With the increase of the stipend to \$37,000, Diffenbaugh saw a jump in residency applicants from between 30 and 40 applicants to more than 100.

OSS also provided region-specific resource directories that informed residents about available state and local supports.³⁷ Guides included a list of community resources such as free child care and parenting support, discounted mobile phone services, low-cost insurance, CalFresh, and food banks. CalFresh

(known at the federal level as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) is a particularly important resource, given that 46% of Alder residents experience food insecurity.³⁸ OSS helped enroll residents in CalFresh by providing verification of enrollment and assisting with income documentation.

Additionally, Alder maintained a Compelling Needs Fund of approximately \$50,000 that was earmarked to support urgent financial needs, such as when a resident’s car has broken down. This fund has been developed through philanthropic fundraising in response to school leadership’s understanding that the Alder student population does not always have the financial “wiggle room” to absorb these setbacks, which can be majorly destabilizing for a student. The fund has grown in recent years in response to student need and OSS’s desire to help students pay for pre-enrollment requirements, such as basic skills and content competency testing (covered by the state from July 2022 through June 2024³⁹), tuberculosis tests, and Live Scan fingerprinting fees. Requests to the fund were evaluated by a committee, and students typically received a response within 48 hours, according to Ibarra Mora. The committee took into account requestors’ financial aid package, whether funds would mitigate the resident’s need (i.e., whether it is a one-time need or ongoing need that aid would only solve temporarily), and whether the need could be supported through other internal or external resources. During the 2022–23 academic year, Alder distributed Compelling Needs funds to 139 residents, averaging \$295 per resident. [Table 4](#) provides a summary of the financial supports that Alder residents can access.

Table 4. Financial Supports for Residents

Source	Average amount	Percentage of residents receiving financial support	Weighted average amounts
Local education agency resident stipend	\$25,000	100%	\$25,000
Golden State Teacher Grant	\$20,000	85%	\$17,000
Federal TEACH Grant	\$4,000	70%	\$2,800
Cal Grant	\$11,000	10%	\$1,100
Alder scholarships	\$5,000	50%	\$2,500
Alder supplemental supports (e.g., testing fees)	\$400	100%	\$400
Alder Compelling Needs Fund	\$295	43%	\$127
Federal loans	\$10,000	26%	\$2,600
Total weighted average			\$51,527

Sources: Learning Policy Institute analysis of program documents and interviews. (2024); Personal communication with Heather Kirkpatrick, President and CEO of Alder Graduate School of Education. (2023, April 18).

Housing, Health Care, and Other Basic Needs

Residents were responsible for securing their own housing. Many residents reported that they lived with family, parents, or a partner during the program, but for those without such arrangements, finding affordable housing can be a major challenge. One resident described it as “the biggest obstacle” she had faced while participating in the residency due to the cost of renting in her placement region. Alder shared resources and supports designed to connect residents with affordable options, including resource documents with apartment-hunting tips and lists of regional housing resources such as CHISPA in Salinas, CA, which provided housing for low-income families.⁴⁰ Residents could also complete a Housing Supports Form that alerted OSS to individual housing needs and could be used to connect residents with potential roommates. Alder also had community partner organizations (e.g., Central Valley Low Income Housing Corporation in Stockton, CA⁴¹) that could provide emergency rent assistance to prevent residents from losing their housing.

Alder gave residents access to no-cost, 24/7 telehealth care for medical questions, mental health, and health coaching through TimelyCare.⁴² Through this service, residents are eligible for up to six no-cost counseling sessions, and they could access three additional visits through an Employee Assistance Program. When required, additional sessions could be accommodated on a case-by-case basis through the OSS. Residents could also access 24/7 text messaging and peer online wellness support. OSS also helped connect students with low-cost insurance through Covered California,⁴³ as well as with free medical, mental health, and dental services through free community-based clinics.

The efforts of Alder’s OSS to provide or connect residents with wraparound supports was part of its whole person approach to teacher preparation. Alder assisted residents with finding support for a range of additional needs, including Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and citizenship services, as well as support for students who identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Cohort as Community

The cohort model provided additional social supports for residents. By having residents begin their coursework in June, before they separated for their clinical placements, Alder helped establish a strong sense of cohort community and trust among the residents who lived and worked in the same region. The residency’s cohort model offered additional social support to residents, and the program design facilitated the development of resident comradery. The first event following residents’ acceptance into the program was a meet-and-greet with other residents in their cohort. Residents reported that they appreciated this early opportunity to connect with their peers because, as one resident explained, “When I came the first day [of class], I already knew people.”

Thereafter, the intensive program structure offered ample opportunities for relationship development and mutual support. Residents identified their summer coursework as a key time for building relationships: “We were together every single day in the summer, so it’s like we’re all getting close now. ... They just give you lots of opportunity to talk about the reading and opportunities to get in different groups.” Another resident described her cohort members as a source of solace because they are “going through the same thing” and can understand the challenges, frustrations, and joys of the intensive residency experience in ways that other family members and friends might not. “We

have our own group chat,” another resident shared, “and we’re constantly texting each other ... and the comfort that we have to ask questions outside of our seminar or outside of our work site is great. I know I can text the group and someone will answer me.” Another resident added, “It’s a really close group of people, and we know each other, and we hang out to finish work or just to have a good time.” Additionally, for students who identify as members of marginalized communities and wanted to connect with similarly situated colleagues outside of their home cohort, Alder facilitated affinity groups for students of similar identities.

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

Academic Supports

Alder supported all residents in meeting high academic expectations by providing access to academic supports such as tutoring and test preparation. Course instructors offered a first layer of support to students by making themselves available by email and often sharing their personal phone numbers. Residents described faculty as responsive and said they get their “questions answered pretty quickly.” Much of the formal academic support available to residents, however, was delivered through Alder’s library services. Alder’s part-time librarian supported residents with graduate-level reading, writing, and research by offering informational webinars, workshops, and personalized consultations, which residents reported to be “pretty helpful.” The librarian also assisted residents with test preparation, as do other members of the OSS team.

Managing Director of Student Services Ibarra Mora acknowledged that “testing has been a huge barrier” for Alder residents, but Alder focused intentionally on providing supports to reduce the impacts of this barrier. Unlike many other teacher preparation programs, Alder did not require candidates to have met the California credentialing Basic Skills Requirement prior to program admission, a design choice that was adopted to make the program more accessible. Instead, residents must meet the Basic Skills Requirement prior to beginning their field placement, which may involve taking the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST). Additionally, residents must fulfill the Subject Matter Competency requirement before registering for spring courses, which many students accomplished by passing one or more California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET). Alder had an attrition rate of approximately 10% and reported that residents’ difficulty passing all required CSETs was the “primary reason for resident attrition from the program.”⁴⁴

However, Alder may begin to see a drop in the number of residents who have difficulty meeting these requirements, thanks to 2021 California legislation that allowed for alternative ways for teachers to demonstrate basic skills and subject matter competence.⁴⁵ The Alder Office of Enrollment and Credentialing reviewed all residents’ transcripts to determine whether Basic Skills and Subject Matter Competency requirements have been met through coursework to minimize the number of tests residents need to take.

The information gleaned from these transcript reviews has informed the development of new strategies to support residents in meeting requirements that include testing. Alder staff found that out of the residents who did not meet the Basic Skills or Subject Matter Competency requirements through their previous

coursework, nearly 60% were short by only a single course. By creating an opportunity for residents to supplement this missing coursework, the university hoped to further reduce the barrier that testing represents by enabling more residents to meet credentialing requirements through coursework.

During the 2023–24 academic year, the university initiated a partnership with Hartnell College to allow Alder residents to enroll in courses that would count toward credentialing requirements, with tuition reimbursed by Alder. Ibarra Mora noted that the university will continue to explore whether this strategy is “a viable option to address the barriers testing causes for students, particularly those with testing anxiety and multilingual students,” and he anticipated that about 50% of Alder residents who would otherwise need testing to meet Basic Skills or Subject Matter Competency requirements would be able to meet them by enrolling in a course at Hartnell.

For those residents who opt to meet requirements through testing, Alder attempted to minimize the testing barrier by offering residents a wide variety of test preparation resources, including:

- weekly testing office hours to address general testing questions,
- study groups from March through June,
- loaner CBEST and CSET study books,
- no-cost online tutoring services,
- library database and test preparation resources, and
- discounts and credits to use for a variety of other test preparation websites and in-person courses.⁴⁶

Residents who had difficulty passing their exams were placed on a Testing Support Plan that helped them set aside time during their clinical placement hours to study for exams.

Residents who did not complete their Subject Matter Competency requirements prior to the start of spring semester become part of the Continuing Cohort and extended their program timeline from 12 months to 18 months. They continued to progress with a reduced course load during spring semester but completed their second semester of clinical placement the following fall (pending successful completion of CSET requirements).⁴⁷ In the intervening time, Continuing Cohort residents typically maintained a working relationship with their placement LEA as either a substitute or paraprofessional, but they did not receive their resident stipend. Historically, approximately 80% of residents complete the program in 1 year and 88% complete it in 2 years with additional time and support through the Continuing Cohort. Alongside their work and coursework, Continuing Cohort members also benefited from increased testing support. One program alumna who participated in the Continuing Cohort described weekly check-ins by Alder staff to make sure she could access all available testing resources and additional weekly in-person test preparation meetings with a representative from her district. Continuing Cohort was also an option for students with other extenuating circumstances besides incomplete testing.

Table 5. Resources Provided by Alder or Through Referral to External Organizations

Resident need	Alder resources	External resources
Tuition support	Need-based Alder scholarships; external resource application assistance	Golden State Teacher Grants; Cal Grant Teaching Credential Program; federal Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grants; private scholarships; federal loans
Food	N/A	CalFresh; regional food banks
Housing	Support finding roommates	Affordable regional housing agencies
Health care and wellness	24/7 telehealth; up to nine no-cost counseling sessions; 24/7 texting and online wellness support	Covered California; regional free clinics for medical, mental health, and dental services
Testing or academic support	Testing office hours and study groups; California Basic Educational Skills Test and California Subject Examinations for Teachers study books available for loan; no-cost online tutoring services; library database and test preparation resources; discounts and credits to use for other test preparation websites and in-person courses	N/A
Child care	N/A	Affordable child care options; regional referral agencies; parent resources such as hotlines for stress counseling
Urgent needs	Compelling Needs Fund	Regional charities; California's Low Cost Automobile Insurance; California LifeLine Program; unemployment benefits

Sources: California Department of Insurance. (2019). [California's Low Cost Auto Insurance](#); California Public Utilities Commission. (2024). [Welcome to California LifeLine](#); Learning Policy Institute analysis of program documents and interviews. (2024).

Partnerships

Strong partnerships with a shared vision are the foundation of the residency model and essential to Alder's growth. Alex Caram, Alder's Senior Director of Strategy, explained, "In order to scale, you've got to find partners, and you've got to keep those partners, and those partners need to really believe in the program and invest in the program and make it their own." By the 2022–23 academic year—13 years after its launch—Alder had expanded beyond Aspire Public Schools to partner with 47 other public school districts, public charter schools, county offices of education, and a Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA).

Alder's deep local education agency (LEA) partnerships were based on explicit agreements and expectations set through a written partnership agreement that was often approved by the LEA board and signed by the LEA's superintendent or other designated contact. The agreement covered a time frame that is agreed upon by the LEA, with renewals as appropriate. According to the template agreement, LEA partners were expected to participate in program administration, provide qualified mentor teachers, offer substitute teaching permits for residents, engage in marketing and promotion of the program, assist with the recruitment and selection of residents, and hire residents who successfully complete the program as vacancies permit. In addition, the agreement outlined expectations around data sharing and engaging in "collaborative conversations to establish a shared understanding of effective teaching" to promote alignment between what residents learn in their coursework and what they experience in their clinical experiences.⁴⁸

Alder has become more strategic and courageous over time in building partnerships. Since becoming an independent entity in 2015, Alder actively sought out partner LEAs, approaching potential partner LEAs within nearby communities as well as through staff and board member connections. Caram shared that Alder engaged in "a whole lot of outreach, trying a variety of different sources to get those introductions," and that it has tried a variety of engagement strategies to get LEAs on board. During that time, she continued:

Alder would partner with any system that was interested and aligned to our mission. Even if they only needed two residents, we would figure out how to combine cohorts in order to make it work because we wanted a strong proof point in a variety of systems.

Over the years, Alder has built a "word-of-mouth reputation" and California's Teacher Residency Grant Program has created more interest in residencies, so LEAs were now approaching Alder. This increased interest has allowed Alder to be more intentional about the LEAs with which it partners and to spend more energy on alignment of values and goals as well as financial sustainability. Caram explained:

We have a clear vision for our model, and we believe in what we do. ... We have our learning outcomes, and they are very much grounded in equity, social justice, and culturally, developmentally responsive education. And if an LEA is not ready for that, then we are not a good partner for them.

Prior to signing a partnership agreement, Alder and LEAs engaged in conversations with various constituents across both organizations to explore the alignment of goals for the program, values and priorities across organizations, and the commitment to a collaborative partnership. (See [Alder's Partnership-Building Process](#).) Monterey Peninsula Unified School District (MPUSD) Superintendent PK

Diffenbaugh 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.” For MPUSD, Diffenbaugh explained:

There’s a lot of alignment. Number one is a commitment to high quality. Two would be a commitment to equity [that is] really about training educators who have the knowledge, skills, and mindset to disrupt the status quo. ... Three would be a commitment to quality programming and continuous improvement. ... [Fourth] is the commitment to diverse teachers and to have teachers who better reflect our student population.

Because this alignment between goals and values is so crucial for a strong partnership, development work was a multiphase process requiring multiple conversations that “show where we are aligned, where we’re ready to run, where there may be challenges, or where we need to fortify the partnership to make sure that it can operate,” Caram said. This process included discussing financials from the beginning.

Another key first step was for the partner to identify and hire a clinical director, typically someone with deep roots in the LEA. The partner’s clinical director managed most residency-related responsibilities within the LEA, including resident and mentor recruitment, the interview process, onboarding, mentor–resident matches, and program-year support and professional development, in addition to managing relationships and communication with placement site principals. (See [Clinical Director: LEA–IHE Boundary-Spanner](#) for more on this role.) Clinical directors, who functioned as boundary-spanners between Alder and each partner LEA, had deep understandings of both the Alder instructional program and the organizational cultures and processes of partner LEAs, and they helped ensure alignment between both sides of the partnership.

At the beginning of each year, clinical directors met with principals to share Alder’s expectations for residents. During the school year, directors aimed to meet with principals on a quarterly basis to discuss residents and hiring. On a cohort-by-cohort basis, directors may make slight changes to Alder programming based on the practices adopted within residents’ placement LEAs. For instance, Lena Anthony, clinical director for Aspire Bay Area, described collaborating with site principals “to make sure that [Alder] lesson planning protocols and processes are aligned” with the lesson planning protocols at the school site. Clinical directors were also active during the hiring process. During hiring season, Sarah Hudson, clinical director for MPUSD, attended monthly meetings to help match graduating residents with open positions.

Heather Kirkpatrick, President and CEO of Alder, met at least annually with each partner LEA superintendent or executive director to present LEA-specific data on the impact of the residency. Alder regularly collected data from residents, principals, and mentor teachers through surveys and reported outcomes disaggregated by resident demographics. Kirkpatrick also presented Alder’s program completion and LEA hiring rates, recruitment strategies and outcomes, and forecasts for future years. (See [Continuous Improvement](#) for more information on Alder’s annual data collection.) Diffenbaugh shared, “[Alder] is very data-oriented, very into continuous improvement, using data to inform their programming. ... Heather sits down with me and my team once a year and they break down the data.” He said that he values how Alder “brings data to the table” and “tracks their values in a way that not everyone does.”

This annual check-in meeting grounded the partnership with a review of Alder’s mission, vision, and values and how they aligned with partner LEA goals. This process of making LEA-specific residency impacts explicit and connecting them to the LEA’s goals was critical to ongoing partnership and cohesion so that residents were trained with a community’s context in mind.

Alder's Partnership-Building Process

Partnerships build over time and require patience, persistence, responsiveness, and flexibility. The first step to building a partnership is to identify the “right people” in the possible partner local education agency (LEA) who can envision the potential of a residency and help garner approval for the residency from their cabinet, board, and unions. This step can be easy, as in the case of an LEA representative who approaches Alder first, but in other cases it can be a challenge because every district operates and is organized differently, so the “right person” can vary from LEA to LEA. For example, in some LEAs, the key contact could be a superintendent or a director in human resources. This variation in key contacts often required that Alder’s team speak with several people before finding the appropriate person in a given LEA.

Once Alder has established an initial connection with the key contact, the next step is to make connections and build relationships within the LEA, which can require patience and persistence. The LEA helps identify additional people whose support for the partnership is critical, such as academic department leads, human resources leads, the superintendent, and union representatives. This phase of the process can move very quickly but can also be challenging due to timing and LEA infrastructure. Alex Caram, Senior Director of Strategy (formerly Managing Director of Strategy and Partnerships) at Alder, shared:

There are times you get introduced to the right person at the right time, and they can move really fast. We’ve also had a number of potential partners who we’ll talk to and the timing is not right—so patience is a large part of it. We’ll often come back months later with a warm, “How’s it going? You want to pick up the conversation again?”

The contact person plays a crucial role in advocating for the residency and partnership with key interest holders. For example, in the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District, Superintendent PK Diffenbaugh played that role. He shared:

We were strategic from the beginning. ... We sat down with our union president and laid out how [the residency] would benefit potential future members and got their buy-in and support from the very beginning. ... We sat down with our board president and vice president and outlined this partnership. It did take the superintendent and cabinet to say this is something we want to do. It helped that it was aligned with board goals, with what we are hearing in our Local Control and Accountability Plan meetings, so it wasn’t hard for us to make the case, because our community was already making the case for this.

Once the partnership is established, maintaining it requires constant work that hinges on relationships. “K–12 systems are all unique and changing all the time,” noted Caram, so Alder is responsive and flexible to “flow with those partnerships.” Hence, Alder had a senior director of partnerships who is critical to maintaining existing partnerships and pursuing new partnerships while trying to project growth between 3 and 5 years in advance.

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

Organizational Structure and Culture

At Alder, a key organizational value is collaboration. The Alder team was a tightly knit and highly coordinated group in which each member's perspective and experience were valued. Multiple regular meetings, each with a different purpose, created what President and CEO Heather Kirkpatrick calls "healthy systems for connections" to build relationships and make cohesive decisions throughout Alder. For example, the Connecting Team (composed of nine senior leaders) met biweekly to bring together leaders with different roles across the organization. Kirkpatrick herself met individually with members of the leadership team weekly. These "rituals" of collaboration helped ensure that every person in the Alder community stayed abreast of organization-wide goals and priorities and could contribute to the team's collective action. "I think we're very intentional about the relationships, the rituals, the human connection," said Kirkpatrick.

These "rituals" of collaboration helped ensure that every person in the Alder community stayed abreast of organization-wide goals and priorities and could contribute to the team's collective action.

These ritualized meeting times reflected and helped instantiate Alder's core value of collaboration. "If you don't make explicit time for it, it feels like it's not part of your job," Kirkpatrick explained about several recent initiatives, including the revision of the residency's Program Learning Outcomes. "At Alder, we're saying, 'All of this is really part of all of our jobs.'" Hence, each team met regularly, typically weekly, and cross-team collaborations were also scheduled to ensure a coordinated and supportive experience for residents throughout the program.

Alder's board of directors and executive team were also part of these collaboration routines. The board of directors included 14 external members who have diverse experience in board governance, finance, legal counsel, education policy, teacher preparation, higher education, K-12 schools, and philanthropy. The board met quarterly as a group, as well as in separate committee meetings with four distinct areas of responsibility: academic affairs, annual organizational audits, finance and business management, and governance. Board directives were implemented by Alder's executive team, which included Kirkpatrick in addition to the dean; the chief operations officer (COO); the chief financial officer (CFO); and the chief diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) officer. Dean Shayna Sullivan oversaw the faculty assembly; the COO and CFO managed 27 staff members across the student services, recruitment and admissions, human resources, strategic planning, investment (i.e., fiduciary matters), and data management teams; and the chief DEIB officer provided guidance on DEI-related matters throughout the organization.

Two in-person retreats each year enabled all Alder faculty and staff to connect with one another. Kirkpatrick also hosted monthly optional "Aldergether" sessions (pronounced "all together"), which were Zoom town halls in which residency-related updates and highlights were shared with everyone, including staff, residents, and mentor teachers. In monthly professional development meetings hosted by the chief DEIB officer, individuals across the residency discussed DEI-related topics. In addition, all Alder personnel participated in a book club in which they read and discussed two different books each year that address themes involving DEI, culture, intersectionality, and/or anti-racism. Sullivan summarized these efforts:

It is an iterative process. I mean, we continuously have these conversations. ... There is an idea that if someone has a marginalized identity, that ... they [have] arrived [or] that there isn't work to do. I think one of the important things that we do as an organization, and also in our coursework, is to think about how do all of us show up in a way that is culturally responsive, sustaining, that is inclusive ... so that we can graduate candidates who are mindful, thoughtful, and reflective as we all continue to grow year after year.

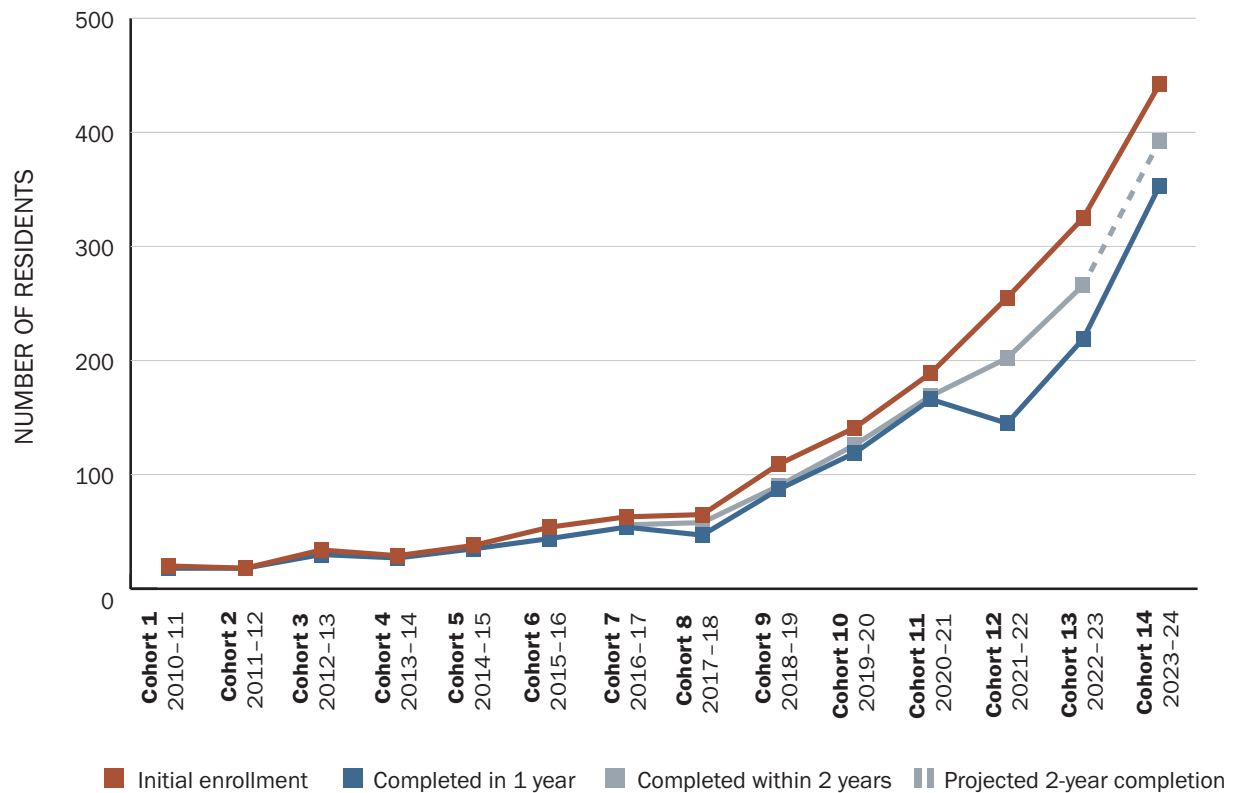
All staff were expected to engage in collaboration and ongoing learning, including Alder's business office. Kirkpatrick shared, "I think the work we do around DEI, Aldergether, whole adult, reading these books, bringing my entire finance team into all of that work—and them wanting to be there—actually matters." The finance team was essential in Connecting Team meetings with student-facing departments and in Alder's internal work around DEI, and their presence sent a clear message about team cohesion and the principles that grounded the residency. It also supported the fiscal team in understanding the residency's strengths and areas for growth, which could inform strategic financial decision-making.

Program Outcomes

Alder has tracked program outcomes since its inaugural cohort of 18 residents in 2010 and has a strong track record of preparing highly qualified teachers to meet local education agency (LEA) partners' workforce needs. Its enrollment, completion, demographic, hiring, retention, and resident survey data provide proof of these positive outcomes. In addition, resident learning and effectiveness were demonstrated through high passage rates on state-required exams, as well as in survey data from principals and mentor teachers.

Alder's enrollment has increased steadily, reaching 325 residents in the 2022–23 academic year. Out of the cumulative total of 1,019 residents enrolled over 13 years, 791 (77.6%) have completed the program in 1 year and 918 (90.1%) have completed it within 2 years (Figure 2). Notably, the program's 1-year completion rate dipped significantly during the 2021–22 academic year, largely as a result of COVID-19-related restrictions and challenges that impeded residents' completion of all degree and credential requirements.⁴⁹ Through strategic recruitment, Alder has almost doubled the proportion of residents who identify as members of historically underrepresented groups, from 45% of residents in 2010 to 83% in 2022.⁵⁰ Graduates were racially diverse, and completion rates were similar across racial groups (see Table 6).

Figure 2. Alder Teacher Residency Enrollment Over Time, 2010–2024



Source: Alder Graduate School of Education. (2024). *Impact*.

Table 6. Alder Enrollment and Completion by Race, 2010–2022

Race/ethnicity	Cumulative enrollment	1-year completers	2-year completers	% enrollment	% 2-year completers
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	2 (66.7%)	3 (100%)	0.29%	0.33%
Asian American	93	71 (76.3%)	80 (86.0%)	9.13%	8.71%
African American	177	126 (71.2%)	148 (83.6%)	17.37%	16.12%
Two or more races	37	28 (75.7%)	35 (94.6%)	3.63%	3.81%
Hispanic or Latino/a	426	325 (76.3%)	396 (93.0%)	41.81%	43.14%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	3	1 (33.3%)	3 (100%)	0.29%	0.33%
Race/ethnicity unknown	24	15 (62.5%)	19 (79.2%)	2.36%	2.07%
White	256	223 (87.1%)	234 (91.4%)	25.12%	25.49%
Total	1,019	791 (77.6%)	918 (90.1%)		

Sources: Calculation based on Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). [Alder Graduate School of Education completion rates](#) (accessed 09/01/2022); Alder Graduate School of Education. (2022). [Teacher residency at Alder GSE annual program assessment report 2021–2022](#).

Between 2010 and 2023, 82% of Alder graduates were hired into the partner LEA where they did their clinical placements, and an additional 13% of graduates were hired into other LEAs, for an overall hiring rate of 95%.⁵¹ (See [Hiring, Induction, and Beyond](#).) Alder graduates have had higher retention rates at their assigned sites in partner districts than their peers from other preparation programs: 84% of 2021 graduates were still teaching at the same school after 1 year, compared with 69% of their non-Alder peers hired in the same year. In fall 2022, 65% of Alder graduates were in the same schools after 3 years, compared with 43% of their non-Alder peers.⁵²

Hiring, Induction, and Beyond

Alder's ultimate goal is for residents to be hired by the local education agency (LEA), ideally in their clinical placement school. A key program strategy toward this end was to involve placement site principals in supporting the resident during the residency year. Principals observe residents throughout the year and have a midyear meeting with the resident, facilitated by the clinical director, which provides an opportunity to discuss the resident's development and potential considerations for growth. These practices supported the development of a relationship between the principal and the resident and allowed the principal to stay abreast of the resident's progress. If a placement site principal ended up having an open position they needed to fill, Alder leadership hoped that the principal's familiarity with the resident as a candidate would make this individual a top-tier prospect.

However, residents' placement sites may not always have openings. In these cases, the clinical director met regularly with district human resources staff during the hiring season, working to connect residents with open positions. Specifically, the clinical director identified vacancies, communicated with hiring principals, and informed residents about aligned opportunities. When residents applied to another school in the same LEA as their placement site, recommendations from their mentor teacher and placement site principal carried significant weight. As one Monterey Peninsula Unified School District principal explained, "I know the other principals. They are going to give me an honest, candid evaluation of all their residents. That's a much better hiring practice than just a random interview." In the rare circumstance that a resident was not placed at their existing placement or LEA, clinical directors served as guides to support the resident in making contact with new schools (within the partnership) or offered advice (if a resident was applying outside of the residency partnership). Across the board, the clinical director also assisted residents as they put together application materials by offering a series of workshops on résumé building and interviewing.

Once graduates were hired, Alder's alumni coordinator connected them with an online induction provider that they could engage with independently if the LEA did not offer teacher induction. Alumni continued to be connected to Alder, such as by being invited to participate in alumni panels to speak with the board of directors, share experiences at recruitment events, interview prospective students, participate in program studies, and, in some cases, become mentor teachers themselves.

Note: As part of Alder's Black Educator Initiative, Black alumni are invited to participate in a panel discussion at a recruitment event where they discuss the challenges and opportunities for those who want to become a teacher and identify as Black.

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

Mentor teachers have reported positive perceptions of the program. For example, during the 2021–22 academic year, 97% of mentors agreed or strongly agreed that having a resident in their classroom was beneficial for their students,⁵³ and 97% agreed or strongly agreed that being a mentor helped them improve their practice. Monterey Peninsula Unified School District Superintendent PK Diffenbaugh 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 MPUSD" ... 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.

The professional development for mentor teachers provided by the program is a likely contributor to this outcome and has the potential to amplify and guide mentors' reflections on their practice that arise as they support a resident.

Alder residents have also performed well on academic measures and assessments, with program grade point averages (GPAs) ranging from 3.0 to 3.25 (depending on the academic year) based on data between 2016 and 2022.⁵⁴ During that same period, between 93% and 98% of Alder residents passed their master's oral examination on their first attempt,⁵⁵ and between 2016 and 2022, between 84% and 92% of Alder residents passed the edTPA teaching performance assessment on their first attempt, for an overall pass rate of 89%.⁵⁶

According to surveys of hiring principals, Alder graduates have been highly rated, even in their novice years; principals have rated 90% of Alder's graduates as more effective or much more effective than other new teachers at their schools after their first year of teaching.⁵⁷ One Alder graduate expressed appreciation for the level of preparedness she felt during her first year of lead teaching. During the program, she remembered, "I just was so consistently encouraged to be an excellent teacher," specifically crediting her readiness to enter teaching to the program's rigor, high expectations, and unflagging support.

Continuous Improvement

Alder routinely collected and analyzed data as part of its effort to continuously improve, and it conducted and disseminated research about the program. Data collection and analysis were done throughout the year using surveys and data from Alder’s local education agency (LEA) partners through the National Center for Teacher Residencies. Additionally, Alder collected its own data in each of the following categories: recruitment and selection, curriculum and learning environment, resident effectiveness, and graduate effectiveness and retention. These activities were documented in Alder’s Annual Data Cycle Calendar (Table 7). Findings data were included in an Annual Program Assessment Report that was presented to the board of directors and publicly available online.⁵⁸

Table 7. Summary of Alder Annual Data Cycle Calendar

Category	Description	Instrument or metric	Summer (July– Aug)	Fall (Sept– Dec)	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
		• National Center for Teacher Residencies (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 (AREs)				X
		• edTPA				X
Graduate effectiveness and retention	Hiring rates, effectiveness, and retention	• Graduate hiring	X			
		• Graduate effectiveness		X		
		• Graduate retention				X

Category	Description	Instrument or metric	Summer (July– Aug)	Fall (Sept– Dec)	Winter (Dec– Jan)	Spring (Feb– June)
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	
		• Diversity, equity, and inclusion survey		X		

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

Internally, Alder collected information on, for example, the barriers to program completion. Upon identifying any significant factors that prevent residents from graduating on time (e.g., health challenges, resident–mentor mismatch, missed exams or certifications), Alder instituted the following changes to offer additional supports: (1) assigning a case manager to residents who need more than 1 year to complete the program, and (2) tracking resident progress to provide support earlier in the academic year.

All Alder personnel (including adjunct faculty and mentor teachers) were evaluated annually to ensure continued alignment with Alder’s approach. Throughout their short-term, part-time employment as adjunct clinical faculty, program supervisors—the content specialists who observe residents in the clinical setting—must remain in close communication with the clinical director to ensure that the feedback they provided to residents was aligned in both focus and scope with the residency’s materials, values, and approach.

On the academic side, the course content for each residency class section was also reviewed and approved by the full-time faculty leads and the dean every semester. Alder Dean Shayna Sullivan explicitly looked “for evidence of diversity, equity, inclusion, culturally relevant pedagogy, and universal design for learning in those core syllabi.” Sullivan’s review process has led to constant conversations among faculty about how to “break these cycles and systems of oppression that show up in all of our courses,” Professor David Steele shared. These reflections were not siloed into “the identity course or the special ed course; they have to be woven into all of our courses and all of the work that we do,” Steele added.

Financial Model

From the beginning, Alder’s business plan has largely been supported by tuition dollars rather than short-term grants. “We used to be raising money for the year we were in, in the start-up years, like, ‘I hope that next grant comes in because we’re only good till April,’” Alder President and CEO Heather Kirkpatrick remembered, recalling that this was not a healthy or strategic approach. In contrast, the business plan aimed for Alder to have between 70% and 80% of its funding come from tuition. It was a “business plan of price points,” said Kirkpatrick. “We needed to get to a certain number of students a year to keep tuition down. ... The reason we had to grow was because we were not stable until we were at that 70% to 80% self-funded [through tuition]. ... That’s why the scale mattered.”

When planning for Alder’s growth, Kirkpatrick emphasized the importance of scaling up sustainably to balance the budget with the number of residents enrolled while still upholding program values. High tuition costs would impede Alder’s ability to attract the diverse student body it hoped to serve. Maintaining tuition below this exclusionary ceiling was important to the program, but doing so, said Kirkpatrick, “meant we had to get to a bigger number [of residents]” in order to balance the finances. Alder was “as big as we are because we need to be. We’re trying to get to be 500 [residents] a year, statewide.” According to Senior Director of Strategy (formerly Managing Director of Strategy and Partnerships) Alex Caram, this goal translated to cohorts of between 20 and 23 residents, which smaller local education agencies (LEAs) can partner together to fill. The lesson for smaller programs is that a sustainable budget will depend on how many candidates they enroll in the residency and across other pathways, as well as the resources and infrastructures they can leverage. Smaller programs should also be aware of the need for a concrete financial plan.

Sustainability

Alder’s financial model combined short-term grants, tuition, community resources, and LEA contributions (see [Table 8](#)). This model was approved and continuously monitored by the board-level Finance Committee, which met quarterly. The chief financial officer forecasted budgets 5 years in advance, and yearly budgets were approved by the Finance Committee in May for the following academic year. In addition, part of the sustainability model involved recognizing that the budget affected the work of the whole team. For example, enrollment—which involved recruitment and partnership development—impacted incoming tuition, which in turn had implications for fundraising.

Thirty percent of Alder’s budget came from both private and public grant funding. Based on enrollment projections, Alder raised funds from foundations and individual donors every year. Alder also pursued public grant opportunities, which, according to Kirkpatrick, “are the largest but the least predictable. [Federal] and state funding—you can never build a budget on them, but, boy, do you want to be able to capture them if they’re around.” Kirkpatrick recalled, “I was going to foundations. I expanded to individuals very slowly, and then I learned about things like TQP [Teacher Quality Partnership] and SEED [Supporting Effective Educator Development], and then, of course, the CTC [California Commission on Teacher Credentialing Teacher Residency] Grants came along much later.” As of the 2022–23 academic year, Alder had obtained approximately \$14 million in TQP (2020, 2022) and \$19 million in SEED (2018, 2020) funding, with roughly half of these funds going to LEA partners as subgrantees.

During the 2022–23 academic year, Alder received 50% of its funding through tuition, and it expected to reach its target of having between 70% and 80% of its funding through tuition by the 2026–27 academic year. Because Alder aimed to keep tuition rates low enough to be able to recruit and enroll candidates from diverse backgrounds, Kirkpatrick acknowledged, “we will never be fully tuition funded. I hope we are never more reliant than that 70% on tuition.” Tuition came to Alder through various avenues, including through grants, scholarships, and federal loans. One quarter of the tuition that Alder collected went directly to LEA partners to fund the clinical director position.

Finally, Alder leveraged community services and programs such as CalFresh (see [Housing, Health Care, and Other Basic Needs](#)) and shared or rented resources such as classroom space with LEA offices, community colleges, and other partner teacher preparation programs (e.g., California State University, East Bay) to reduce its overhead costs. Caram explained, “One of the reasons why our operational model works is because we’re not spending a bunch of money on facilities.” Instead, Alder utilized LEA partner offices for weekly in-person seminars, while for course intensives, which were less frequent, Alder rented classroom space at community colleges and universities.

LEA Contributions

In addition to providing facilities, LEA partners contributed significantly to Alder’s resident and mentor stipends and supplemented clinical directors’ compensation, both of which were funded with Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) dollars⁵⁹ (i.e., LEA dollars) and other grants. For example, PK Diffenbaugh, Superintendent of the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District (MPUSD), shared that MPUSD uses LCFF, California’s Educator Effectiveness Block Grants, and local foundation grant funds to support the residency.

LEAs also tapped into the CTC’s Teacher Residency Implementation and Expansion Grant Program, which awarded grants for use over a 5-year period. Kirkpatrick said, “We’ve encouraged all of our partners to apply [for the Teacher Residency Implementation and Expansion Grants], and most of them have.” In addition, Alder worked with partner LEAs to procure 1-year Capacity Grants that support the planning and preparation that are needed to launch a new cohort. During the 2022–23 academic year, 10 out of 39 LEA partners accessed Expansion Grants, and 7 partners accessed Capacity Grant funds, for a total of approximately \$4.8 million. Starting in the 2023–24 academic year, 15 LEA partners began using Implementation Grant funds, 5 partners began using Expansion Grants, and 2 partners were tapping into Capacity Grant funding, for a total of approximately \$5 million. This funding went directly to LEA partners rather than through Alder.

Stipend amounts differed by cohort, depending on LEA contributions, but LEAs have been able to significantly increase the stipends thanks to the CTC’s Teacher Residency Grants. Kirkpatrick shared, “We used to see \$5,000 to \$20,000 stipends, which [were] the ceiling. With the new CTC funding, many of them are at \$35,000.” For example, MPUSD budgeted \$15,000 for living stipends for residents from its LCFF funds but has been able to use the Teacher Residency Grant—not to offset that LCFF expenditure, but to increase the resident stipend to \$37,000 for 5 years. Kirkpatrick noted the importance of this increase: “If we want to shift the demographics of who comes in,” she said, “the living stipends have to be livable.”

LEA partners were willing to make these investments based on Alder's reputation, and once they saw the positive outcomes, they were willing to continue their investments. Diffenbaugh explained:

[We are willing to continue our investment] because of the quality of the program, because of our high rate of need, and because our principals consistently rate the residents as higher quality than other candidates coming in from other programs. All that was evidence to me that this is worth the investment, worth continuing.

Diffenbaugh also shared that MPUSD was willing to "invest LCFF funding because it aligns with our board goals of recruiting and retaining high-quality, diverse staff that reflects our student body" and because LCFF provided a source of ongoing funding that was not dependent on supplemental grant funds.

LEAs also contributed by supplementing compensation for their clinical directors. Although Alder provided a substantial proportion of a clinical director's salary, LEA partners offered additional compensation to clinical directors for responsibilities that extended beyond the residency, as well as for onboarding. For example, MPUSD took on the expense of bringing on a new clinical director a year in advance to allow for planning and learning. Diffenbaugh 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."

Kirkpatrick remains committed to sustaining Alder's residency when those CTC grant programs end. She explained, "It is a matter of will. ... It is a matter of understanding what your priorities are." Alder found a way to make the residency program affordable "before all this gorgeous money" was available, and it is committed to sustaining operations when the funding is no longer available.

Table 8. Alder Graduate School Summary Annual Budget per Resident (Average)

Revenues/ expense	Category	Alder	Local education agency
Revenues	Tuition	\$22,000	
	Fundraising (federal grants, philanthropy)	\$7,500	
	Teacher Residency Grant Program funds		\$25,000
Total revenues		\$29,500	\$25,000
Expenses	Administration and staff	\$4,750	
	Academic faculty	\$9,000	
	Facilities/operating costs	\$3,500	Classroom space
	Recruitment and student support staff	\$4,250	
	Managing and partner directors	\$5,000	\$2,500
	Direct resident supports (e.g., scholarships, Compelling Needs, supplemental; average cost)	\$3,000	
	Resident living stipends (average)		\$25,000
	Mentor teacher stipends (average)		\$4,000
Total expenses		\$29,500	\$31,500

Source: Personal communication with Heather Kirkpatrick, President and CEO of Alder Graduate School of Education. (2023, April 18).

Next Steps and Conclusion

Creating a sustainable financial structure for its residency program is top of mind for Alder and its local education agency (LEA) partners given the impacts of the ever-shifting policy climate. Alder's growth target of 500 students was part of this sustainability planning as it aimed to increase the percentage of the graduate school budget that is self-funded.

Alongside this big-picture planning, Alder intended to continue developing robust and mutually supportive relationships with its LEA partners. As Alder's reputation has grown, so has the opportunity for it to become more intentional about the LEAs with which it partners and how it develops these relationships. Alder's Senior Director of Strategy Alex Caram said, "A lot of time is spent around alignment and around sustainability," which involved a significant commitment to building both relationships and trust.

Residency leadership, faculty, and staff continue to modify programming and structures to better align with the graduate school's mission and residents' needs. Alder has launched updated Program Learning Outcomes that placed a strong emphasis on residents' mastery of culturally responsive and community-centered teaching approaches that uplift the whole child.

Alder is also continuously looking for ways to improve the resident experience. For example, Alexandria Creer Kahn, Senior Director of Academic Programs, is "excited to create metrics that give us a bit more window into [residents'] feelings of belonging" within the program. In addition, Kahn sees chances to develop mentorship communities of practice, create opportunities for knowledge sharing between mentors and Alder content faculty, and collect data that could help Alder understand "how mentors are feeling about their own growth around diversity, equity, and inclusion."

Alder program leaders' commitment to continuous improvement and to an explicit set of values—knowledge, hope, compassion, courage, collaboration, and excellence—enabled the residency to prepare strong cohorts of conscientious, effective, and caring educators for the workforce in an inclusive and supportive environment where candidates can experience growth and thrive. These values are the foundation of Alder's pursuit of equity and excellence for teacher candidates and their students.

Endnotes

1. Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *Teacher residency at Alder GSE annual program assessment report 2022–2023*. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dyPTUH1q2HhU1ROHwyi9H4X8Pb9ztsYz4ugyOJhVylM/edit>
2. While the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted both program and general teacher retention, based on historical data (i.e., pre-COVID-19), program leaders expect retention to improve as school systems continue to recover. Alder Graduate School of Education. (2024). *Impact* (accessed 10/01/2021). <https://aldergse.edu/impact/>
3. Alder identifies the following racial and ethnic identities as historically underrepresented groups in the teaching profession: African American, Hispanic or Latino/a, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or two or more races.
4. Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *Teacher residency at Alder GSE annual program assessment report 2021–2022*. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1G9wTIXV1CD5fQWyMIJFQICg2iap40qHh/view>
5. Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *About Alder Graduate School of Education*. <https://aldergse.edu/about/>
6. Program selection began with a comprehensive list of all known teacher residency programs in California. Selection for study inclusion was based on residency completion survey data from the California Commission on Teaching Credentialing (CTC), publicly available information about each program, recommendations from partner organizations that are familiar with the California residency landscape, and additional information gathered through a brief questionnaire. These data were compared with program selection criteria that were based on the evidence base for high-quality residencies, program longevity and impact, and attention to representing a diversity of program characteristics. Finally, programs described in more than one prior Learning Policy Institute study were excluded from the current study.
7. Alder Graduate School of Education. (2024). *Impact* (accessed 10/01/2021). <https://aldergse.edu/impact/>
8. Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *Alder GSE's program & student learning outcomes*. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/12sZJwQiyel-hqyWU6REgIKcRaA8-ZNwI/view>
9. California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. (2016). *California teaching performance expectations*. https://www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/educator-prep/standards/adopted-tpes-2016.pdf?sfvrsn=8cb2c410_5
10. California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. (2024). *Standards: Educator preparation*. <https://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/stds-prep-program>
11. Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *Alder GSE's program & student learning outcomes*. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/12sZJwQiyel-hqyWU6REgIKcRaA8-ZNwI/view>
12. Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *Alder GSE's program & student learning outcomes*. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/12sZJwQiyel-hqyWU6REgIKcRaA8-ZNwI/view>
13. When it would be beneficial for students due to geographical constraints, Alder will offer the indicated course in a synchronous online format. Content, assignments, and learning outcomes will remain the same. Students will be informed about the modality at least 60 days before the first day of the term to give them time to plan.
14. Interview with Shayna Sullivan, Dean of Alder Graduate School of Education. (2023, January 27); Alder Graduate School of Education. (2021). *Alder Graduate School of Education student handbook and catalog, 2022–2023*.
15. Interview with Alexandria Creer Kahn, Senior Director of Academic Programs at Alder Graduate School of Education. (2023, January 27).
16. Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *Alder GSE's program & student learning outcomes*. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/12sZJwQiyel-hqyWU6REgIKcRaA8-ZNwI/view>
17. Alder Graduate School of Education. (2021). *Alder Graduate School of Education course scope and sequence*. https://docs.google.com/document/d/12mYO_NJ33V1vzpPidi9N7IWSrR4dI_th9DKIKBuCfyU/edit#
18. Alder Graduate School of Education. (2021). *Alder Graduate School of Education course scope and sequence*. https://docs.google.com/document/d/12mYO_NJ33V1vzpPidi9N7IWSrR4dI_th9DKIKBuCfyU/edit#
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20. Ellis, T. I. (2022). *Child and adolescent development and learning theory* [Syllabus]. Alder Graduate School of Education.

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22. Alder Graduate School of Education. (2021). *Alder Graduate School of Education course scope and sequence*. https://docs.google.com/document/d/12mYO_NJ33V1vzpPidi9N7IWSrR4dI_th9DKIkBuCfyU/edit#
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26. Alder Graduate School of Education. (2021). *Alder Graduate School of Education course scope and sequence*. https://docs.google.com/document/d/12mYO_NJ33V1vzpPidi9N7IWSrR4dI_th9DKIkBuCfyU/edit#
27. Alder Graduate School of Education. (2021). *Alder Graduate School of Education course scope and sequence*. https://docs.google.com/document/d/12mYO_NJ33V1vzpPidi9N7IWSrR4dI_th9DKIkBuCfyU/edit#
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29. Alder Graduate School of Education. (2024). *ED290: Action research project: Overview and FAQ*.
30. California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. (2016). *California teaching performance expectations*. <https://www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/educator-prep/standards/adopted-tpes-2016.pdf>; Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *Program and student learning outcomes*. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hrtTtN30I6yKxbliSqsVOForPnl5ykGcHKgO4bbHwLk/edit>
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32. Some cohorts may also have program supervisors who conduct some of the formal observation and coaching sessions.
33. Potential candidates may be referred to directors by principals or district teachers who have themselves gone through the program. Since larger cohorts of residents come with greater administrative support from Alder, districts are incentivized to develop their residency pipelines by referring classified staff.
34. If an applicant's GPA is under 2.65, they have the opportunity to appeal and provide more context. Candidates with a GPA below 2.0 are not eligible for the program.
35. Alder Graduate School of Education. (2022). *2022–2023 cost of attendance*.
36. In a few cases, partner districts hire residents as official employees, which allows residents to receive higher salaries and benefits. However, Alder generally avoids this type of arrangement because it tends to distract from a resident's role as a student–learner.
37. Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *Making it work regional resources*. <https://aldergse.edu/studentresources/>
38. Interview with Heather Kirkpatrick, President and CEO at Alder Graduate School of Education. (2023, January 18).
39. California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. (2022). *Program sponsor alert: California examinations and assessment fee waivers*. https://www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/educator-prep/ps-alerts/2022/psa-22-12.pdf?sfvrsn=a0e926b1_3
40. CHISPA. (2023). *About us*. <https://chispahousing.org/about-us/>
41. Central Valley Low Income Housing Corporation. (2023). *Home*. <https://cvlihc.org/>
42. TimelyCare. (2024). *Higher ed's most trusted virtual care provider*. <https://timelycare.com/>
43. Health for California Insurance Center. (2024). *What is Covered California?* https://www.healthforcalifornia.com/covered-california?gclid=CjwKCAjwg-24BhB_EiwA1Z0x8rFzlvOIITawJNxJKcOWjPfmDT4AOMcHbHhSuA6_fp5FY2dHjo_GSRoC8iYQAvD_BwE
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46. Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *CSET candidate testing support from Alder*. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lbpuEkesJLzIPG2Taugon38netnxLPEfIRkf7eIZY/edit?tab=t.0>
47. Starting in 2024, residents in the Continuing Cohort are employed by the partner local education agency for the spring and fall semesters and are supported by Alder as they complete any remaining requirements. Residents re-enroll the following spring to complete their clinical placement and coursework.
48. Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *Alder GSE education services agreement*. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JViRloRleN0cnYDyXjYol9IATsSn6RZh/view>
49. Specifically, according to Alder’s 2021–2022 Annual Program Assessment Report, “Sixty-three percent of Multiple Subject credential residents had not passed the RICA [Reading Instruction Competence Assessment] exam, 30% of residents had not satisfied the Subject Matter requirement, 2% had not satisfied the Basic Skills requirement, 32% had not passed the edTPA, 22% still needed to complete CPR training, 5% had not satisfied the U.S. constitution requirement, 15% had coursework/GPA issues to resolve, 9% needed to complete an exit interview for financial aid, and 4% owed tuition.” Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *Teacher residency at Alder GSE annual program assessment report 2021–2022*. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1G9wTIXV1CD5fQWyMIJFQICg2iap40qHh/view>
50. Alder Graduate School of Education. *Impact*. <https://aldergse.edu/impact/>
51. Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *Teacher residency at Alder GSE annual program assessment report 2021–2022*. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1G9wTIXV1CD5fQWyMIJFQICg2iap40qHh/view>
52. Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *Teacher residency at Alder GSE annual program assessment report 2021–2022*. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1G9wTIXV1CD5fQWyMIJFQICg2iap40qHh/view>
53. Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *Teacher residency at Alder GSE annual program assessment report 2021–2022*. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1G9wTIXV1CD5fQWyMIJFQICg2iap40qHh/view>
54. Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *Teacher residency at Alder GSE annual program assessment report 2021–2022*. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1G9wTIXV1CD5fQWyMIJFQICg2iap40qHh/view>
55. Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *Teacher residency at Alder GSE annual program assessment report 2021–2022*. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1G9wTIXV1CD5fQWyMIJFQICg2iap40qHh/view>
56. This excludes academic year 2020–21 due to the statewide suspension of edTPA as a requirement. Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *Teacher residency at Alder GSE annual program assessment report 2021–2022*. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1G9wTIXV1CD5fQWyMIJFQICg2iap40qHh/view>
57. Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *Teacher residency at Alder GSE annual program assessment report 2021–2022*. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1G9wTIXV1CD5fQWyMIJFQICg2iap40qHh/view>
58. Alder Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). *Teacher residency at Alder GSE annual program assessment report 2021–2022*. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1G9wTIXV1CD5fQWyMIJFQICg2iap40qHh/view>
59. See pp. 32, 42, 112, and 113 of Monterey Peninsula Unified School District. *LCFF budget overview for parents*. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-DLRlj5acrzmjOHPguk4u-h_ZzsPeLH/view for an example of how the residency can be written into a district’s Local Control and Accountability Plan.

About the Authors

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