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Student Achievement Gains and California's Residency-Prepared Teachers



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Summary

In 2018, California launched state-funded teacher residency programs to address teacher shortages and improve preparation by deepening clinical training and supporting candidates financially. This brief examines achievement outcomes for students taught by residency-prepared new teachers during the 2022–23 to 2024–25 school years. Compared to other new teachers, residency-prepared teachers taught larger proportions of Latino/a students, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and English learners. Students of residency-prepared new teachers in grades 4–8 had significantly larger growth in math than those of other new teachers in the same district. Elementary students of residency-prepared teachers had larger growth in English language arts (ELA), on average, than their same-district peers taught by other new teachers, while growth was similar among middle school students. Because these analyses included residency graduates from 25 preparation institutions working across 120 districts, these findings point to benefits from the residency model itself, not just from any one program's unique features.

Introduction

Teacher residencies offer a comprehensive preparation model for aspiring teachers and address local staffing needs. Developed in partnership between a teacher preparation program and a local education agency, residencies place candidates in the classroom of an experienced mentor teacher for a full school year while candidates take aligned credential coursework. Residents typically receive financial supports, such as living stipends and/or subsidized tuition. Early research on individual residency programs across the country has found that residencies attract a more racially diverse candidate pool and support higher retention in the profession.[1]

States are increasingly funding residencies, and more teachers are being prepared through this model.[2] California, the site of this study, invested nearly $1 billion in the Teacher Residency Grant Program (TRGP) between 2018 and 2026,[3] and the number of residents enrolled statewide more than quadrupled during this time.[4] Federal and local funding sources also have supported California residencies, and the model continues to scale up across the state. As of 2024–25, more than 40 institutions offered residency programs, enrolling more than 2,000 new residents.

Given this investment and growth, a clearer understanding is needed of how outcomes for residency-prepared teachers compare to those prepared through other pathways. A companion study, *Teacher Residencies in California: Enrollment, Preparation, and Outcomes of Residency-Prepared Teachers*, found that California's residencies recruited a more diverse candidate pool than student teaching and internship programs. It also found that residents rated their preparation more highly, passed the California Teaching Performance Assessment at higher rates, secured teaching jobs more quickly, were more likely to teach in higher-need schools, and had higher 3-year retention rates. This brief extends the research by comparing the achievement growth of students taught by residency-prepared teachers to students taught by other new teachers.

California's Teacher Residency Programs

While there are some variations in residency models in California and nationally, most share features that distinguish them from other preparation models. Residencies typically feature:

- a partnership between the preparation institution and a local education agency,
- recruitment aimed at the partner district's specific staffing needs,
- yearlong clinical placement in the classroom of a mentor teacher,
- credential coursework aligned with district practices, and
- financial support to cover tuition and/or living costs.[5]

Residencies vary in how fully they implement these features, but both California's TRGP and the federal Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) program require them. Almost all California residency programs were part of either a TRGP or TQP grant between 2018 and 2025. About half of the reported California teacher residents during this time were funded by TRGP, with the remaining residents funded through federal grants, philanthropic sources, or directly by local education agencies.

The TRGP funds residencies that prepare candidates for state-designated shortage areas (special education, bilingual education, science, computer science, technology, engineering, math, transitional kindergarten, and kindergarten) or diversify the workforce. Each grant-funded resident must coteach at least half-time in their mentor teacher's classroom for a full year and receive a stipend of at least $20,000. Grant-funded programs must also support mentoring and induction for residency graduates in their first year of working as a teacher of record, and residents must commit to working as a teacher for at least 4 years in a California public school.

Student Outcomes of Residency Programs

Research on individual residency programs, mostly located outside of California, has generally found that students of residency-prepared teachers performed as well as or better than students of other new teachers in the same district.[6] These studies typically involved small samples and varied in how they accounted for differences in the students and schools that residency-prepared teachers served. Studies of single programs make it difficult to generalize about the effectiveness of a preparation model: Unique features of that program (e.g., selection process or specific program supports), rather than the model itself, could be driving the results.

Three studies have leveraged statewide data to measure student performance of residency-prepared new teachers. One study, which focused on Texas teachers prepared through state-funded residencies, found that students of residency-prepared teachers had significantly larger achievement growth in both ELA and math than students of other new teachers.[7] A second, larger Texas study found larger ELA growth for students of residency-prepared teachers, with positive but often insignificant differences in math.[8] Both studies found that the largest gaps existed for residency-prepared teachers compared to uncertified teachers or interns, with smaller differences relative to student teachers. Additionally, a Tennessee study that compared new teachers prepared before and after their programs transitioned from a student teaching model to a residency model found higher achievement gains in ELA that were marginally significant for residents' students.[9] Since not all programs fully adopted the residency model, the authors of the Tennessee study noted that the model's true effect was likely understated.

This Study

This brief offers the first statewide analyses of whether the achievement growth of California students taught by residency-prepared teachers differed from that of students taught by other new teachers. Using linked data from the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the California Department of Education for the 2022–23 through 2024–25 school years, we identified all students taught by new teachers (i.e., teachers in their first year of working in California schools as a teacher of record). We then compared these students' achievement growth by their teachers' entry pathway: residency, student teaching, internship, emergency permit, or out-of-state prepared. (See California's Pathways Into Teaching.)

To measure growth statewide, we used data captured from the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress system, which tests students in grades 3–8 and 11. Since prior-year scores were necessary to measure growth, we included students of new teachers in grades 4–8 who took the needed ELA and/or math assessments. In each subject area, there were more than 200,000 student observations (about 5% of students in these grades). More than 10,000 students were taught by new residency-prepared teachers from 25 teacher preparation institutions. Because the datasets that were available to identify residents did not distinguish between residents and student teachers for some institutions, some residents were classified as student teachers in the resulting analyses (thus underestimating differences between the two groups).

Residency-prepared new teachers generally teach in higher-need schools. Therefore, to enable fairer comparisons, our regression models controlled for student, classroom, teacher, and school characteristics. All models included students' prior-year scores, which allowed us to interpret the outcome as achievement growth, along with grade-level and year indicators. Our preferred models compared students of new teachers within the same district and year. Throughout this brief, we use the results of these models (Model 7 in Tables S3–S8; see the Technical Supplement for these tables, additional analyses, and details on the data and methods). Since California districts must apply for state-funded TRGP grants, this within-district comparison is policy relevant and better accounts for unobserved differences across districts that affect how new teachers and student learning are supported. Across the 3 years analyzed, 120 California districts (13% of all districts) had at least one residency-prepared new teacher teaching ELA or math in grades 4–8.

California's Pathways Into Teaching

As in most states, there are multiple pathways into teaching within California. The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing manages all educator credentials in the state and provided the data needed to differentiate the following pathways into teaching.

Student Teaching. Student teachers complete their coursework, clinical experiences, and certification requirements before becoming a teacher of record and managing their own classroom. In this study, we classified someone as a student teacher if their first teaching document was a preliminary credential recommended by an approved California teacher preparation program.

Residency. Residency operates as a type of student teaching, with residents also receiving a preliminary credential before becoming a teacher of record. In this study, we used multiple data sources to differentiate residents from student teachers (see Patrick et al., 2026).

Internship. Interns complete their coursework and certification requirements while working as a teacher of record and receiving clinical support. In this study, we classified someone as entering on an internship pathway if their first teaching document was an intern credential.

Emergency Permit. If districts cannot find a credentialed teacher to fill a position, they may hire teachers with emergency permits, most commonly a Short-Term Staff Permit or Provisional Internship Permit. Requested by the hiring district, these permits typically last 1 year and cannot be renewed. Because they do not require enrollment in preparation or demonstrated subject expertise, teachers on emergency permits vary widely in preparation and content knowledge. In this study, we classified someone as entering on an emergency permit if their first teaching document was one of the state's emergency permits or waivers.

Out-of-State Prepared. Teachers credentialed in other states may enter California schools after applying for a preliminary teaching credential from the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. Teachers who were prepared out of state must fulfill certain state-specific requirements and must initially enter on a preliminary credential, regardless of prior teaching experience. We cannot observe teaching experience from other states, so "new" teachers who were prepared out of state may not be new to teaching. In this study, we classified someone as entering with out-of-state preparation if their first teaching document was a preliminary credential with a preparation location outside of California.

Sources: California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. *Emergency/long term permits* (accessed 09/15/2026); California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. *Out-of-state applicants* (accessed 09/15/2026); California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. *Pathways to credentialing* (accessed 09/15/2026); Patrick, S. K., Tan, T. S., Fitz, J., & Yun, C. (2026). *Teacher residencies in California: Enrollment, preparation, and outcomes of residency-prepared teachers*. Learning Policy Institute.

Key Findings

Students Served by Residency-Prepared Teachers

More than 700 districts (about 78% of California districts) had new teachers teaching grades 4–8 ELA or math over the 3 years of this study. Of these, 120 districts had at least one residency-prepared new teacher with these assignments. Residency-prepared new teachers taught, on average, larger shares of Latino/a students, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and English learners than other new teachers. Students taught by all new teachers tended to have lower scores than the state average in the prior year (with 0 representing the state average for that year and grade). Students taught by residency-prepared new teachers had lower prior-year scores, on average, compared to all students taught by new teachers. (See Table 1 for math sample characteristics and Table S2 in the Technical Supplement for ELA sample characteristics.)

Table 1. Characteristics of California Students Taught by First-Year Teachers for Grades 4–8 Math in 2022–23 to 2024–25, by Pathway

Characteristic	All new teachers	Residency	Student teaching	Internship	Emergency permit	Out-of-state prepared
Prior-year standardized assessment score (mean)						
Mathematics	-0.19	-0.32	-0.06	-0.32	-0.32	-0.10
Student characteristic (%)						
Asian	10.0%	8.5%	12.2%	8.2%	7.8%	10.8%
Black	5.2%	5.8%	4.4%	5.5%	6.0%	5.1%
Latino/a of any race	62.4%	71.2%	60.2%	67.0%	65.0%	53.9%
Multiracial	4.7%	3.5%	5.0%	4.0%	4.3%	6.2%
Native American	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%	0.8%	0.7%
Pacific Islander	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%
White	16.8%	10.4%	17.6%	14.4%	15.8%	22.9%
Socioeconomically disadvantaged	68.0%	77.0%	64.4%	73.4%	72.3%	58.9%
Student with disabilities	13.8%	14.1%	12.1%	16.9%	14.5%	14.6%
English learner	19.0%	22.4%	18.0%	20.0%	20.3%	16.5%
Total student observations	**243,188**	**11,242**	**101,893**	**29,897**	**76,025**	**24,131**

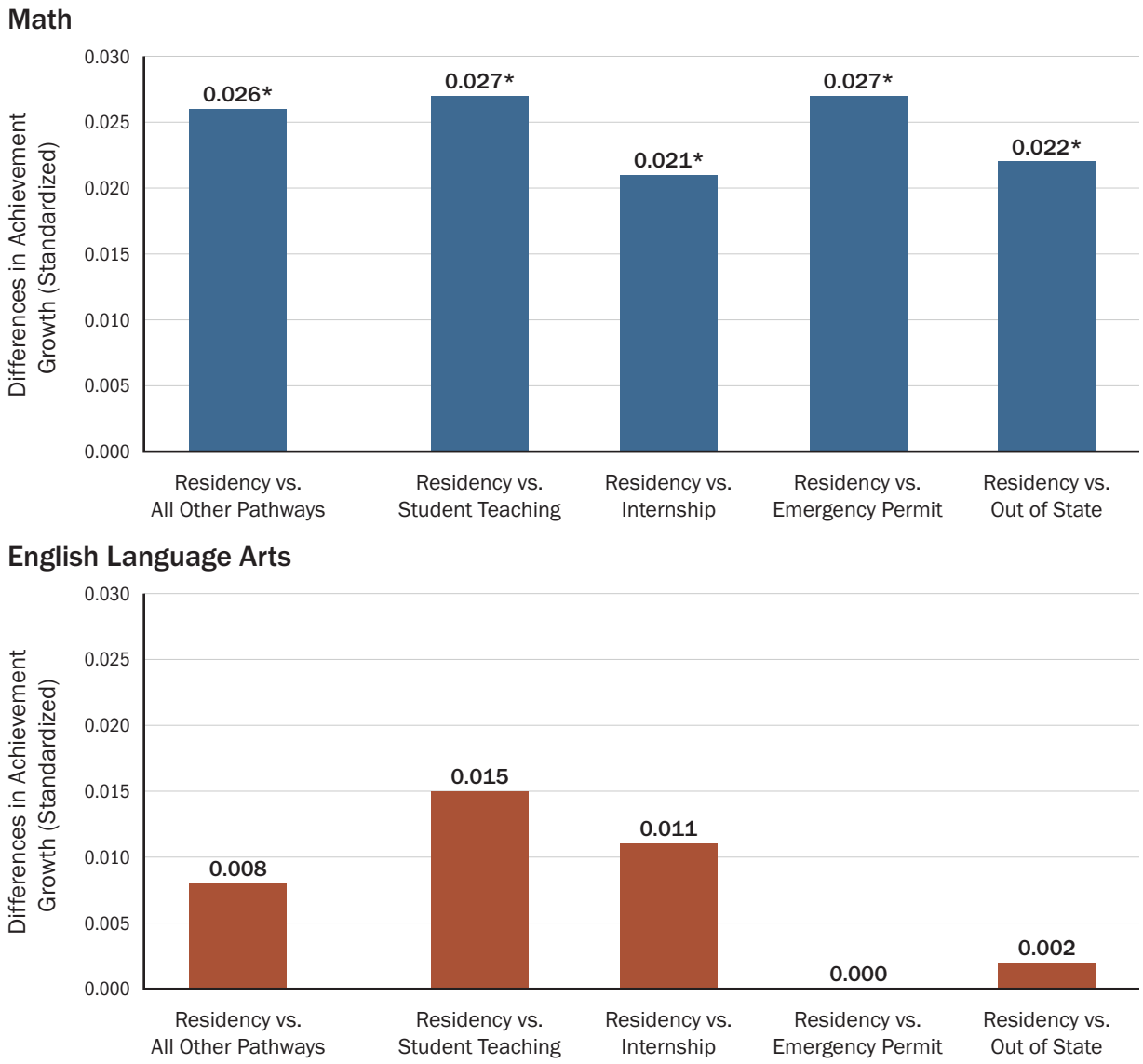
Note: This table describes the student characteristics of all California students who were tested in grades 4–8 math and assigned a first-year teacher in the 2022–23, 2023–24, and 2024–25 school years.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analyses of dataset linking credential data provided by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing to student and teacher data provided by the California Department of Education. (2026).

Achievement Growth in Math and English Language Arts

Math. Within districts that hired residency graduates, students taught by residency-prepared new teachers had significantly larger math growth than students taught by other new teachers in that year. As shown in Figure 1 and Table 2, this held true overall and for new teachers entering through all four other pathways: student teaching, internship, emergency permit, and out-of-state prepared.

Figure 1. Math and ELA Achievement Growth Differences for Students Taught by New Teachers in 2022–23 to 2024–25, by Pathway



Notes: ELA = English language arts. The graph shows grades 4–8 math and ELA achievement growth differences for students taught by residency-prepared new teachers compared to other new teachers in the same district and year after controlling for prior-year assessment score, year, and grade, along with student, classroom, teacher, school, and district characteristics. *$p < .05$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analyses of dataset linking credential data provided by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing to student and teacher data provided by the California Department of Education. (2026).

To put these differences in perspective, we also estimated average differences in math growth for students taught by first-year versus second-year math teachers using the same model shown in Table 2. The average difference in math achievement growth between students being taught by second-year and first-year teachers (0.020 standard deviations) is slightly smaller than the difference between new residency-prepared teachers and other new teachers.

English Language Arts. Overall, there were small, positive but statistically insignificant differences in ELA achievement growth between students of residency-prepared new teachers and students taught by other first-year teachers in the same district and year. The largest estimated differences were between students taught by residency-prepared teachers and those taught by new teachers prepared through student teaching, with smaller differences for other pathways.

Table 2. Regression Results for Students Taught by New Teachers in 2022–23 to 2024–25

Variable	Math score (standardized)	ELA score (standardized)
Panel A: Residency vs. all other pathways (residency as the reference group)		
Non-residency	-0.026* (0.009)	-0.008 (0.009)
Panel B: Pathway (residency as the reference group)		
Student teaching	-0.027* (0.009)	-0.015† (0.009)
Internship	-0.021* (0.010)	-0.011 (0.010)
Emergency permit	-0.027* (0.010)	0.000 (0.009)
Out-of-state prepared	-0.022* (0.011)	-0.002 (0.010)
Observations	243,163	261,541
R-squared	0.711	0.676

Notes: ELA = English language arts. The table shows grades 4–8 math and ELA achievement growth differences for students taught by residency-prepared new teachers compared to other new teachers in the same district and year after controlling for prior-year assessment score, year, and grade, along with student, classroom, teacher, school, and district characteristics. *$p < .05$. †$p < .10$.

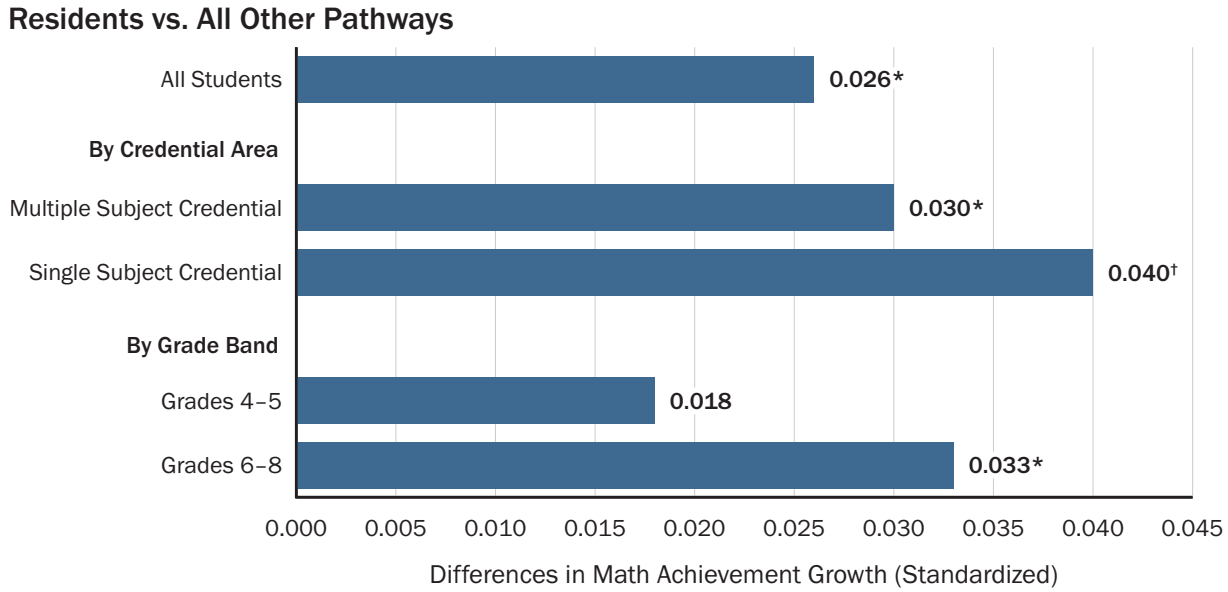
Source: Learning Policy Institute analyses of dataset linking credential data provided by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing to student and teacher data provided by the California Department of Education. (2026).

Differences by Grade Band and Credential Area

Results varied by student grade band and teacher credential area. In California, almost all teachers teaching math and ELA in grades 4–8 have Multiple Subject or Single Subject credentials.[10] Multiple Subject credentials allow teachers to teach all core subjects in a self-contained classroom across all grades, while Single Subject credentials permit teachers to teach specific subjects (e.g., math) and are typically held by teachers teaching in secondary schools. About 94% of students in grades 4–5 had math and ELA teachers with Multiple Subject credentials versus 2% with Single Subject credentials. In grades 6–8, 34% of students had math teachers with Multiple Subject credentials and 59% with Single Subject credentials. Also in grades 6–8, 32% of students had ELA teachers with Multiple Subject credentials and 64% with Single Subject credentials. See the Technical Supplement for the full set of results by pathway, grade band, and credential area.

Math. As shown in Figure 2, students of residency-prepared teachers with Multiple Subject credentials experienced significantly larger growth in math than students of other new teachers in the same credential area. Students of residency-prepared Single Subject teachers experienced even larger gains relative to students of other Single Subject teachers, though the difference was only marginally significant (likely due to smaller sample size). For students in grades 6–8, students taught by residency-prepared new teachers had significantly larger growth than their peers in the same district and year who were taught by other new teachers, while differences were smaller and insignificant for students in grades 4–5.

Figure 2. Math Achievement Growth Differences for Students Taught by New Teachers in 2022–23 to 2024–25, by Pathway, Credential Area, and Grade Band

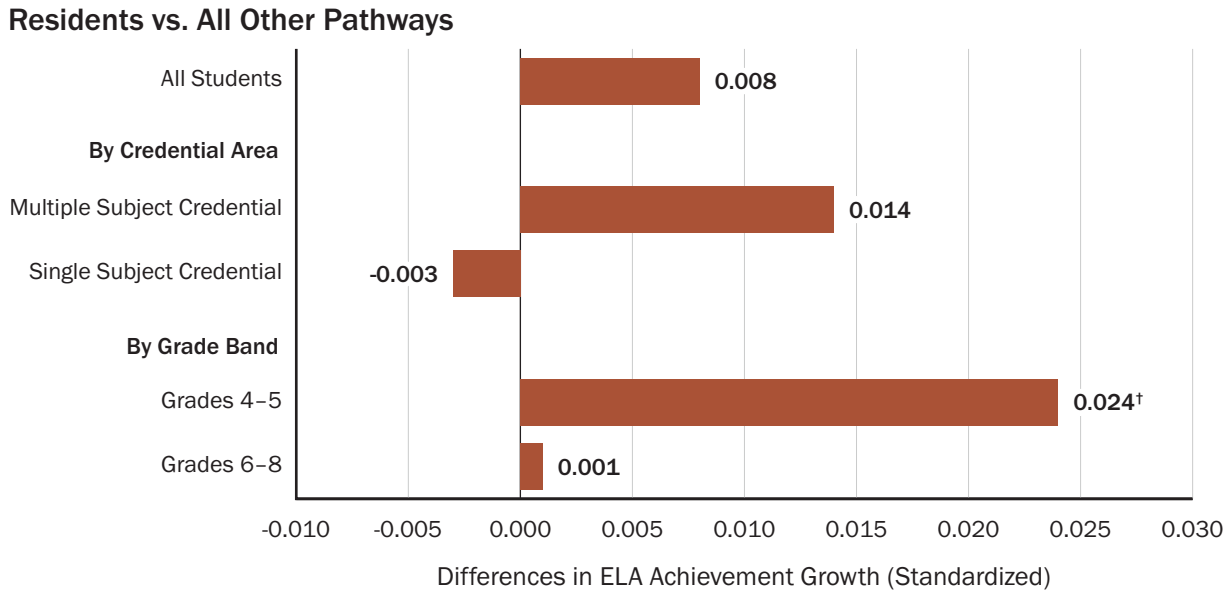


Note: The graph shows math achievement growth differences for students taught by residency-prepared new teachers with Multiple or Single Subject credentials compared to all other new teachers in the same district and year after controlling for prior-year assessment score, year, and grade, along with student, classroom, teacher, school, and district characteristics. $^{\dagger}p < .10$. $^{*}p < .05$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analyses of dataset linking credential data provided by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing to student and teacher data provided by the California Department of Education. (2026).

English Language Arts. As shown in Figure 3, students of residency-prepared teachers who held Multiple Subject credentials had larger ELA achievement growth than students of other new teachers, though these differences were statistically insignificant. Elementary students taught by residency-prepared new teachers had marginally larger ELA growth than students in the same district taught by other new teachers. Further analyses by pathway indicated that elementary students of residency-prepared teachers had larger growth than students taught by new teachers prepared through student teaching. These differences for elementary students taught by residency-prepared teachers were slightly larger than the average differences in ELA growth between students taught by first-year and second-year teachers.[11]

Figure 3. ELA Achievement Growth Differences for Students Taught by New Teachers in 2022–23 to 2024–25, by Pathway, Credential Area, and Grade Band



Notes: ELA = English language arts. The graph shows ELA achievement growth differences for students taught by residency-prepared new teachers with Multiple or Single Subject credentials compared to all other new teachers in the same district and year after controlling for prior-year assessment score, year, and grade, along with student, classroom, teacher, school, and district characteristics. †$p < .10$.

Source: Learning Policy Institute analyses of dataset linking credential data provided by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing to student and teacher data provided by the California Department of Education. (2026).

Implications

Teacher residencies are an innovative preparation model and are designed to meet local staffing needs; relate coursework to more extensive, hands-on teaching practice; and decrease financial barriers for candidates. California has invested substantially in residencies through the TRGP, allocating nearly $1 billion in state funds since 2018. California residencies are also funded through federal, local, and philanthropic sources. An earlier companion study found that California residencies enrolled a racially diverse candidate pool and were highly rated by their graduates. Residents were also more likely to pass the California Teaching Performance Assessment, get hired into teaching jobs, and stay in the classroom.

Among districts hiring residency-prepared new teachers, students of these teachers made greater achievement gains than students of other new teachers, controlling for student, classroom, teacher, and school characteristics. In math, these differences were statistically significant; in ELA, the differences were marginally significant for students in grades 4–5. These gaps were slightly larger than the typical difference in achievement growth between students of first-year and second-year teachers. Differences varied by student grade band and the teacher credential area, with suggestive evidence that students of residency-prepared new teachers especially outperformed their peers in elementary school ELA and middle school math.

In contrast to past research studying individual residency programs, this study included residency graduates from 25 preparation institutions who are teaching across 120 California districts. These findings suggest that the residency model itself is successfully preparing graduates to be more instructionally effective than other new teachers. This study also provides initial evidence on which types of instructional training residencies may be most effectively providing (i.e., teaching ELA in grades 4–5 and teaching math in grades 6–8). Further research can help pinpoint whether specific features of residency programs may be driving these differences in achievement growth; such analyses could also support program improvement across pathways.

Along with the previous findings on residents' placement and retention, these achievement results indicate that California's investments in residency programs may be paying off for school districts and their students. Since our analyses cannot identify all of California's residency-prepared new teachers, we may be underestimating the differences between new teachers prepared in residencies versus student teaching programs. Even so, these findings suggest that residency-prepared new teachers were more effective, on average, than their peers when it comes to supporting their students' achievement growth in math and, in some cases, in ELA.

In 2026, the California legislature invested an additional $250 million in the TRGP, which will further support and expand residencies statewide. These funds can help sustain existing programs while expanding into underserved regions. Rural students have less access to residency-prepared teachers. Regional consortia, such as those organized by county offices of education, may be helpful to expand residency partnerships into more rural areas. District leaders can also consider using district dollars to support residencies—even without external grant funding—by adopting strategic staffing models[12] or reallocating funds from teacher development budgets.

California's sustained investment in teacher residencies is yielding measurable benefits for students, not just for the teachers and districts involved. As the state continues to expand this model, ensuring that more communities share in these gains will be essential to realizing the full promise of residency-based teacher preparation.

Endnotes

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2. Saunders, R., Fitz, J., DiNapoli, M. A., Jr., & Kini, T. (2024). *Teacher residencies: State and federal policy to support comprehensive teacher preparation*. Learning Policy Institute & EdPrepLab.

3. Information on the TRGP grants from 2018 through 2025 can be found here: California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. (2026). *Teacher residency*; Leung-Gagné, M., Carver-Thomas, D., Sorensen, L. Kini, T., Patrick, S. K., Tan, T. S., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2026). *Trends in California's teacher workforce: Understanding supply, demand, and shortages*. Learning Policy Institute, Getting Down to Facts, & Stanford SCALE Initiative. For information on the investments in TRGP made in 2026, please see: California Legislative Information. (2026). *AB-126 education finance: Education omnibus trailer bill*.

4. Patrick, S. K., Tan, T. S., Fitz, J., & Yun, C. (2026). *Teacher residencies in California: Enrollment, preparation, and outcomes of residency-prepared teachers*. Learning Policy Institute.

5. Saunders, R., Fitz, J., DiNapoli, M. A., Jr., & Kini, T. (2024). *Teacher residencies: State and federal policy to support comprehensive teacher preparation*. Learning Policy Institute & EdPrepLab.

6. Garrison, A. W. (n.d.). *Memphis Teacher Residency: Teacher effectiveness in 2021–22*. Memphis–Shelby County Schools; Gottlieb, J. J., & Kirksey, J. (2022). *Innovations in university-based teacher preparation: Comparing the 'grow your own' alternative to the traditional program at Texas Tech*. Texas Tech University College of Education; Jaciw, A. P., Wingard, A., Zacamy, J., Lin, L., & Lau, S. S. (2021). *Final report of the i3 evaluation of the Collaboration and Reflection to Enhance Atlanta Teacher Effectiveness (CREATE) teacher residency program*. Empirical Education; Sloan, K., Allen, A., Blazevski, J., Carson, F., & Rockman, S. (2018). *A different, more durable model: Hunter College Urban Teacher Residency Project*. New Visions for New Public Schools.

7. Goldin, S., Bastian, K. C., Allen, D., Marks, J. T., Petry, K., Wilson, S., Byers, T., Tapiawala, R., Fuller, S. C., Otte, A., Cathro, D., Bortot, C., & Anderson, I. (2025). *Evaluation of paid teacher residencies in Texas: Impacts and promising practices*. Education Policy Initiative at Carolina.

8. Van Overshelde, J. P., & López, M. M. (Forthcoming). *Teacher residencies in Texas: Examining short- and long-term outcomes*. Learning Policy Institute.

9. Truwit, M., & Ronfeldt, M. (2026). The model itself or something else? Whether and how the transition from traditional preparation to teacher residency model impacts the outcomes of graduates. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*.

10. California's education specialist credential authorizes teachers to teach special education. Of the student observations in this analysis, only 4% had teachers working on education specialist credentials. California recently introduced a P–3 credential for teachers of early elementary grades. Just like preliminary teaching credentials, intern credentials and emergency permits also authorize individuals to teach within these credential areas.

11. Students of second-year teachers had higher ELA growth (0.017 standard deviations) than students in the same district and year taught by first-year teachers. This difference was slightly larger when restricting the analysis to students in grades 4–5 (0.018 standard deviations).

12. Fitz., J., Yun, C., Wang, V., Bland, J., Wei, W., & Wojcikiewicz, S. (2026). Supporting and sustaining paid teacher residencies. *State Education Standard*, *26*(2).

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