

# Early Learning from Formative Evaluation of California's Teacher Residency Grant Program

Melissa Eiler White • Sola Takahashi • Kate Hirschboeck • Liam Honigsberg •  
Rebecca Perry • Frances Reade • Eric Ambroso

## Introduction

Teacher residency programs are intensive pathways into the teaching profession that focus on rigorous clinical preparation. They integrate credentialing coursework with a clinical placement in the public school classroom of an expert mentor teacher, for a full academic year.<sup>1</sup> Developed and operated by a partnership between a local school district and a university or college that has a state-approved education program (and sometimes other partners, such as a local union), a residency program serves as a pipeline for meeting specific district workforce needs (e.g., more special education teachers). Each one is guided by a partnership team with representatives from both the district and its partnering institution of higher education (IHE).

WestEd's formative evaluation of the teacher residency programs that are funded through California's Teacher Residency Grant Program focuses on a range of research-based aspects of the teacher residency model, which are articulated

<sup>1</sup> The residency programs covered in this report are all funded by California's Teacher Residency Grant Program, which requires that residents teach at least half time for the equivalent of a full academic school year.

WestEd is conducting an external formative evaluation of California's Teacher Residency Grant Program.\* Administered by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), the grant program supports local education agencies to develop or expand a teacher residency program in partnership with an institution of higher education (IHE) that has a CTC-approved teacher preparation program. The purpose is to prepare residents to become special education, STEM, and/or bilingual teachers. The formative evaluation activities are intended to provide feedback quickly, thus enabling stakeholders to adjust their work as this initiative evolves. This is the second in a series of evaluation briefs planned for release to all grantees in 2019/20.

\* This program was funded in 2018 with \$75 million from the California state budget. The funding provided \$50 million for Special Education Teacher Residency Programs and \$25 million for STEM or Bilingual Teacher Residency Programs. The funding is designated to support local education agencies (LEAs) to develop or expand a teacher residency pathway with an institution of higher education (IHE) that has a CTC-approved teacher preparation program to prepare special education, STEM, and/or bilingual residents. Grants were released to 32 grantees in March 2019, funding a total of 38 LEA-IHE residency partnerships to develop or expand residencies.

in the residency characteristics developed by the California Teacher Residency Lab, a philanthropy-funded support system for residency programs in the state. Drawing from the first year of evaluation, this brief shares early findings on four of those aspects: *partnership, resident recruitment, mentorship, and alignment of coursework and clinical practice.*

The *partnership* between an IHE and a K-12 system must be strong enough to support the collaborative work required to launch and operate the teacher residency program, including, for example, effectively allocating resources; developing new staffing models; designing or redesigning candidates' coursework and clinical experience; and developing sustainable funding models.<sup>2</sup> A high-quality resident *recruitment* process is essential in creating a pool of diverse, high-ability candidates whose interests (e.g., teaching special education) and whose potential align with partner districts' specific hiring needs.<sup>3</sup> *Mentor teachers* are central to the professional growth and development of teacher residents, so the careful selection and ongoing development of these mentors is critical to an effective program.<sup>4</sup> Finally, *alignment between residents' clinical experiences and their campus-based coursework* is critical if residents are to have the kind of coherent experience that best supports their learning.<sup>5</sup>

- 2 National Council of Accreditation for Teacher Education. (2010). *Transforming teacher education through clinical practice: A national strategy to prepare effective teachers.*
- 3 Carver-Thomas, D. (2018). *Diversifying the teaching profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color.* Learning Policy Institute; Leong, M., Motamedi, J. G., & Yoon, Y. Y. (2018). *Common practices for recruiting, training, and retaining bilingual and diverse teachers.* Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest.
- 4 Guha, R., Hyler, M.E., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2016). *The Teacher Residency: An innovative model for preparing teachers.* Learning Policy Institute; National Center for Teacher Residencies. (2015, June). *Clinically oriented teacher preparation.*
- 5 Loewenberg Ball, D., & Forzani, F. M. (2009). The work of teaching and the challenge for teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 60*(5), 497-511; McDonald, M., Kazemi, E., & Kavanagh, S. S. (2013). Core practices and pedagogies of teacher education: A call for a common language and collective activity. *Journal of Teacher Education, 64.* 378-386; Zeichner, K. (2010). Rethinking the connections between campus courses and field experiences in college- and university-based teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 61*(1-2), 89-99.

## Measurement Approach for Evaluation

WestEd's evaluation focuses on the collection and use of data to provide information about program outcomes and about how key aspects of the residency programs are functioning. The measurement approach is informed by improvement science, a methodology for continuous improvement, characterized by system investigations; analysis of core processes; development of a theory of improvement to achieve desired outcomes; and small-scale, iterative cycles of testing the changes called for in the theory of improvement.\* The evaluation team looks at each residency program as a system comprising key processes, such as those related to partnership, resident recruitment, mentorship, and alignment of coursework and clinical practice. The evaluation captures information about how these key processes are functioning.

This formative evaluation is intended to support programs' continuous improvement by giving them regular and timely feedback on their processes, which allows them to identify areas of strength and weakness and make midcourse corrections as needed. That goal has influenced evaluation decisions about types and frequency of data collection and data reporting. For example, the WestEd team started sharing partnership-specific evaluation data with residency programs in January 2020, and will continue doing so up to three times a year for the duration of the evaluation.\*\*

The evaluation will also report on trends and patterns across programs, and on the challenges faced and the successes achieved by these programs. Ultimately, this evaluation will be poised to report on the extent to which key outcomes have been achieved, and will offer insight about the extent to which different aspects of the programs may have supported those outcomes.

\* Bryk, A. S., Gomez, L., Grunow, A., & LeMahieu, P. (2015, February). *Learning to improve: How America's schools can get better at getting better.* Harvard Education Publishing.

\*\* The evaluation's dissemination plan is documented in the first brief of this series: *California Teacher Residency Program: Formative evaluation overview.* (2020). WestEd.

WestEd has a multifaceted strategy for disseminating findings to the various audiences for this evaluation. This brief and others like it are intended to share a thematic snapshot of what the evaluation is learning, primarily but not exclusively for funded partnerships. A comprehensive report of what is learned from all Year 1 data collection will follow and will be geared toward policymakers. This brief shares early learning from WestEd’s fall 2019 data-collection efforts, which included role-specific *surveys* of four key program stakeholder groups (partnership team members,<sup>6</sup> mentor teachers,<sup>7</sup> residents,<sup>8</sup> and supervisors<sup>9</sup>) in all 38 funded programs; *interviews* with the leads from each partnership in a sample of 10 programs<sup>10</sup>; and use of *program data* collected by the CTC from funded partnerships and shared in the aggregate with WestEd. Across all four stakeholder survey groups, the response rate was 76 percent (533 respondents of 703 surveyed). Response rates for each group were as follows: residents, 82 percent; mentor teachers, 74 percent; partnership team members, 74 percent; supervisors, 64 percent.

Like the results from most opinion surveys, those from the stakeholder surveys likely reflect positive response bias, which is the tendency of survey takers to lean positive in their responses. Thus, in reviewing exhibits showing responses to survey items, notice the *relative* response distributions within and across items.

Following a brief program overview, the remaining sections of this report are organized according to the aforementioned aspects of the residency programs: partnership, resident recruitment, mentorship, and alignment of coursework and clinical practice.

## Program overview

All 38 partnerships for teacher residency programs included in this evaluation received CTC grants in spring 2019. In November 2019, the CTC asked them to report program information, including the total number of enrolled teacher candidates (i.e., residents), demographic/background information about the residents, and the credential/authorization that each resident was pursuing. Exhibits 1 and 2, on the following page, summarize these fall 2019 data.

---

6 *Partnership team members* are representatives from the IHE or the LEA who are involved in the day-to-day work of running the residency that is supported with Teacher Residency Grant Program funds.

7 A *mentor teacher* is the teacher of record of the classroom in which the resident teaches during the residency year.

8 *Residents* are teacher candidates supported with Teacher Residency Grant Program funds.

9 *Supervisors* are the individuals, often but not always from the IHE, who are responsible for observing, evaluating, and/or supporting funded residents in their clinical placements. Sometimes these individuals are referred to as “coaches.”

10 WestEd evaluators used four program factors to guide selection of sites for interviews: (a) type of locale (i.e., urban, rural, suburban), (b) residency focus (i.e. special education, STEM, bilingual), (c) participation in the California Residency Lab, and (d) whether the program received an “expansion” or “launch” grant. A total of 10 programs were selected for the sample.

### EXHIBIT 1. FUNDED TEACHER RESIDENCY PROGRAMS STATEWIDE, BY THE NUMBERS

Number of state-funded teacher residency programs with residents enrolled <sup>a</sup>	27
Number of programs serving residents seeking special education credential	18
Number of programs serving residents seeking STEM credential	13
Number of programs serving residents seeking bilingual authorization	9

Source. Fall 2019 data from CTC.

<sup>a</sup> An additional 11 programs received grants but had no residents enrolled in fall 2019; some of them intentionally waited until spring 2020 to recruit residents.

### EXHIBIT 2. TEACHER RESIDENTS, BY THE NUMBERS

Total number of participating teacher residents <sup>a</sup>	234
Number of residents pursuing Education Specialist credential	93
Number of residents pursuing STEM credentials	87
Number of residents pursuing Bilingual authorization	61
Percentage of responding teacher residents identifying as people of color or multiracial <sup>b</sup>	74%

Source. Fall 2019 data from CTC, unless otherwise noted.

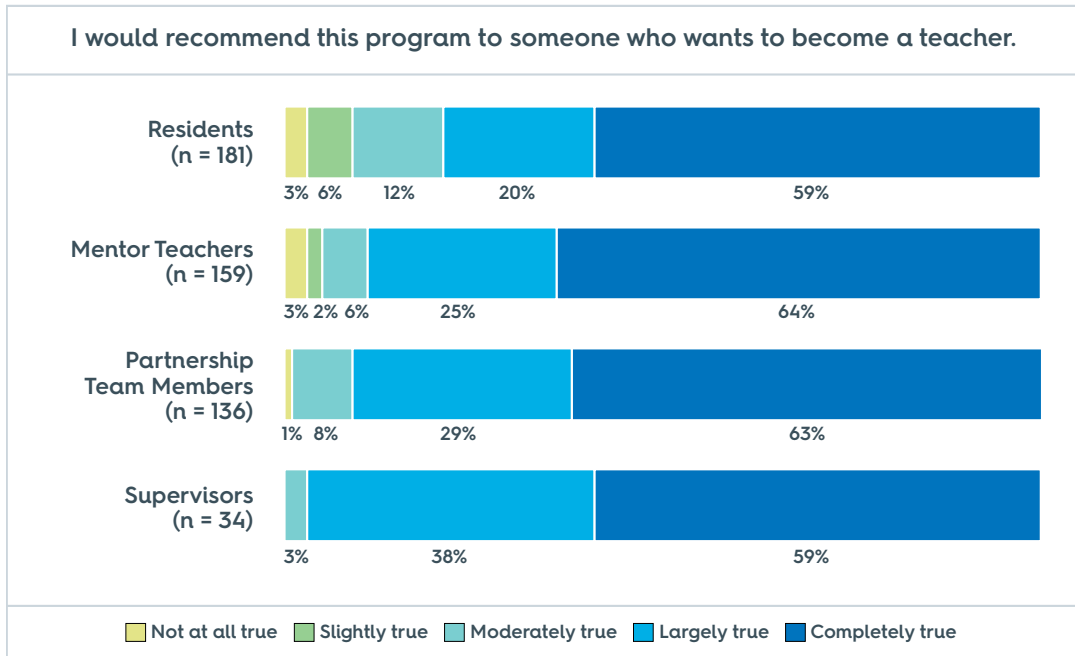
<sup>a</sup> Because some residents are pursuing multiple credentials/authorizations, the sum of residents listed in the following three rows is greater than the total number of participating residents.

<sup>b</sup> These data are from WestEd's stakeholder survey, not from the CTC. Survey takers were asked to identify their ethnicity and their race in two separate items, in keeping with practices of the California Department of Education. Respondents are included in this category if they identified their ethnicity as Hispanic/Latinx, or identified with a racial category that was not white. Respondents who identified as multiracial are also included in this percentage. Thirty-two respondents who either skipped these items or indicated "Decline to state" are not included in this percentage.

Overall, the stakeholders surveyed were quite positive about their own residency program. Responding to the statement that they would recommend the program to someone who wants to become a teacher, 79 to 97 percent in each stakeholder group indicated that the statement was *largely true* or *completely true* (exhibit 3). As one supervisor said, "I think it's a great program provided to residency teachers and feel overall [that] it's a great opportunity to get your credential and learn daily on the job." One mentor in another program responded in the same vein: "It's much more beneficial for the residents to be there to help [build] classroom culture at the beginning of the year, and they get the full experience if they go all the way through. They learn students' names and students see them more as a real teacher, so [the residents'] understanding is more

accurate.” Another mentor said, “I think it is wonderful to be able to have the resident the whole school year. They can learn so much during the entire year. The program also helps to keep me, as a mentor, on track and making sure to expose my resident to as many learning opportunities as possible. I would definitely do this again for other future special education teachers.”

**EXHIBIT 3. STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT VALUE OF RESIDENCY PROGRAM, BY PERCENTAGE**



Source. Response data from WestEd’s California Teacher Residency Stakeholder Survey, fall 2019 administration.  
 Note. Percentages have been rounded and may not total 100.

.....

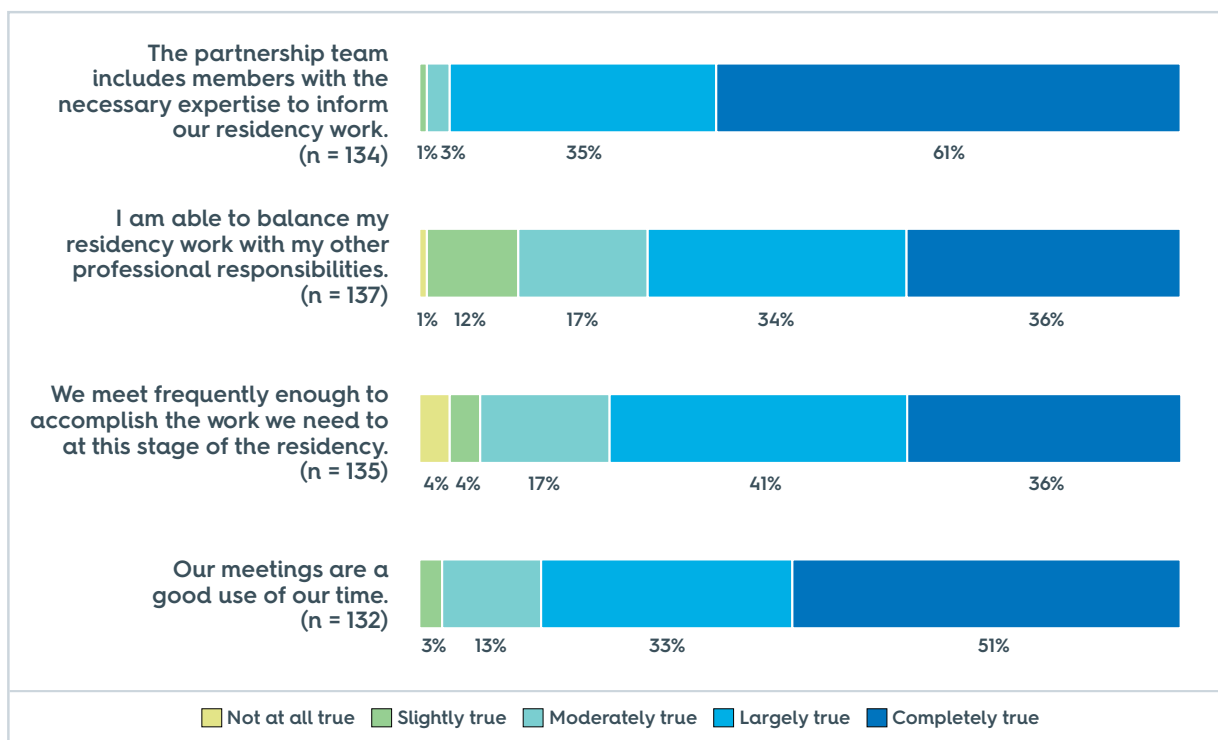
*“I think it is wonderful to be able to have the resident the whole school year. They can learn so much during the entire year. The program also helps to keep me, as a mentor, on track and making sure to expose my resident to as many learning opportunities as possible. I would definitely do this again for other future special education teachers.”*

.....

## Partnership

Surveys asked members of partnership teams about their perceptions of specific aspects of their own partnership. When asked about whether their partnership had the necessary expertise to inform the residency work, the vast majority (96 percent) responded positively. The two survey items about partnership that received relatively less positive responses were these statements: “I am able to balance my residency work with my other professional responsibilities” and “We meet frequently enough to accomplish the work we need to at this stage of the residency,” with 30 and 25 percent of respondents, respectively, indicating that these statements were either not at all, slightly, or moderately true (exhibit 4).

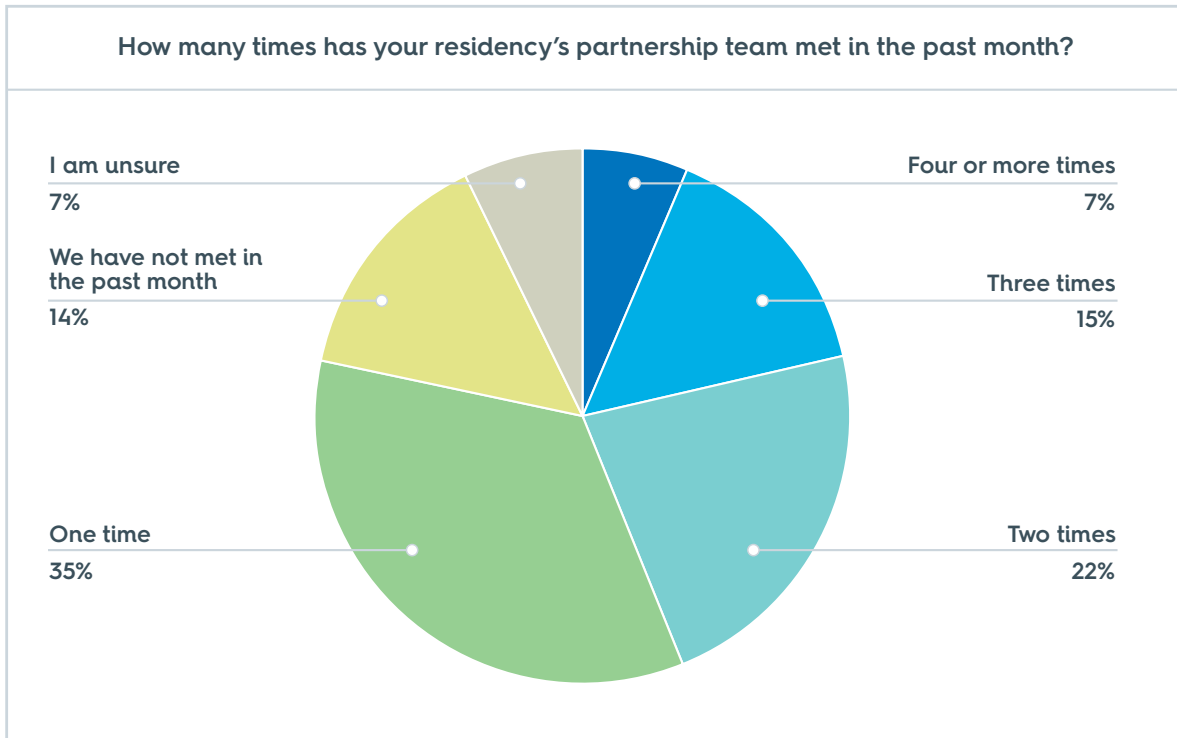
**EXHIBIT 4. PARTNERSHIP TEAM MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT TEAM COMPOSITION, WORKLOAD, AND COMMUNICATION STRUCTURES, BY PERCENTAGE**



Source. Response data from WestEd's California Teacher Residency Stakeholder Survey, fall 2019 administration.  
 Note. Percentages have been rounded and may not total 100.

Most partnerships (78 percent) had met at least one time in the month prior to the survey, with a large proportion (44 percent) meeting two or more times (exhibit 5). In interviews, several partnership leads noted that having longer meetings, with extended time together to think about the big picture of their work, was preferable to having shorter meetings in which it seemed there was only enough time to, as one person put it, “put out fires.” Interviews also revealed the stresses felt by many project leads in launching and overseeing the residency programs. As one said, “Starting [a new program] from ground zero is a lot of work for people who have other jobs.” Another commented on how the realities of their program implementation was not quite aligning with what they had proposed or envisioned, saying, “We’re achievers. We want to do things well and it doesn’t feel good to feel like you’re not where you want to be or where you’re supposed to be.”

## EXHIBIT 5. PARTNERSHIP MEETING FREQUENCY, BY PERCENTAGE (N = 139)

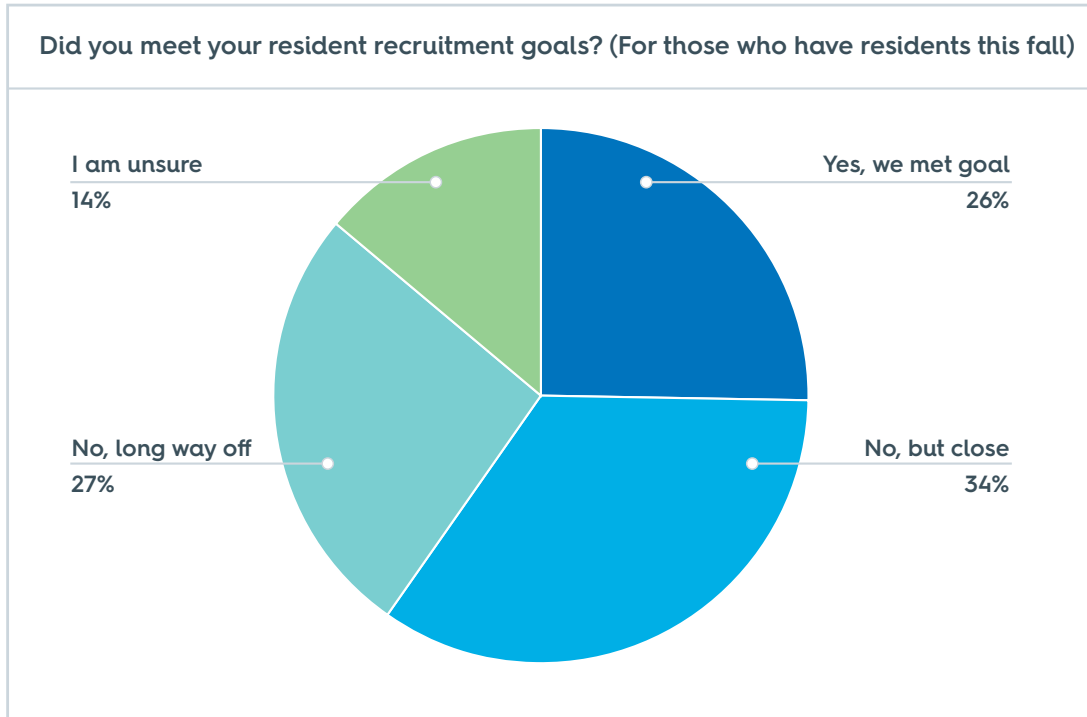


Source. Response data from WestEd's California Teacher Residency Stakeholder Survey, fall 2019 administration.  
Note. Percentages have been rounded and may not total 100.

### Resident recruitment

Recruitment of teacher candidates was one of the more significant challenges for residency programs. Just over one quarter of the partnership team survey respondents indicated that their program had met recruitment goals, whereas over 60 percent indicated that they had not met their goals. In this latter group, responses to the survey item asking whether they had met their goals were split between “No, a long way off” and “No, but close” (exhibit 6).

## EXHIBIT 6. RECRUITMENT OUTCOMES, BY PERCENTAGE (N = 102)



Source. Response data from WestEd's California Teacher Residency Stakeholder Survey, fall 2019 administration.  
Note. Percentages have been rounded and may not total 100.

Ninety-one percent of the respondents to the survey for partnership team members indicated that they had experienced recruitment challenges (exhibit 7). Chief among the reported recruitment challenges was finding candidates who met admission requirements (68 percent). In open-ended survey responses, respondents specifically noted as a recruitment barrier the need for applicants to pass certain credentialing exams prior to enrollment, including both the California Subject Examinations for Teachers and the California Basic Educational Skills Test. One explained, “[The] inadequate amount of time for test preparation and [the] financial burden that stems from testing- and application-related fees are major attrition factors that prevent recommended candidates from entering the program and [the] credential process, perpetuating teacher shortages in high-need subjects.” Also noted by respondents as key recruitment challenges were financial barriers for residents (65 percent), competition with other pathways and programs (49 percent), and difficulties reaching a diverse candidate pool (33 percent).

When asked about recruitment challenges, a relatively large portion of respondents (30 percent) marked “other.” From their written explanations of this response choice, two key themes emerged: challenges related to the grant timeline and those related to a requirement that residents work in the partner district for a period after completing the program.

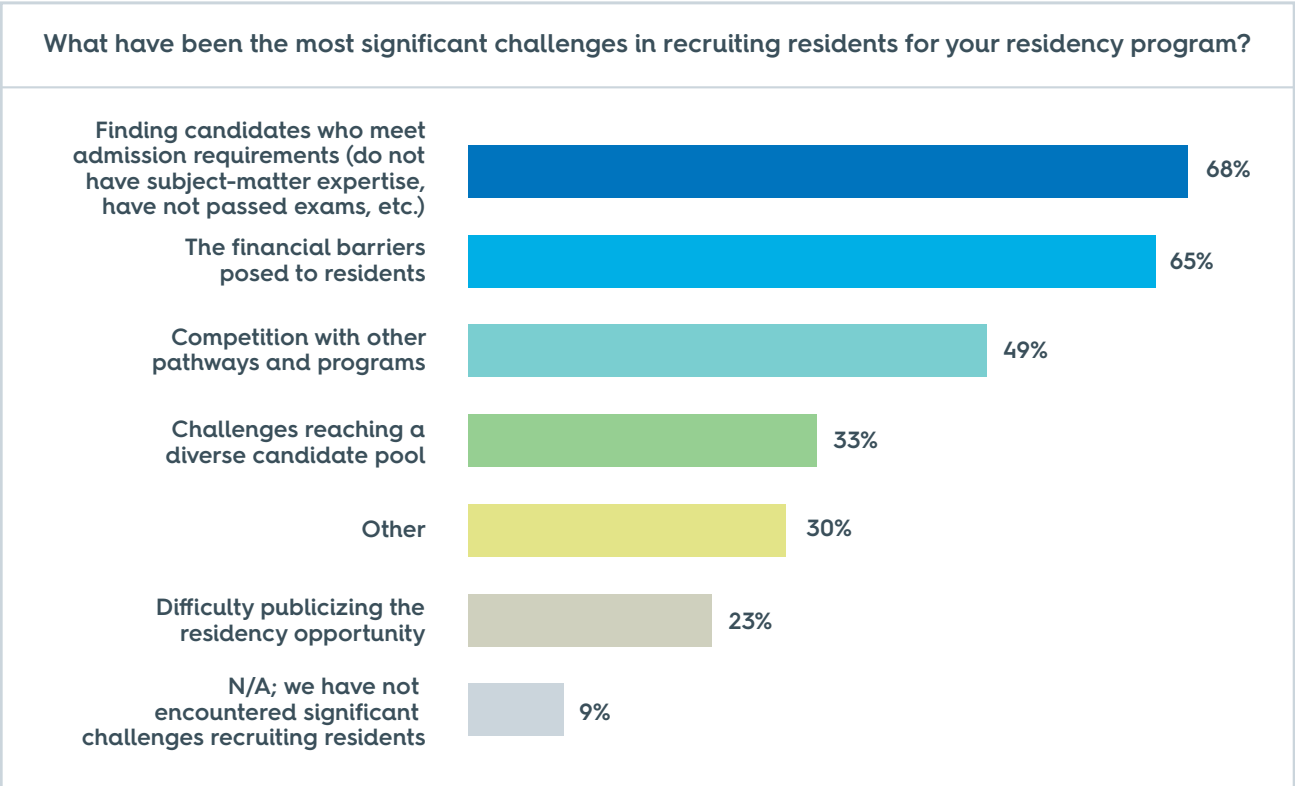


About the grant timeline, one respondent said, “We were approved for the residency grant late in (the) spring semester, which limited our recruitment period.” Another wrote that “the recruitment period was very short – 2 to 3 weeks [until the end of school] and over the summer – so it was difficult to get the word out and provide enough time for residents to complete all the requirements.” Elaborating on these challenges, one partnership team member wrote, “The timing of the grant and the university application deadlines led to a pool of candidates with potential, but not well prepared for the position. In addition there was not sufficient time for the identification of residency sites and teachers.”

Because these are multiyear grants, grantees will have the opportunity to roll the Year 1 funds forward to recruit additional residents in the coming years. In Year 2, grantees should be better positioned to recruit residents because they will not have the constraints they experienced in Year 1 when grant funds were released during what would otherwise have been the prime recruitment window.

Some respondents indicated that the grant’s post-residency work requirement of four years in the program’s partner district deterred potential residents from enrolling. One respondent wrote, “We’ve had issues particularly with the commitment portion [that requires] candidates to stay within the sponsoring school district for multiple years.”

**EXHIBIT 7. PARTNERSHIP TEAM MEMBERS’ PERCEPTIONS ABOUT RESIDENT RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES, BY PERCENTAGE (N = 105)**



Source. Response data from WestEd's California Teacher Residency Stakeholder Survey, fall 2019 administration.  
 Note. Respondents were told to check all applicable response options, so the percentages add to more than 100.

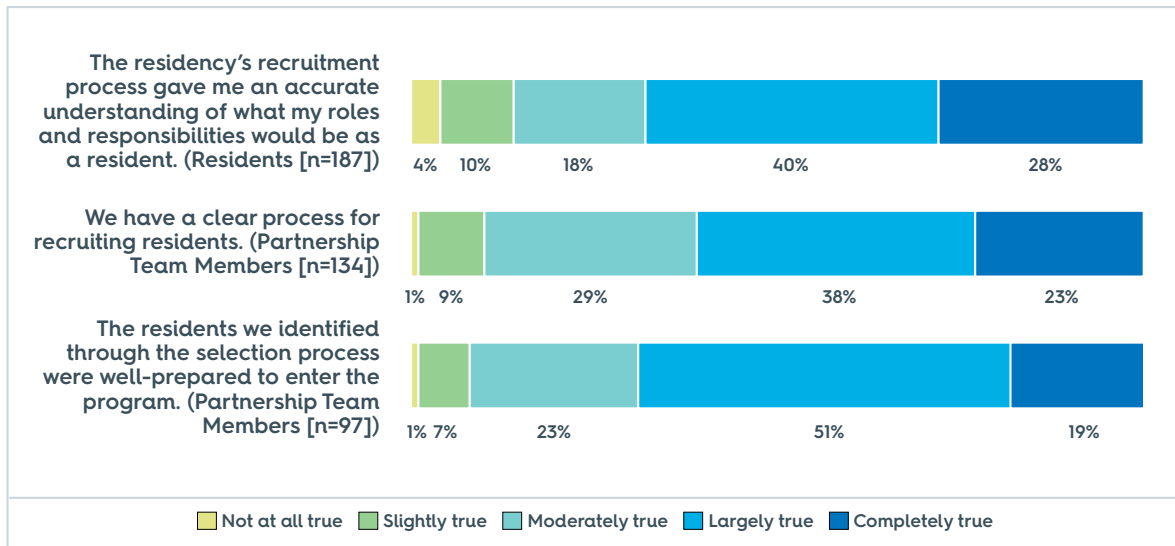
### Connections between Partnership and Resident Recruitment

Survey data suggest that there may be a relationship between a strong partnership and a strong recruitment process. In this analysis, partnership strength was measured by a composite score created from responses to eight survey items about the partnership (e.g., partner perceptions regarding having the “right” people involved, meeting frequently enough, and having meetings that are a good use of their time). A second composite score was based on two items on the resident survey asking about their experience of the recruitment process. The correlation between partnership strength and whether the partnership team met its recruitment goals was statistically significant, while the relationship between partnership strength and residents’ perceptions of the recruitment process was a borderline-significant correlation. These results suggest that the relationship between partnership and resident recruitment is worth exploring further with other data. It may be the case that, on average, stronger partnerships have a higher-quality recruitment process and better outcomes. Such a relationship may be explained by stronger partnerships more successfully sharing the work of resident recruitment and selection across the IHE and its district partner.

Almost 40 percent of the partnership team members indicated that their recruitment process was less than “very” clear” or “completely” clear. Open-ended survey responses suggest that program leads learned from their experiences in Year 1, with one lead explaining, “Looking ahead, we will recruit and communicate earlier and more frequently as we tighten up our procedures and systems.”

The vast majority of responding residents reported that their experience of going through the recruitment process gave them an accurate understanding of what their roles and responsibilities would be as a resident and that it increased their desire to participate in the program (exhibit 8). Partnership team members indicated that finding residents who could meet admission requirements was their major recruitment challenge (exhibit 7). Yet two thirds of the respondents indicated that, in the end, they considered their own program’s residents to be well qualified (exhibit 8).

## EXHIBIT 8. PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE RESIDENCY RECRUITMENT PROCESS, BY PERCENTAGE



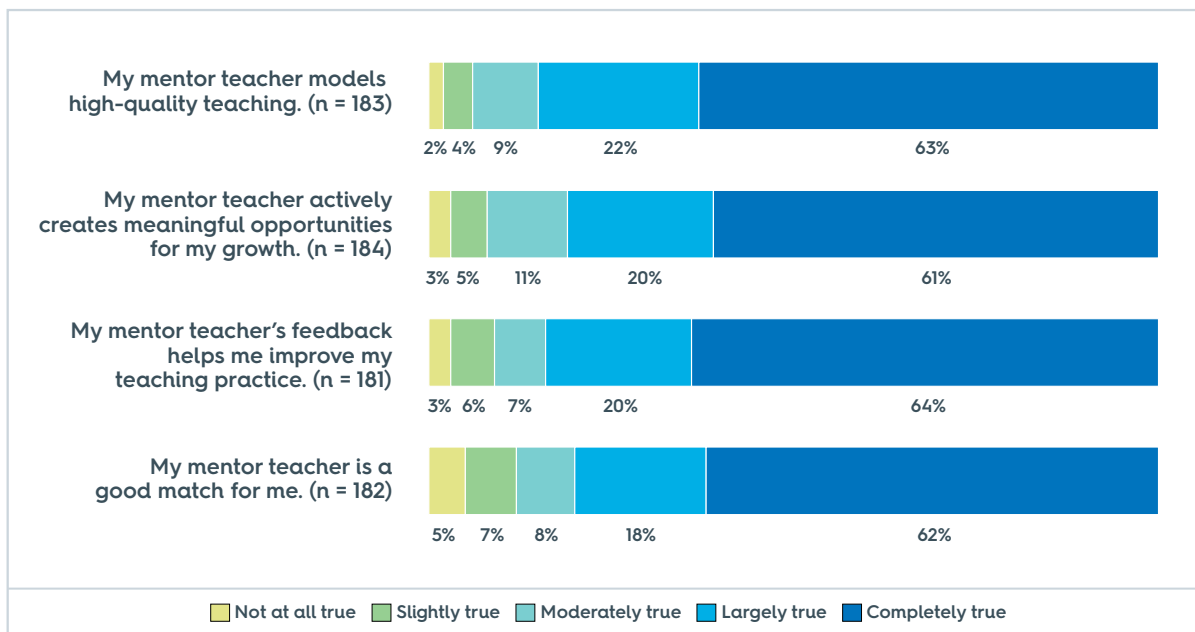
Source. Response data from WestEd's California Teacher Residency Stakeholder Survey, fall 2019 administration.

Note. Percentages have been rounded and may not total 100.

### Mentoring

Across items in the resident surveys, the most positive responses related to residents' perceptions about being mentored (exhibit 9, on the following page). Mentor teacher respondents were likewise generally positive about their mentorship practices (exhibit 10, on page 13). Almost all mentors reported that they model lessons and practices with their resident at least once a week, or more frequently, and that they give feedback one to three times a month, or more frequently. Mentors reported that they co-teach lessons a bit less frequently, with a third indicating that they did so one to three times a month, or not at all. Several mentors described how co-teaching improves their own teaching. One wrote, "As a mentor I make sure I do better in co-planning and implementing my lessons every day. I learn with my Teacher Scholar every day! I have someone co-planning, reflecting, and revising our instruction. She observes, reflects, and makes changes to her lessons that helps me think about my own teaching. So I am improving with her!"

## EXHIBIT 9. RESIDENTS' EXPERIENCE OF MENTORING, BY PERCENTAGE



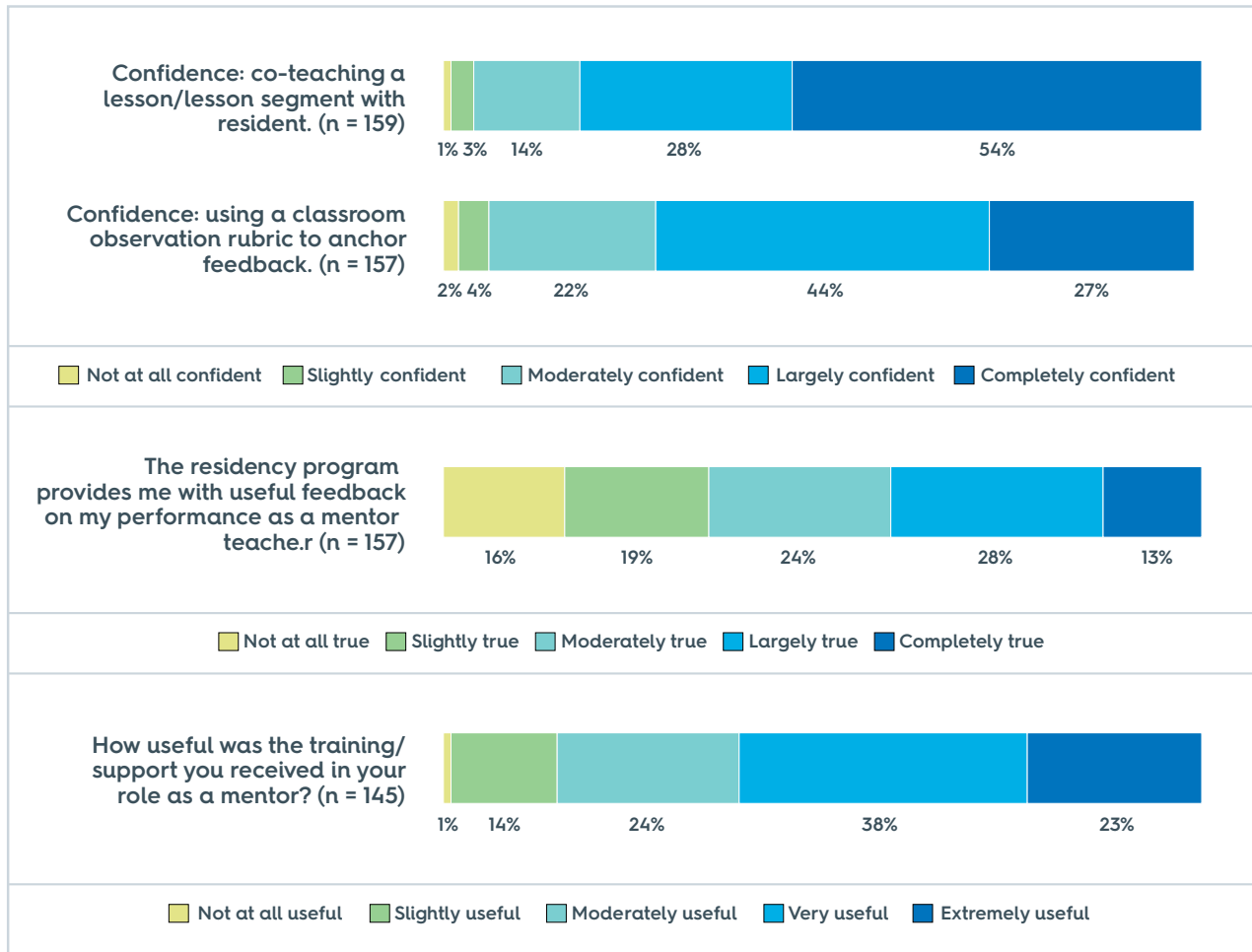
Source. Response data from WestEd's California Teacher Residency Stakeholder Survey, fall 2019 administration.

Note. Percentages have been rounded and may not total 100.

Mentors also reported feeling quite confident about key aspects of their work, including co-teaching lessons and using a classroom observation rubric to anchor their feedback (exhibit 10). On the other hand, nearly 60 percent of responding mentors indicated that they are not necessarily getting useful feedback on their performance as mentors. In their open-ended survey responses, several made specific requests for such feedback, with one writing, "Create systems for feedback on mentor performance."

Additionally, about 40 percent of mentors indicated that the training they received was "moderately," "slightly," or "not at all" useful. One stated, "We had the one meeting at the beginning of the year, but I don't feel like I've had much input or involvement from [the partnership] besides that. If there is something that my teacher candidate should be doing, or feedback I should be giving, I'd like to know that. Perhaps that info was given out at that first meeting and I missed it." Another said, "Give us training so that we are more likely to give relevant/consistent feedback." More generally, many mentors noted in open-ended responses that they simply want additional communication from their programs about a range of topics, including expectations for their work as mentors, what residents are learning in coursework, and the feedback that residents' coursework supervisors are providing. Many requested having regular meetings that would include supervisors and/or residents.

## EXHIBIT 10. MENTOR TEACHERS' CONFIDENCE AND PERCEPTIONS ABOUT SUPPORT, BY PERCENTAGE



Source. Response data from WestEd's California Teacher Residency Stakeholder Survey, fall 2019 administration.

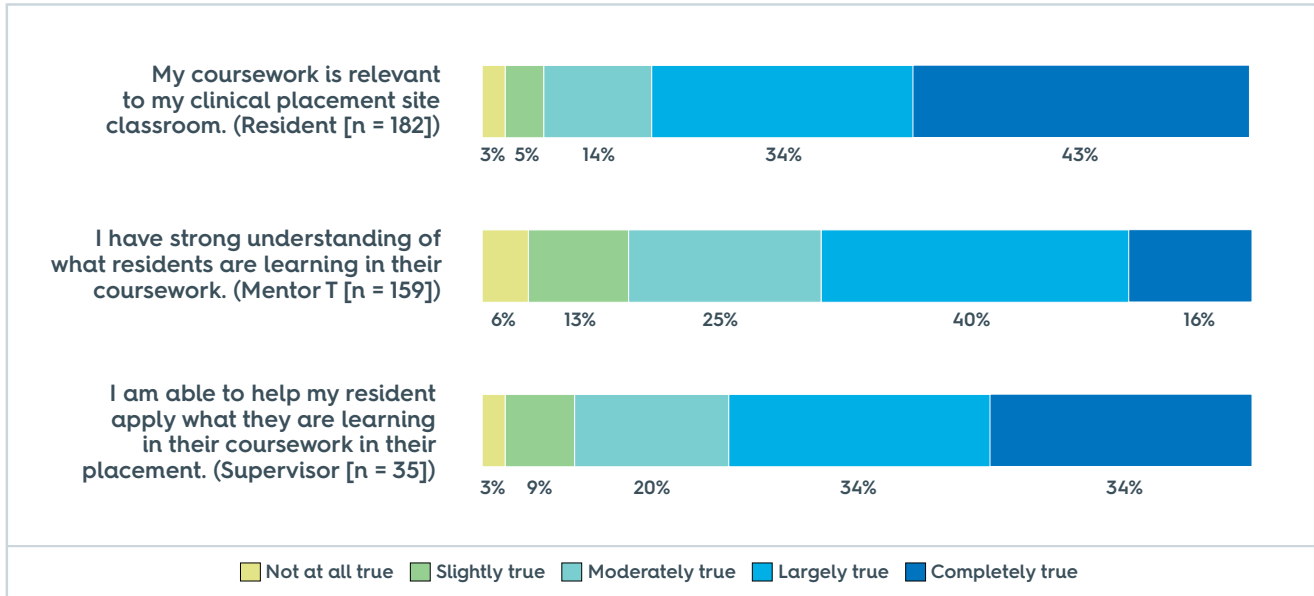
Note. Percentages have been rounded and may not total 100.

### Alignment of coursework and clinical practice

Across survey responses from mentors, residents, and supervisors alike, responses about the extent to which clinical experiences are well aligned with coursework were generally less favorable than responses to other survey topics (exhibit 11, on the following page). This result may not be surprising, because aligning coursework to clinical experiences is a significant and time-consuming endeavor and most of these programs had newly launched, having had only a small window for pre-launch planning. This alignment requires clarity about the high-priority skills that all candidates should learn; about the coursework that introduces those skills; and about what kind of clinical experiences would allow residents to practice and receive feedback on those skills. Yet several program leads interviewed for the evaluation had not yet settled on a set of prioritized skills. In open-ended survey responses, several mentors expressed a desire to have greater clarity about residents' coursework in order to more effectively support their residents. One said, for example, "More clearly define what the students are learning and when, so we can support [them]." Many mentors specifically asked for more-regular communication about coursework. "I would appreciate a group email once or twice a month with some general updates about what the residents are doing in their courses," said one. Supervisors also

indicated a desire for additional information, with one stating, “I would like to be more aware of what my residents are doing in coursework so I can integrate it into my supervision work without having to rely on the resident to summarize everything.”

### EXHIBIT 11. STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT ALIGNMENT BETWEEN COURSEWORK AND CLINICAL PRACTICE, BY PERCENTAGE



Source: Response data from WestEd’s California Teacher Residency Stakeholder Survey, Fall 2019 administration.  
 Note: Percentages have been rounded and may not total 100.

### Conclusion

Data from the fall of Year 1 of the Teacher Residency Grant Program suggest that, overall, stakeholders are very positive about their experiences with their program, which is notable given that most of the programs had just launched in fall 2019 and had a limited window for planning and recruitment. Among partnership team members from IHEs and school districts, there was recognition that strong partnership work requires adequate time for collaboration, and there was evidence that in some programs not all of the important foundational work had been completed. A portion of partnership leads indicated challenges in trying to manage residency

*Data from the fall of Year 1 of the Teacher Residency Grant Program suggest that, overall, stakeholders are very positive about their experiences with the programs, which is notable given that most of the programs had just launched in fall 2019 and had a limited window for planning and recruitment.*

program work amid other responsibilities and noted the need for more regular opportunities for collaboration within the program. Recruitment of residents was a significant barrier for the majority of partnerships, with

partnership team members indicating that some of the most challenging recruitment roadblocks were related to credentialing exams, financial barriers, competition from other pathways, and finding diverse candidates. Mentors and residents alike were generally very positive about the mentorship in the residencies, though it appears there is room for improvement in mentorship-related training, support, communication, and feedback. Finally, the alignment of coursework to the clinical experience is an area that appears to need further attention in many partnerships.

In 2019/20, the California Residency Lab has been providing direct support to 20 of the funded partnerships through a series of in-person and virtual sessions that bring expertise to the partnership teams on the topics covered in this report and on other topics; that create opportunities for teams to plan next steps and for networked learning across partnerships; and that provide scaffolds for using data for continuous improvement.

---

© 2020 WestEd. All rights reserved.

Suggested citation: White, M. E., Takahashi, S., Hirschboeck, K., Honigsberg, L., Perry, R., Reade, F., & Ambroso, E. (2020). *Early learning from formative evaluation of California's Teacher Residency Grant Program*. WestEd.

This evaluation was funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.



**About WestEd** > WestEd is a nonpartisan, nonprofit agency that conducts and applies research, develops evidence-based solutions, and provides services and resources in the realms of education, human development, and related fields, with the end goal of improving outcomes and ensuring equity for individuals from infancy through adulthood. For more information, visit [WestEd.org](https://www.wested.org). For regular updates on research, free resources, solutions, and job postings from WestEd, subscribe to the *E-Bulletin*, our semimonthly e-newsletter, at [WestEd.org/subscribe](https://www.wested.org/subscribe).