



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Launching the California Teacher Residency Grant Program

Findings from Year 1 (2019/20)

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## Executive Summary

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Educators and policymakers in California are faced with an ever-growing urgency to address chronic teacher shortages, which disproportionately affect lower-income students and students of color (García & Weiss, 2019). Teacher residencies – programs that integrate credentialing coursework with a clinical placement in the public school classroom of an expert mentor teacher – have shown promise helping districts to meet specific workforce needs, diversify their workforce, and retain residency completers in high-need schools (Silva et al., 2015).

**California Teacher Residency Grant Program.** In an effort to develop long-term solutions to meet the need for diverse, well-prepared educators in high-need areas, the state of California dedicated \$75 million in 2018 to develop and expand teacher residency programs across the state through the California Teacher Residency Grant program. The grant-funded residencies are led by partnerships between local education agencies and colleges or universities and are specifically focused on preparing STEM, bilingual, and special education teachers to teach in high-need schools.

WestEd is conducting a formative evaluation of the California Teacher Residency Grant Program. The evaluation examines how grantees are progressing toward the grant’s overarching goal of preparing diverse, well-prepared STEM, bilingual, and special education teachers who take jobs in and are retained in high-need schools. This report summarizes learnings from the grant’s first year of implementation, 2019–20.

## Findings

### **1. Many partnerships are beginning to make progress toward increasing the number of teachers in shortage areas, as well as the proportion of teachers of color**

- Most residents intend to complete the program and take a job in their district.
- Residents in grantee programs better reflect the racial diversity of students they serve compared with the existing teaching workforce, but there is still room for progress.

### **2. All stakeholder groups valued the residency programs**

- The vast majority of stakeholders endorsed their programs.
- Residents, mentors, and supervisors pointed to the clinical experiences as a particularly valuable aspect of the residency programs.
- Mentors valued the opportunity to mentor residents.

### **3. Partnerships are working to strengthen key components of their residency programs**

- Partnership team members are committed to recruiting and supporting teachers of color, but there is still work to do.
- Many partnerships experienced challenges establishing strong connections between coursework and clinical experience.
- Overall, training and support for mentor teachers can be strengthened, but some programs are doing this well.

#### **4. Partnerships are taking a variety of approaches toward building sustainable residency programs**

- Partnerships are beginning to build strong working relationships between institutions of higher education and local education agencies.
- Partnerships are taking advantage of a variety of strategies to make full-year residency placements a possibility for residents.
- Many residents still struggle to meet their financial needs.
- Many residencies drew on additional sources of financial support, in addition to grants, but still need support developing long-term, sustainable financial models.

#### **5. In the COVID-19 crisis, most residents and mentors adapted to working together in an online environment, but stakeholders are concerned about resident preparation and financial stresses for residents.**

- Most programs quickly adapted to an online environment.
- Even as clinical placements continued, stakeholders were widely concerned about residents' loss of valuable teaching experience due to COVID-related school closures.
- Financial stresses for residents grew in the COVID-context.
- Residents had concerns about meeting program requirements during distance learning, and about whether COVID disruptions would harm their ability to get hired in the fall.

### **Recommendations for supporting California Teacher Residency programs**

Based on the evaluation findings, and wider research from the field, the evaluation team offers the following recommendations to policymakers, advocates, and others leading or supporting the California Teacher Residency programs:

- **Ensure stable leadership roles in both the local education agencies and institutions of higher education that are participating in the residency partnership.**
- **Technical assistance offered to funded-partnerships should focus on issues of key importance.**
- **Ensure that programs are encouraged to take a stance of learning and improvement.**
- **Prioritize supports for the cohort of residents entering their first year as teachers in 2020–21.**
- **Ensure residency stipends can be supplemented with additional financial aid and supports to make the full-year residency a financially viable pathway.**