

# GOING FURTHER TOGETHER

**BUILDING OWNERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT TO SUPPORT HIGH-QUALITY TEACHER PREPARATION**

**SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT CASE STUDY: OWNERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT**

# ABOUT GOING FURTHER TOGETHER

This report is part of a suite of materials created by *Prepared To Teach* and WestEd during our shared research effort, the Sustainability Project.<sup>1</sup> The work explores sustainability challenges in teacher preparation—and, importantly, promising practices to overcome those challenges (see [Appendix](#) for more about the project).

All the reports are available on the [Prepared To Teach](#) website, [preparedtoteach.org/resources](https://preparedtoteach.org/resources). In addition, associated resources and tools, including guidance documents, budget calculators, and presentation materials, can be accessed there. All *Prepared To Teach* materials are licensed under the Creative Commons license [CC BY-NC-SA](#); we hope they prove useful to our colleagues everywhere. ●

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# INTRODUCTION

Financial investments and careful stewardship of dedicated resources are required to develop and grow high-quality teacher preparation programs, including teacher residencies. But significant, long-term funds are not always easy to come by, and funding alone cannot produce long-term sustainable teacher residencies.<sup>2</sup> Building shared ownership and engagement over teacher preparation is one way to ensure that efforts will endure beyond initial funding. Success can be found by drawing on effective, lasting collaboration among stakeholders who have not traditionally worked together—both within organizations (e.g., across departments) and across organizational lines (e.g., between teacher preparation programs and districts). As partners identify mutual goals and agree to work toward them together, these commitments can help drive the work forward.<sup>3</sup> In many cases, including in the vignettes shared in this report, teacher preparation program champions have successfully fostered ownership and engagement with colleagues in order to sustain and grow the kinds of commitments that will ensure program development and longevity. These programs demonstrate how an initial investment – from a teacher preparation partner, fundraising effort, or external grant – coupled with strategic effort and thinking—can not only maintain existing programs, but also spur innovation that results in shared ownership, deepened collaboration, and/or stronger, more embedded structures.

The sustainability approaches outlined in the other reports in this series on teacher preparation require that preparation champions build cross-sector ownership and engagement (see [Appendix](#) for more information on the full suite of reports in the series). Building sustainability involves rethinking organizational budgets, which requires alignment around commitments, priorities, and systems. To achieve sustainability goals, the right people need to be at the table, engaged in the right conversations. This report highlights partnerships that have successfully engaged this work.

*Prepared To Teach* and WestEd have worked to understand the methods different teacher preparation champions have used to develop mutually agreed-upon goals, commitments, and processes in residencies and other high-quality teacher preparation programs. Teacher preparation programs – including those housed at institutions of higher education and at other organizations that certify teachers – work closely with districts to create strong preparation systems that support aspiring teachers. These preparation efforts go more smoothly when partners share ownership of the process and encourage engagement with their shared strategies.<sup>1</sup> This research project surfaced two strategies that were common across preparation programs and their district partners’ in their efforts to build ownership and engagement:

**Building shared commitments and vision:** co-constructing shared, long-term commitments and mutual expectations for what teacher preparation efforts will accomplish. Creating a shared vision can help establish collective investment in affordable, high-quality, accessible programs.

**Creating sustainable collaboration and communication structures:** establishing formal, ongoing opportunities for collaboration about teacher preparation. These structures might facilitate sharing of effective practices or collaboration across sectors to address teacher shortages. Most successful programs have found a way to appoint a permanent liaison to enhance cooperation.

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<sup>1</sup> While this paper focuses specifically on teacher preparation programs and their district partners, there are other stakeholders, including local businesses, philanthropies, and families and community members who can play a role in teacher preparation. As they support candidates or share their vision for community schools, they exert influence over teacher preparation efforts.

These two approaches rely on one another; in our experience, a necessary first step toward establishing lasting collaborative structures lies in the support for shared commitments and vision. As organizations identify and commit to goals and actions, sustainable structures are a key strategy for accomplishing those goals and ensuring that they are poised to last. Collaboration and communication structures can help ensure that commitments and vision remain aligned and relevant. Scheduling ongoing interactions allows key players to maintain communication, work toward improvement, and make necessary adjustments.

For organizations interested in ensuring that high-quality teacher preparation programs are viable in the long term and manageable for everyone involved, building ownership and engagement is a critical step. In the sections that follow, we highlight organizations across the country that have developed strategies within and across institutional boundaries to support localities striving to build ownership and engagement around their teacher preparation goals.<sup>ii</sup>



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## **BUILDING SHARED COMMITMENTS AND VISION**

When key stakeholders collaborate on a shared vision of high-quality teacher preparation grounded in mutual commitments, several positive outcomes can result. Interviews conducted for this report, and other interactions the research team has had with the field, have surfaced meaningful collaborative work as a key step. When that work advances beyond the original

person or people involved, additional champions join efforts to produce broad and long-term shifts in practice. Support from policymakers, funders, or fellow colleagues who are fully invested in a preparation strategy can allow efforts to flourish, helping practices become part of a long-term strategy. Some institutions have found that collaboration can develop shared goals for all involved to work toward. Other programs have succeeded in building broad, diverse coalitions to bring about shifts in practice. When partners come together, they are able to marshal their individual strengths and resources to build a stronger program. When motivated stakeholders engage in targeted engagement activities and use strategically designed and deployed communications to make shared commitments in pursuit of a mutual vision, the odds are increased that a system will be able to build—and eventually scale and sustain—high-quality teacher preparation programming.

The interviews we conducted revealed a few types of vision-building. In some cases, vision was built within organizations, where champions for high-quality teacher preparation worked with colleagues to build will to achieve shared goals. Elsewhere, the work took place across different organizations that collaborate on teacher preparation, such as P-12 school districts, higher education, non-profit organizations, and labor unions. Finally, in some cases, a broader vision and set of commitments were established at the state level, leading to large-scale changes in teacher preparation.

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<sup>ii</sup> In many cases, these organizations have used tools and other resources to facilitate their work. Examples are included in this case study through links and endnotes. The project also has tools and resources developed by [Prepared To Teach](#) to support partnerships' work.

## BUILDING SHARED VISION WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS

While partnership building across programs and districts is necessary to carry out strong teacher preparation efforts, building ownership and the will internally is also

critical. For example, if deans are not invested in the importance of sustained clinical practice experiences that integrate program studies with candidates' field placements, they are unlikely to ensure that their staff coordinate with partner districts to ensure strong clinical placements. Similarly, if district HR directors recognize the value of more residency partnerships, but school improvement units in the district do not understand the instructional benefits of embedding teacher candidates in schools, finding ways to financially support candidates for intensive clinical placements will be more difficult. Building ownership and the will to enact a vision entails making sure that key players within an organization—including deans, faculty, assistant and associate superintendents, principals, unions, and site coordinators—have similar understandings about topics as broad as the program's overarching goals, as well as topics as specific as the instructional practices of mentors.

### FROM THE FIELD 1: BUILDING INTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

#### **Incentivizing School-Based Work for Portland State University (PSU) Faculty**

*Strategies: Dedicating staff to partnerships, incentivizing community-based research with funding, changes to the tenure process*

The teacher preparation program at Portland State University (PSU) College of Education in Oregon is known for its engagement with its district partners.<sup>4</sup> A public university that confers 450 education degrees each year, PSU has the largest college of education in Oregon. PSU dedicated resources to hire a Partnerships Director, who was tasked with liaising between the university and local school districts to find placements for teacher candidates. With this enhanced capacity, PSU was able to work more closely with surrounding districts, strengthening its focus on partnerships.

One key focus for deepening relationships between the preparation program and districts was to engage faculty in more work with schools and districts. As is often the case in higher education, existing incentive structures worked against deep faculty engagement in schools. Using grant funds, PSU created partnership grants restricted to projects with local districts that incentivized faculty to establish research agendas exploring connections between educational theory and clinical practice. PSU also created professional incentives for collaboration with districts: Unlike at most other institutions of higher education, or IHEs, the tenure process at PSU now values community-centered research that is designed to positively affect the local community.

This emphasis on connections between the college and districts permeates the College of Education, as PSU's teacher candidate methods courses now embed examples focused on local problems of practice, such as information targeted to support students with special needs.<sup>5</sup> The result is a closer relationship between local P-12 schools and the university and a faculty rooted in the community that believes in the importance of school-based work.

## Engaging Faculty Through Program Research at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte

*Strategies: Providing faculty summer research stipends, exposing more faculty to the lived experiences of candidates, using candidate data to inform curriculum, creating shared professional learning opportunities for faculty*

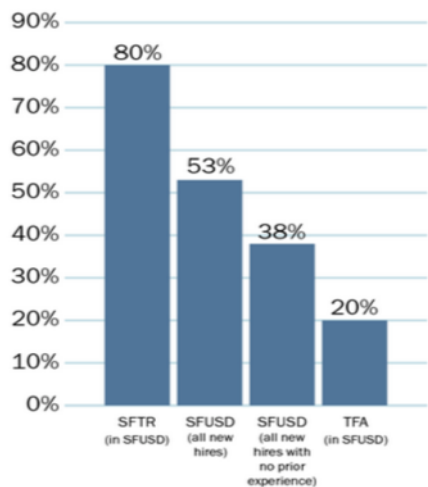
Starting in 2016, the Cato College of Education at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte began a program redesign process to strengthen candidates' preparedness for the field. Leveraging small, externally funded stipends, the College engaged faculty in intensive "learning tours" over the summer to inform the curricular redesign. These learning tours connected faculty and other stakeholders with discussions about the lived experiences of both program candidates and school personnel. Some particularly powerful information came from a series of interviews conducted with over 200 student teachers; after the candidates began student teaching, faculty members asked them where the program had prepared them well and where they felt they had gaps in their understanding. Faculty members also analyzed student learning outcomes to better inform curriculum decisions.

These research efforts surfaced a need for the program to better integrate coursework and fieldwork. As a result, the College established ongoing opportunities for faculty to engage in practice-based approaches to preparation. The thoughtful redesign process has developed deep faculty investment in the program that they helped redesign.

## Building Internal Advocacy Within San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD)

*Strategies: Positioning high-quality teacher preparation as a solution to a teacher shortage, leveraging impact data, sharing videos and stories to document human impact, drawing in key decision makers*

### Comparison of Five-Year Teacher Retention Rates: SFUSD



Source: SFUSD Human Resources Department; San Francisco Teacher Residency

SFUSD is home to the San Francisco Teacher Residency (SFTR), an initiative that started in 2010 as a collaboration between SFUSD, the Stanford Teacher Education Program, the University of San Francisco, and the United Educators of San Francisco (UESF). SFTR has prepared 150 teachers over the past decade and draws on several sources of funding to provide financially sustainable pathways to the classroom for teacher candidates in high-cost San Francisco. One of these sources is a significant investment from SFUSD. While the SFTR program is shifting to a partnership with UESF and Stanford, SFUSD will continue its teacher residency efforts.

To maintain the district's financial investment amidst competing budget priorities, SFUSD's Executive Director of Professional Growth and Development considers efforts to champion the residency to be an ongoing part

of her work. Her vision for teacher preparation translates into concrete budget advocacy, as she talks to the leaders of each strand of the residency to ascertain how much funding they need to meet their goals, then works to make a case to district budget staff for that funding. The executive director prepares “data sheets” on each residency cohort and on the residency cohorts over time. These reports demonstrate program impact, such as the ways in which the residencies have produced a more diverse teacher workforce and have helped solve persistent teacher shortages. The reports show, for example, that SFUSD had 95 vacancies at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year, and has since started three consecutive school years without any unfilled classroom positions. This is due in part to the fact that residency programs focused on shortage areas in the district—Spanish bilingual, mild/moderate special education, and STEM teachers.

The advocacy work, which highlights the measurable impacts of the residencies, is paired with strategic communications work that the executive director describes as “a little like being a publicist.” She and her team create videos to share with the San Francisco Board of Education, and they produce newsletters that highlight different aspects of the residencies each month to build engagement and awareness among stakeholders (the school board, senior SFUSD leadership, HR staff, and school leaders). She also conducts outreach to senior instructional staff at SFUSD to make sure they are aware of the program’s successes. This advocacy takes place in tandem with the residency program’s efforts to streamline their work and make sure the program operates efficiently in a time of tightening SFUSD budgets. Through this work, the executive director has continuously built the ongoing commitment needed to ensure that the residency efforts are sustained and constantly able to improve.

## **BUILDING SHARED VISION BETWEEN P-12 SCHOOLS AND PREPARATION PROGRAMS**

Partnerships between preparation programs and districts are foundational to high-quality teacher preparation. Quality programs feature deep partnerships focused on learning opportunities that are mutually beneficial to candidates and P-12

students. Partnerships provide opportunities for parties from both sectors to learn about each other’s contexts and needs, plan their work in tandem, and design a vision for the work to ensure that it progresses toward meeting shared goals.<sup>6</sup> When programs and districts co-construct understandings of what students need and how teachers can help provide those supports, districts can benefit from access to locally prepared teachers who understand their context and have been provided with the knowledge and opportunities for practice that they need to lead a classroom.



## FROM THE FIELD 2: SPREADING SUCCESSFUL RESIDENCIES THROUGH CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, BAKERSFIELD (CSUB)

*Strategies: Leveraging impact data, pitching a promising model to potential partners*

CSUB established a successful rural residency program in Kern County using funding from a federal Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grant. The Kern Rural Teacher Residency (KRTR), offered support to three rural districts—Buttonwillow, Lamont, and Semitropic—to create paid residencies to attract, prepare, and retain quality teachers. The residencies met district needs and taught the partners important lessons, but they ended when the TQP grant concluded, due in part to the fact that these small districts had modest staffing needs and low turnover, which meant that it was not necessary or financially sustainable to continue preparing cohorts of teachers.

Using the lessons learned from the KRTR, as well as the knowledge that other local districts were hiring KRTR graduates, the department chair at CSUB created a compelling pitch to encourage additional districts within Kern County to partner with CSUB to start residency programs. In meeting with potential partner districts and speaking with principals and district administrators, CSUB clearly outlined the difference between traditional teacher preparation and a residency, showing what participation in a residency program would entail, both for participating for districts and for CSUB; the benefits to districts of funding resident stipends; and other partnership costs, such as a coordinator position. Since grant funds no longer existed, CSUB focused its fiscal advice on how districts could use state and other dollars to establish their residency programs. Similar to the internal data-informed advocacy employed by the San Francisco Unified School District, CSUB presented promising data designed to appeal to potential partners, such as KRTR survey data indicating that residents were well-prepared, including in the STEM disciplines; stayed in the district longer than other teachers across the state; and were more likely to create warm, supportive classroom environments.

Although the TQP-funded program ended, the effects of the KRTR were long-lasting. Additional residency partnerships were formed between CSUB and districts in Kern County as a result of the KRTR's success: A residency to fill urban openings, a high school-focused residency, and a residency specifically for another large, rural district within Kern County were created.<sup>7</sup> Another program in nearby Tulare County was built on the KRTR work to serve rural schools. A residency consortium was also formed, bringing together four teacher residency programs in different stages of their development (the four programs are training their fifth, fourth, third, and first cohorts of teachers, respectively). The consortium programs are partnering to institutionalize teacher residency work at the IHE and district levels. At the IHE, the team is working to establish a designated coordinator for each program, small class sizes, designated faculty, in-kind departmental support, and consortium meetings and support. At the district level, partners are engaging to establish designated resident and mentor stipends, access to district facilities and specialists to teach resident courses, and conference travel opportunities. Meaningful, innovative work is happening within preparation program partnerships, but their

## STATES' ROLES IN BUILDING A BROADER SHARED VISION

efforts can be enhanced or constrained, depending on the state-level context the programs are operating within. Statewide shifts in resource allocation or teacher preparation policy have, in several cases, laid the groundwork to facilitate greater investments in high-quality teacher residencies and other robust preparation programs. Creating a statewide movement toward high-quality teacher preparation requires thoughtful engagement of key stakeholders. Several states have found success using strategies tailored to their local educational structures and political climates, such as through using strategically communicated data or holding targeted engagement activities to find individualized solutions and share lessons learned. •

### FROM THE FIELD 3: THREE STORIES OF STATE SHIFTS

#### Using Data to Make a Case for Residency Programs in California

*Strategies: Positioning high-quality preparation as a solution to a teacher shortage problem, drawing in key decision makers, pitching a promising model to potential partners, leveraging impact data*

In California, advocacy grounded in data facilitated a significant, state-level investment in teacher residencies. California has long suffered from a teacher shortage.<sup>8</sup> For many years, the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, and later, the Learning Policy Institute (LPI), both research and policy non-profit organizations, published annual reports on teacher shortages in California, identifying high-quality teacher residency programs as one potential solution to chronic teacher shortages.<sup>9</sup> The state had begun engaging in promising work with teacher residencies, funded through the federal TQP grant starting in 2009. And in 2014, the S.D. Bechtel Foundation funded the New Generation of Educators Initiative (NGEI), supporting clinically oriented reforms in one of the biggest teacher preparation systems in the country: the California State University (CSU) system.<sup>10</sup> These investments resulted in promising outcomes, and advocates lifted up these outcomes, pushing for the promising results to translate into a statewide investment.

LPI and other organizations that are focused on advocacy and civil rights, such as the Education Trust-West and the American Civil Liberties Union, strategically communicated about the value of teacher residencies, identifying potential legislative champions and working with the California School Boards Association to help school board members understand the problems teacher shortages present. The Public Policy Institute of California further amplified the message by publishing the results of its annual survey of California voters, which identified teacher shortages as a major concern. LPI continued to engage legislators with the teacher shortage issue by asking teaching residents to speak at legislative hearings, inviting key policymakers to visit teacher residencies, and sharing reports on the benefits of teacher residency. In 2018, these efforts coalesced in a historic \$75-million statewide investment in teacher residency.<sup>iii 11</sup>

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<sup>iii</sup> While \$75 million was invested, the 2020-21 Budget Act reclaimed \$23 million in unused funds, resulting in \$51 million spent on teacher residencies.

## THE ROLE OF TEACHERS' UNIONS IN SUSTAINABLE, QUALITY TEACHER PREPARATION

Teachers' unions have been supportive of residencies. Teachers who are well prepared stay in the field longer and can represent the profession well. In addition, unions appreciate the fact that funded residencies can help attract candidates from historically underrepresented backgrounds into teaching. Both of the national organizations, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA), support aspiring teachers coming into the profession through strong preparation pathways. In fact, the NEA was an early promoter of teacher residencies, engaging in both research and funding for pilots.<sup>12</sup>

As preparation programs and their district partners explore building new models to prepare teachers, local collective bargaining unit leaders should be part of conversations from the very beginning. *Prepared To Teach's* work in the field has found that if collective bargaining units are not included early on, implementation delays that could have been prevented can occur. But when unions are included from the start, they can surface and help address potential challenges—from smaller items like nomenclature for mentor teachers, to larger issues like ensuring new paraprofessional residency pathways into teaching will not compromise individuals' healthcare or district employment records. Even more, unions will be able to identify supports for these new efforts, such as professional development resources, mini-grants, and publicity for recruitment. They can also be strong advocates at the state level for supportive legislation.

### Louisiana's Efforts to Combine Local Initiatives with Statewide Collaboration

*Strategies: Conducting residency pilots to create state-specific plans, convening stakeholders, passing legislation*

The Louisiana State Superintendent's team built a statewide coalition to create a shift toward residencies, culminating in a policy requiring all Louisiana undergraduate teacher candidates to participate in a yearlong teaching residency. The state team started their work with an understanding that partnerships would need to be a fundamental part of changing statewide policy. The team incentivized districts across the state with small grants, asking them to find higher education partners with whom they could design pilot residency experiences. These residency partnerships all convened with the state several times a year, a targeted engagement activity that provided them with an opportunity to present their work.

At the end of the three-year pilot period, the State Education Department made recommendations to the Louisiana Board of Secondary and Elementary Education to enact a state policy requiring traditional teacher preparation programs—defined in Louisiana as undergraduate programs—to include a year-long residency. The policy also called for the state to develop a mentor teacher program, provided those mentors with funding, and required universities to fund and manage the undergraduate residency programs.<sup>13</sup>

## Strengthening Rural Teacher Quality in Colorado

*Strategies: Creating structures to address state priorities, strengthening ties between rural districts and universities, advocating for legislative support*

In 2014-2015, rural Colorado was facing a serious teacher shortage. The state invested in the Colorado Center for Rural Education (CCRE) at the University of Northern Colorado to grow the pool of teachers in rural schools by building partnerships between school districts and preparation providers. Partnerships had access to mini-grants of up to \$50,000 from state Title I funding that they could use to support teacher recruitment and retention in rural areas. These dollars were in addition to an existing rural budget line provided from the Colorado General Assembly designed to incentivize pre-service and in-service teachers to work in rural settings for a minimum of two years. The state hoped that partnership development would both complement and augment the existing stipends for teachers.

The mini-grants funded a range of efforts, including recruitment of Native American and Hispanic high school students through a high school teacher academy and disseminating financial aid to those student populations. The efforts were widely viewed as successful, leading the General Assembly to increase the overall funding for teacher recruitment and retention endeavors throughout Colorado, with approximately \$800,000 going to support work in rural school districts—a \$200,000 dollar increase over the initial pilot investment.

## DATA AND TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS—MAKING A CASE FOR HIGH-QUALITY PREPARATION AND SUPPORTING IMPROVEMENT

The role of data in the building of sustainable, high-quality teacher preparation varied in our sample. In every case, strong outcomes data—in particular, data on the retention and diversity of teacher candidates—helped build coalitions to promote and sustain changes, such as the advocacy conducted in San Francisco or the compelling aggregated data that resulted from the residency pilots in Louisiana. In some cases, data helped anchor conversations, creating shared language and understandings between the P-12 districts and the teacher preparation providers that comprised preparation program partnerships, and it proved critical in creating high-level preparation champions or establishing lasting structures. Even though research on teacher preparation has indicated that partnerships can benefit from identifying key data to help guide and inform discussions and program adjustments, not every program in this sample used data as the mechanism to build shared practice-level understandings.<sup>14</sup> When efforts to extend ownership and engagement beyond practitioners succeeded, however, data consistently proved critical.

# MAINTAINING SUSTAINABLE STRUCTURES AND PERMANENT ROLES

Just as shared vision is an important component of building and scaling a successful teacher preparation program, it is critical to have lasting structures in place to support coordination, collaboration, and communication. High-quality teacher preparation necessitates collaborative work across traditional institutional boundaries so that enduring structures can facilitate the growth and longevity of the work.

Structures include regular opportunities for collaboration, clearly delineated roles to ensure shared ownership of teacher preparation, and formal partnerships between key stakeholders. In some cases, preparation programs are best served by the addition of a permanent role that can help develop or maintain important components of the work. With established program components designed to advance high-quality teacher preparation, the initiative is much less likely to lose steam if a key champion leaves the organization or a single funding source disappears. Structures, like vision, require time to build and maintain, but they can lead to successful efforts to scale and preserve programs.

## ESTABLISHING COMMUNICATIONS STRUCTURES

Creating opportunities for key teacher preparation stakeholders to discuss relevant issues, such as specific district needs or challenges shared across teacher candidates, has helped some programs advance their work in meaningful ways. Regular collaboration allows key players to share insights and opinions, build strong working relationships, learn about one another's contexts, plan ongoing shared work, and ensure that programs evolve in a mutually beneficial direction—ultimately supporting the challenging, important work preparation programs undertake.

## FROM THE FIELD 4: ESTABLISHING PRODUCTIVE COMMUNICATION

### **Creating Alignment Between the University of Houston and P-12 Districts Through Governance Meetings**

*Strategies: Preparation program/district coordination, data discussions, curriculum updates to reflect district needs, establishing a key permanent role to support quality*

The University of Houston (UH) has a large teacher residency program and partners with 13 of the 35 school districts in the Houston area. UH also has school-based structures in place to support candidates. Pre-service teachers are placed into cohorts based on the districts where they teach, and the university prepares mentor teachers and a site coordinator to support each cohort. Mentor teachers receive continuing education credits from the university, and, in one district, a small stipend provided by the district.

The university manages its work with these carefully curated local partners through the efforts of the site coordinators, who hold monthly governance meetings with the principals at partner schools. Site coordinators are full-time employees who work with all of the mentor teachers

and residents at a given school, liaising between the university and the placement sites. In some cases, they are funded by districts and, in other cases, they are funded by UH.

In governance meetings, the site coordinator and principals have a formal opportunity to talk about performance data and district needs. The meetings focus on residents' performance, and the site coordinator and each principal look at data from residents' classrooms and discuss their development. The university takes the information from these meetings and continuously improves the curriculum to meet residents' needs. The data also informs the focus of resident coaching conversations.

Analyzing information from residents' experiences and embedding it in the curriculum is a labor-intensive effort, but the end result is a classroom experience that is particularly relevant for the jobs residents will assume. These concerted efforts may be connected to a high rate of retention in teaching—Roughly 96% of program graduates continue teaching in the greater Houston area after they finish their residencies.

### **Developing Shared Ownership Through Regular, Inclusive Meetings in Albuquerque and Staten Island**

*Strategies: Inclusive and diverse teams of decision-makers, regular stakeholder meetings*

In Albuquerque and Staten Island, the teacher preparation arms of local universities have committed to inclusive leadership. The University of New Mexico, working with Albuquerque Public Schools, has convened a design team. Similarly, the College of Staten Island has convened an advisory group. Both groups bring diverse voices to their conversations, including, for example, district instructional and human resource leaders, university program leaders, clinical and tenure-line faculty, principals, and union leaders. The groups meet once or twice a month to discuss key issues relating to their teacher preparation work, such as mentor teacher selection, content in teacher candidates' university courses, and funding for candidates. The shared ownership and inclusivity mean that more ideas and perspectives enter the decision-making process, and the collaborations help the districts and universities work from their respective strengths to jointly improve their programming.

### **Using Collaborative Quarterly Meetings to Ground Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD)'s Work**

*Strategies: Inclusive and diverse teams of decision-makers, regular stakeholder meetings, clearly defined roles for team members*

LAUSD has seven teacher residency programs that partner with six IHEs in the area. Despite the logistical challenges caused by Los Angeles' sprawl, the partners prioritize their quarterly meetings to ensure that obstacles are addressed, roles are clearly defined, and recruitment efforts for the second-largest district in the country are on track. These partner meetings offer an opportunity for deep work on specific topics of mutual interest, such as identifying key workforce needs within the district. Each partner brings several key leaders to the meetings, ensuring that knowledge is well-distributed throughout LAUSD and the IHEs. The collaborative work supports the cultivation of a diverse teacher workforce that fills some harder-to-staff and critical subjects, including special education, bilingual education, and STEM education.<sup>15</sup>

## ESTABLISHING STRUCTURES THAT FACILITATE CO- OWNERSHIP OF THE TEACHER PREPARATION PROCESS

When teacher preparation programs and districts work together to address teacher shortages and the need for highly qualified teachers, solutions can emerge that draw on the strengths of all members of the partnership and that ultimately benefit students. •

### FROM THE FIELD 5: ESTABLISHING PRODUCTIVE COMMUNICATION

#### **Sharing Instructional Duties Between California State University, Fresno (Fresno State) and Fresno Unified School District**

*Strategies: Preparation program/district coordination, co-teaching the certification curriculum, curriculum alignment with district needs*

Fresno State and Fresno Unified School District have partnered through external grants to update teacher preparation experiences in ways that better support candidates and the district alike.

Core to the work was a commitment to co-teaching the preparation curriculum. The first co-teaching efforts consisted of a mix of district and higher education professionals co-planning lessons, jointly facilitating learning, and reflecting together. In the second year, the partnership developed more clearly defined roles for university and district staff. Over time, the model was expanded and modified—Now, for example, one set of university faculty team-teaches literacy foundations, culturally sustaining practices, and inquiry while another teaches math methods, special education, and curriculum design.

The shared delivery of curriculum resulted in significant shifts for both the university and the district. For the university, the faculty members who taught core curriculum classes were also assigned as coaches to help residents with their clinical practice, which profoundly increased alignment between theory and practice in the residency program. The program now offers a smoother educational experience, and it allows faculty to spend more time in schools. At the district, staff embraced opportunities to strengthen professional learning opportunities for residents. Fresno Unified now provides a weekly four-hour professional learning opportunity for residents. The sessions are aligned to coursework and field placement realities, and they are grounded in district initiatives, curriculum, and expectations. In addition, the district hosts monthly Saturday sessions with conference-style breakout sessions so residents can choose learning opportunities that will support their growth.

Two other key factors contribute to the success of the initiative and the widespread support for the program. First, the district has committed to a formal co-teaching model within residents' classrooms, and they ensure that both potential mentor teachers and residents have the co-teaching preparation they will need to be successful.<sup>16</sup> Since Fresno Unified has taken responsibility for ensuring teachers are prepared to co-teach, the district has lightened a burden that principals typically shoulder for student teachers, giving Fresno Unified principals more time to focus on classroom instruction.



Second, although the partnership is no longer supported by the initial grant, the commitment to the work has not waned. Layers of formal support and established communication processes for the residency exist at both the university and district levels. Commitments like quarterly activity meetings enable the partnership to continuously reaffirm and strengthen its bonds. Although raising and identifying resources remains an important part of the partnership's shared efforts, rather than existing as a grant-funded program in isolation of other work, the residency partnership successfully integrated its goals into both the district and the university.

### **Investing in Partnerships for Strong Programming at the University of Colorado at Denver (CU Denver)**

*Strategies: Dedicated partnership office, yearlong co-design process with new schools, selection of promising partner sites, tailoring programs to meet district, program, and candidate needs*

The University of Colorado at Denver (CU Denver) has a successful history of 30+ years of deep partnerships in education, always working from simultaneous core commitments to P-12 schooling and teacher education. Today, as the website notes, "Partnerships are the heartbeat of the School of Education & Human Development." CU Denver works closely with district leaders to identify schools that are fertile ground for meaningful partnerships, choosing those with strong leadership, a solid core teaching staff, and educators who are committed to reflective practice and an openness to co-teaching and mentoring teacher candidates. Before launching a new partnership, leaders from CU Denver's Office of Partnerships spend significant time working with school and district leaders to explore what the partnership will look like, identify the most pressing local needs, and discussing how the school's context fits with the University's teacher preparation goals and curriculum. The result is a teacher education program committed to supporting partnership-driven, customized, and innovative models of teacher preparation. CU Denver has received national recognition for their work, including the 2018 Multicultural Education and Diversity Best Practices Award from the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, and inclusion in a case study as one of seven programs in the nation focused on preparing teachers for deeper learning<sup>17</sup>.

The partnership development process conveys significant benefits for teacher candidates and communities alike. In some instances, CU Denver has worked with districts to "grow their own," supporting districts' high school graduates through college in programs that offer jobs as paraprofessionals during their undergraduate years. Candidates can make money and enter into residency while undergraduates and obtain an education degree and the required experience in an affordable way (for more information, see the [Simple Shifts](#) case in this series). In other instances, CU Denver has helped districts design work-study agreements to enhance residents' financial aid packages or has worked closely with a district to ensure residents' courses are timed in a way that is compatible with district schedules.

### **Cross-Sector Exchange of Ideas and Resources at Montclair State Center for Pedagogy**

*Strategies: Innovatively deployed district staff, job sharing*

The Montclair State University Center of Pedagogy works in close partnership with the Newark school district. The Urban Teacher Residency, which lives within the center, and the district have restructured the preparation program to include job sharing, where district staff have



taken a leave of absence from their roles and worked directly at the university. This structural shift has benefited the center while offering new opportunities for district staff. In one case, a district staff member became the center-based program director, informing how the program works with the district and expanding into higher-needs schools. The district insights she brought to the role gave residency and center staff a deeper understanding of how best to work with the district and extend their support to schools. Another district staff member joined the Urban Teacher Residency's coaching team, which helped the center develop new perspectives about the cooperating teachers it supports.

The Center has moved beyond supporting teacher preparation by linking their efforts with Montclair's educational leadership department. The Ed Leadership Program joined forces with Newark's Department of Professional Staff Development to support the district in growing their own leaders. University faculty support district staff by co-teaching leadership development courses with them. The end goal is to develop outstanding new leaders with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to serve the specific needs of the Newark community.

## CONCLUSION

Programs across the country have successfully leveraged diverse strategies to build ownership and engagement around the process of preparing new teachers. The variation in approaches speaks to the fact that building ownership and engagement is not a one-size-fits-all process. Of great importance are a clear vision and the related commitments that are specific to the context that is paired with structures and roles that are tailored to the stakeholders involved in the process. But there are also shared underlying strategies that many programs have adopted in their efforts to coalesce support around their work—in particular, creating a vision for teacher preparation that exists outside of a single person or role; structures that incorporate diverse stakeholders who meet at regular intervals; and deep, collaborative relationships. As teacher preparation stakeholders consider these strategies, they may identify pieces from one or more of the featured programs that are worth examining and potentially adopting locally. •

# APPENDIX: ABOUT THE SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT

The Sustainability Project team, composed of WestEd and *Prepared To Teach* worked for the past year to create this suite of resources associated with our work on sustainability in quality teacher preparation. In this joint effort, WestEd brought valuable thought partnership and quantitative research expertise and *Prepared To Teach* leveraged its five years' worth of work leading sustainability efforts across the nation.

While *Prepared To Teach* is known for a focus on creating more sustainably funded teacher residency partnerships, where candidates work alongside an accomplished teacher of record for a year, these reports are not focused specifically on residencies. Here, we highlight a range of clinically rich teacher preparation models that have found ways to be more sustainable. For this reason, we generally use the terms “teacher candidate” and “aspiring teacher” to describe those learning to teach, reserving the terms “resident” and “residency” for when programs describe themselves as residencies and meet basic definitional requirements of being yearlong and not using teacher-of-record, fast-track approaches. As we hope our suite of resources affirms, there are a variety of different ways that strong programs can be thoughtfully and sustainably designed.

In addition to this report, the project includes five other reports and a set of web-based analytic tools and guidance documents:

- ***Dollars and Sense: Federal Investments in Our Educator Workforce***: a report that provides a rationale for and a federal plan to create sustainably funded, high-quality teacher residencies throughout the nation
- Three case studies on what *Prepared To Teach* calls the “3 Rs” of sustainable teacher preparation:
  - Reallocation: ***Simple Shifts: Paying Aspiring Teachers with Existing Resources***
  - Reduction: ***The Affordability Imperative: Creating Equitable Access to Quality Teacher Preparation***
  - (Re)Investment: ***The Residency Revolution: Funding High-Quality Teacher Preparation***
- ***Beyond Tuition, Costs of Teacher Preparation: Descriptive Analytics from the Aspiring Teachers' Financial Burden Survey***: analyses of income sources, expenses, debt, and work realities from *Prepared To Teach*'s national survey of teacher candidates.
- Release of a **suite of web-based, user-friendly resources** including university and district budgeting tools, communications supports to share the ideas from the project with audiences new to the ideas, and guidance documents that can support partnerships as they engage different aspects of sustainability for their programs.

## **What We Mean by “High-Quality” Teacher Preparation**

Although our purpose in this project was not to define or assess teacher preparation quality, we recognize that sustainability efforts must have an associated value proposition: Growing a stronger, more diverse, better prepared, and more supported educator workforce.

Many frameworks for quality teacher preparation exist, developed by different groups for different purposes. This project was supported to research teacher preparation sustainability as part of a [specific set of quality principles](#). The nation also has two accrediting bodies with standards for teacher preparation—[AAQEP](#) and [CAEP](#)—while individual certification subject areas have their own professional frameworks. What’s more, each of the 50 states articulates its expectations for programs, and programs themselves define their own visions for quality.

Teacher preparation quality frameworks share many features, even as aspects of how to define and measure quality remain contested. For *Prepared To Teach*, we conceptualize quality around four non-negotiable tenets that should be present in addition to commonly accepted principles, such as continuous improvement and alignment with standards:

- 1 High-quality programs focus on equity for candidates. Equitable access for all aspiring teachers, from every background, is a centerpiece of program designs, with concerted efforts to develop pathways for candidates of color. Programs ensure a quality, supported experience for all candidates, with dedicated efforts to improve experiences for candidates from underrepresented populations.
- 2 High-quality programs focus on equity for P-12 students. Unless programs elevate the need for aspiring teachers to be aware of and to know how to work against institutional racism and other systemic inequities, not every P-12 student will have access to a good education. Quality programs provide both curricular study and clinical practice experiences that develop teachers who can disrupt inequities and help all students thrive.
- 3 High-quality programs are based in research on learning and development and its applications to teaching.<sup>18</sup> Teachers must be able to form deep, caring relationships that help students construct knowledge. Quality programs embrace the need to engage candidates deeply in content knowledge and pedagogy that support authentic learning, and they do so within a framework of human development centered in culturally responsive and sustaining approaches to teaching and learning.
- 4 High-quality programs integrate extended clinical practice experiences with coursework. Learning to teach well requires both study and application, and no one can master the complexities of teaching well enough to lead a classroom without opportunities to put theory into practice. Quality programs work in deep partnership with schools and districts to design learning opportunities with mutual benefits for candidates and P-12 students in mind and ensure that graduates are ready for the complex work of being a teacher.

### **Our Process for the Case Studies**

The research team conducted protocol-based interviews of 30 to 60 minutes with over 40 individuals across programs that represented urban, rural, and suburban teacher preparation efforts.

We invited participants we knew from our five years of work in the field; a thought partner group that informed the project, including over 80 individuals, suggested other innovative programs to include.

The interviews were intended to gather insights on different approaches to sustainability, not to

evaluate programs or to provide comprehensive pictures of the complex set of work related to teacher preparation. Rather, we focused on capturing insights that could help support the field more broadly in moving the work of sustainability forward. ●

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To inform our work, we engaged a broad national thought partner group of over 80 participants from nearly as many organizations.

These thought partners hail from 17 states and the District of Columbia. They are educational leaders from districts, universities, philanthropies, professional organizations, state education departments, and more. They informed the framing of the reports, recommended people to connect with to learn about their work, reviewed materials, and supported dissemination. In addition, as the vignettes throughout the report evidence, dozens of programs and partnerships shared their stories with us.

The input of every individual across every conversation had a huge impact on this work. Still, participation in the project does not necessarily indicate agreement with the views ultimately represented across the suite of resources the project produced. Any insights that resonate, we know these colleagues influenced; any imperfect presentations or interpretations are our own.

Some of those who supported this work have been able to share their names publicly; we are honored to name them below. Others could not sign on, but regardless of whether their names are printed, we acknowledge and thank them. Even more importantly, all those who participated demonstrate a deep commitment to education. For that, also, we thank them—even more.

The project would also like to thank team members at both WestEd and *Prepared To Teach*, who offered untold hours of support, from envisioning the research all the way through to ensuring the final documents were as strong as possible. ●

## LIST OF THOUGHT PARTNERS AND STUDY PARTICIPANTS

NAME	ORGANIZATION	ROLE
Adina Lopatin	—	Independent consultant
Betsy Cook	Educate Texas	Deputy Director
Bill Horwath	Education First	Partner
Brittany Lane	Colorado Department of Higher Education	Director of Educator Preparation
Bryan C. Hassel	Public Impact	Co-President
Bryan Johnson	Los Angeles Unified School District	Director, Certificated Workforce Management
Calvin J. Stocker	US PREP National Center	Senior Director, Operations & Strategic Initiatives
Carlos Villagrana	Houston Endowment	Program Officer
Cathy Yun	Learning Policy Institute	senior researcher
Chris Lozier	National Center for Teacher Residencies	COO
Christine Walsh	State University of New York, Oswego	Professional Development School (PDS) administrator
Christopher Koch	Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)	President
Ellen Behrstock Sherratt	The Teacher Salary Project	Chair, Board of Directors
Emma Espel Villarreal, Ph.D.	RMC Research Corporation	Senior Research Associate
Grace Beard	Education First	Associate Consultant
J. Cody Huie	Raise Your Hand Texas Foundation	Vice President of Programs
Jacqueline Rodriguez	American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE)	Vice President of Research, Policy, and Advocacy
Jennifer Ramos	Relay Graduate School of Education	Dean
Jeremy Golubcow-Teglasi	Denver Jewish Day School	Upper School Faculty
Karen Riley	The University of Denver, Morgridge College of Education	Dean and Professor
Kristen Munger	SUNY Oswego	Associate Dean, School of Education
Lorrei DiCamillo, Ed.D.	Canisius College	Associate Dean, School of Education and Human Services
Marjori Krebs	University of New Mexico	Professor/Albuquerque Teacher Residency Partnership Coordinator
Mark LaCelle-Peterson	Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation	President/CEO
Marquita Grenot-Scheyer	CSU Office of the Chancellor	Assistant Vice Chancellor
Melissa Tooley	New America, Education Policy Program	Director, PreK-12 Educator Quality
Nancy M. Sileo	University of Northern Colorado - School of Special Education	Professor
Nicole Bono	Louisiana Department of Education	Chief of Staff, Educator Development
Odette Clarke	New York City Department of Education/ New York City Coalition for Teacher Preparation	Senior Manager, University Partnerships/ Partnership Specialist
Pat Russo	SUNY Oswego	Professor
Phillip S. Rogers	National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC)	Executive Director/CEO
Priscilla Aquino Garza	Educate Texas	Director of Policy & Advocacy
Sarah Beal	US PREP	Executive Director
Scott Muri	Ector County Independent School District	Superintendent
Shea Mosley Culpepper	University of Houston	Director of Teacher Education
Sherri Anderson	Western Colorado University	Director of Educator Preparation
Steven K. Wojcikiewicz	Learning Policy Institute	Senior Researcher and Policy Advisor
Sungti Hsu	Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation	Chief Relations Officer
Valerie Martin Conley	University of Colorado Colorado Springs	Dean

# ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> In addition to web-based tools and resources available on the *Prepared To Teach* website, the project produced the following reports: Karen DeMoss, “Dollars and Sense: Federal Investments in Our Educator Workforce” (New York: Bank Street College of Education, *Prepared To Teach*, May 2021); Maria Saliccioli et al., “Going Further Together: Building Ownership and Engagement for Sustainable, Quality Teacher Preparation” (New York: Bank Street College of Education, *Prepared To Teach*, May 2021); Hannah Dennis and Karen DeMoss, “Simple Shifts: Creating Paid Roles to Support Aspiring Teachers” (New York: Bank Street College of Education, *Prepared To Teach*, April 2021); Hannah Dennis, Karen DeMoss, and Divya Mansukhani, “The Affordability Imperative: Creating Equitable Access to Quality Teacher Preparation” (New York: Bank Street College of Education, *Prepared To Teach*, April 2021); Hannah Dennis and Karen DeMoss, “The Residency Revolution: Funding High-Quality Teacher Preparation” (New York: Bank Street College of Education, *Prepared To Teach*, April 2021); “Beyond Tuition, Costs of Teacher Preparation: Descriptive Analytics from The Aspiring Teachers’ Financial Burden Survey” (New York: Bank Street College of Education, *Prepared To Teach*, May 2021).

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<sup>8</sup> Desiree Carver-Thomas et al., “Sharpening the Divide: How California’s Teacher Shortages Expand

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<sup>9</sup> Learning Policy Institute, “Teacher Residencies in California.” Learning Policy Institute, n.d., [https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/LPI-Brief-CA\\_TeacherResidencies.pdf](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/LPI-Brief-CA_TeacherResidencies.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Melissa Eiler White, “The NGEI Approach to Improving Teacher Preparation in the CSU through a System of Supports.” WestEd, August 2020, [https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/NGEI\\_SystemsofSupport\\_Report.pdf](https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/NGEI_SystemsofSupport_Report.pdf).

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