Teachers’ Preparation Experiences from Coursework to the Classroom

Findings from the 2022 Learn Together Survey

KEY FINDINGS

- Only one-third of K–12 classroom teachers reported having access to a scholarship or another financial subsidy to attend their teacher preparation program.

- Likewise, only one-quarter of teachers indicated having access to a student loan forgiveness program.

- Teachers who opted for alternative preparation programs were most likely to cite their lower cost and shorter length relative to traditional preparation programs as reasons for selecting them.

- Most teachers reported wanting their preparation program to spend more time on managing student behavior, addressing social and emotional learning needs, engaging students, and supporting students with disabilities.

- Teachers were least likely to report wanting more time spent on pedagogical theory or preparing for their licensure exams.

- Teachers of color were less likely than White teachers to be matched with mentor teachers who shared their racial or ethnic background.

- Teachers having access to additional supports for transitioning to a classroom (e.g., portfolio preparation) were more likely to report having access to a mentor teacher in their first year of teaching.

Policymakers and researchers have dedicated increasing attention to the state of K–12 teacher preparation programs (TPPs) amid concerns over potential teacher and staff shortages in many school districts and states (Knox, 2022; Goldberg, 2021). As of 2022, Nguyen, Lam, and Bruno (2022) estimated that there were at least 36,000 vacant K–12 teacher positions across the United States, and another 163,000 teaching positions had been filled by underqualified staff. At the same time, the number of people completing traditional, four-year undergraduate TPPs appeared to be declining. During the 2018–2019 academic year, fewer than 90,000 undergraduate education degrees were conferred, falling from a peak
of nearly 200,000 degrees conferred during the 1970s (King and James, 2022).

As shown in Figure 1, the decline in teacher candidates passing through traditional TPPs is partially offset by the growing number of teachers completing alternative preparation programs. Alternative certification programs provide training for prospective teachers who already possess a bachelor’s degree in another field. The structure and standards for these programs are defined locally, vary by state, and can be administered through an institute of higher education (IHE) or another nonprofit or for-profit organization (King and Yin, 2022). By the 2019–2020 academic year, 30 percent of prospective teachers were enrolled in alternative certification programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). Teachers who enter the teaching profession through alternative certification programs are, relative to their peers in traditional TPPs, more likely to identify as teachers of color and are more likely be career switchers who have been working in an occupation outside the field of education or working in education but not as a teacher (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018).

However, recent surveys indicate that interest in teaching as a profession has declined overall. A 2022 NORC survey found that only 18 percent of people in the United States would “encourage [their] child or another young person [they] know to become a K–12 teacher” (NORC at the University of Chicago, 2022).

**FIGURE 1**
TPP Completion Rate, by Type of Program

![Graph showing TPP completion rate by type of program from 2008-09 to 2020-21.](image)

**SOURCE:** Authors’ calculations of data of the number of teachers who completed TPPs (data accessed from U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

**NOTE:** Traditional program refers to an undergraduate-based TPP that is typically four years in length and attracts individuals who enter college with the goal of becoming a teacher. Alternative certification program refers to a pathway for prospective teachers who have a bachelor’s degree in a different field than teacher education, and, because policy and standards are set locally, the structure of such programs varies by state. These programs can be administered through IHEs or through other nonprofit or for-profit organizations. For more information about non-IHE-based alternative certification programs, see King and Yin, 2022.
Likewise, using ACT data, Croft, Guffy, and Vitale (2018) found that the popularity of education as an intended major among ACT test-takers had declined from the third most popular among intended majors in 2007 to eighth by 2017.

With many states and districts facing staffing challenges and declining levels of both interest in teaching and attainment of teaching credentials, quick action is needed to restore the health of the K–12 teacher pipeline, and TPPs play a central role in this effort. In this report, we look at responses from a nationally representative sample of 3,606 K–12 teachers who took the 2022 Learn Together Survey (LTS) to see what teachers said about how well their TPPs provided the training, experiences, and resources needed to transition to the classroom. Specifically, we use these survey data to report on teachers’ experiences and supports received during three phases: (1) entry into their program; (2) their experiences while in their program, specifically their access to content expertise and supports for completing their program; and (3) transition to the teaching workforce. Our survey data include responses from teachers of all experience levels, with varying lengths of time since completing their TPPs. Therefore, our analysis is meant to describe the preparation experience of the current K–12 teaching workforce and not, necessarily, the current state of K–12 TPPs.

We organize this report into sections based on each of these three phases, including findings relevant to each phase. Finally, we conclude with a summary of key findings and implications.

**Entry into TPPs**

Several factors could encourage individuals to enter a TPP, including the availability of financial aid and connection with others who are familiar with the program. In this section, we explore the supports that teachers were able to access when entering their TPPs.

**Financial Supports Were Uncommon but Helpful for Teachers Entering TPPs**

The 2022 LTS asked teachers to reflect both on whether they had access to five distinct supports for their entry into their TPPs, shown in Figure 2, and, whether they thought each support was or would have been helpful. We grouped these supports into two categories: financial supports, such as scholarships or loan forgiveness programs, and relational supports (e.g., whether teachers knew someone affiliated with their chosen TPP prior to entry or whether they had been recruited explicitly into that TPP).

For each support enumerated in the survey, teachers were able to respond that they had access to the support and it was helpful, they had access to the support and it was not helpful, they did not have access to the support and it would not have been helpful (not shown in Figure 2). Teachers could also indicate that they did not know whether they had access to the support. In Figure 2, we combined the responses of all teachers who indicated that they had access to the support, whether or not it was helpful, to understand the availability of the support, and we report this as the percentage of teachers who had access to that support (blue bars). We
subsequently report the percentage of teachers who said they had access to the support and it was helpful (dark green bars) and the percentage of teachers who did not have access the support but would have found it helpful (light green bars). We use this figure format throughout the report to illustrate teacher-reported access to various TPP supports and their helpfulness.

Figure 2 shows that a scholarship or financial subsidy, which did not require repayment, was the most common support teachers reported receiving: 34 percent of teachers reported having received one of them (blue bar). Overall, 31 percent of teachers both received a scholarship or financial subsidy and found it helpful (dark green bar), indicating that most teachers (more than 90 percent) who had access to and received this support found it to be helpful. An additional 46 percent of teachers reported that they did not receive a scholarship or financial subsidy but would have found either one helpful (light green bars). In sum, more than three-quarters of teachers reported that scholarships or financial subsidies were or would have been helpful.

The other supports that teachers indicated were or would have been the most helpful were also related to financing the program: 69 percent of teachers reported that having access to a stipend and tuition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Supports</th>
<th>Relational Supports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I received a scholarship, or another financial subsidy I did not have to repay, to attend.</td>
<td>I knew someone who attended, graduated from, or worked at my TPP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I received a stipend and tuition assistance in exchange for a commitment to work as a teacher for a set number of years.</td>
<td>I was recruited into my TPP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I participated in student loan forgiveness programs or service scholarships in exchange for a commitment to teach for a set period of years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of teachers who reported having access to the support</td>
<td>Percentage of teachers who did have access to the support and found it helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of teachers who did not have access to the support but would have found it helpful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: “Did you have access to and use any of the following supports, and to what extent did they help you enter your [TPP]?” (n = 3,328). To understand the availability of such supports, we combined responses of teachers who reported having access to and receiving the support, regardless of whether or not they indicated that the support was helpful, in the “Percentage of teachers who reported having access to the support” group (blue bars). Then, to understand the percentage of teachers who found or would find the support helpful, we show the percentage of all teachers who responded, “I had access to this and it was helpful” (dark green bars) and the percentage of all teachers who responded, “I did not have access to this and it would have been helpful” (light green bars). Teachers who indicated that they “did not know whether they had access to the support” are not shown in the figure, but their responses are included in the denominator.
assistance in exchange for a commitment to teach was or would have been helpful to recruit them into the TPP; yet only 9 percent of teachers reported having access to this support. Sixty-six percent of teachers indicated that participating in a student loan forgiveness program or service scholarship in exchange for a commitment to teach for a set number of years was or would have been helpful in entering their TPPs, but just 24 percent of teachers had access to this support. Figure 3 shows that teachers with six to 19 years of experience were most likely to have had access to a student loan forgiveness program. Teachers who identify as Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin were more likely to have had access to these programs, while White teachers and Asian or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander teachers were less likely to have access to this support.

Returning to the data presented in Figure 2, we find that teachers considered relational supports—those that drew on their networks and relationships—to be relatively less helpful compared with financial supports. Fifty-eight percent of all teachers indicated that knowing someone who attended, graduated from, or worked at their TPP was or would have been helpful in their entry into the TPP. Fewer than one-half of teachers (42 percent) found being recruited by the program helpful or thought that it would have been helpful in facilitating their entry into the program. Conversely, more teachers who completed alternative certification programs rather than traditional TPPs mentioned that relational supports were or would be helpful: 65 percent of these teachers indicated that knowing someone at the alternative certification program was or would have been helpful in their entry into the program, and 51 percent mentioned that being recruited into the program was or would have been helpful.

We also counted the total number of entry supports that teachers reported being able to access: Teachers reported having access to an average of 1.1 supports out of the five supports that the 2022 LTS asked about. Teachers who identified as Black

FIGURE 3
Access to Student Loan Forgiveness Programs During TPP, by Teacher Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching experience</th>
<th>Percentage of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0–5 years</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6–10 years</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11–19 years</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 or more years</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial/ethnic identity</th>
<th>Percentage of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latinx</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (including multiple ethnicities)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: “Did you have access to and use any of the following supports, and to what extent did they help you enter your [TPP]?” (n = 3,328), which specifically asks respondents to indicate whether they “participated in student loan forgiveness programs or service scholarships in exchange for a commitment to teach for a set period of years.” Significance indicators are provided to denote whether teachers in a particular group (i.e., teaching experience band, racial or ethnic identity) were significantly more likely (▲) or less likely (▼) to participate in a student loan forgiveness program than teachers not in that particular group.
or African American and teachers who identified as multiracial or another race or ethnicity, on average, reported having access to a greater number of entry supports than their peers, as did teachers in undergraduate preparation programs and teachers with 11–20 years of experience. Teachers who identified as White, had at least 20 years of experience, or attended a postbaccalaureate preparation program reported having access to significantly fewer supports.

Teachers Reported Entering Alternative Certification Programs Because of Their Shorter Length and Lower Cost

As shown in Figure 1, growing shares of teacher candidates opt to enroll in nontraditional TPPs. Prospective teachers who do not major in education during their baccalaureate program can participate in a postbaccalaureate program or an alternative certification program. These programs can facilitate entry into the teaching profession for current school staff, such as paraprofessionals, or for prospective staff in adjacent careers or with different training. Alternative certification programs offer accelerated certification and often support teachers to earn their credentials as they teach (Podolsky and Sutcher, 2016).

The 2022 LTS asked teachers who participated in an alternative certification program why they chose this type of program. The most common response, endorsed by 65 percent of such teachers, was that an alternative certification program allowed them to get a teaching job more quickly than a traditional undergraduate program. This finding is reinforced in our analysis of teachers’ preferences regarding the length of their student teaching experience (discussed in the next section). Additionally, one-half of all teachers who attended an alternative certification program indicated that they did so because it was less expensive than a university-based program. We did find that fewer than one-quarter of teachers who completed a postbaccalaureate or other alternative certification program reported having access to a scholarship or financial subsidy, compared with 44 percent of teachers who completed an undergraduate TPP. Although, as these survey responses suggest, the higher prevalence of financial aid for attendees of traditional TPPs may be due to the higher overall costs of these programs relative to alternative certification programs.

Experiences During TPPs

To better understand teachers’ experiences during their TPPs and how these programs equipped them for the classroom, we focus on teachers’ preferences for how time was spent during their TPPs and their access to supports for persisting through their programs.

Teachers Would Have Preferred That Their TPPs Spent More Time on Managing Student Behavior, Engaging Students, and Supporting Diverse Learners

The 2022 LTS asked teachers about various topics and activities on which their TPPs should have spent less time, the same about of time, or more time. About two-thirds of teachers indicated that their programs should have spent more time on how to manage student behavior, integrate social and emotional learning, and engage students (see Table 1). About one-half of teachers mentioned a desire for their program to spend more time on supporting students with disabilities and implementing culturally responsive pedagogy.

Interest in spending more time on these topics often split by gender: Women were more likely than men to indicate their programs should have spent more time on student behavior management, social emotional learning, supporting students with disabilities, and culturally responsive pedagogy. Teachers who identified as Asian or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or as Black or African American were more likely to want to spend additional time on culturally responsive pedagogy, while White teachers and teachers with more than 20 years of experience were less likely to express an interest in spending more time on the topic.

Few teachers thought their program should have spent additional time on general pedagogical theory (15 percent) or preparing for the licensure exam (16 percent). However, there were important
differences by race and ethnicity. Black or African-American teachers were twice as likely and Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin teachers were 1.5 times as likely as White teachers to express an interest in additional time focused on preparing for the licensure exam. Additionally, relatively more Black or African American teachers and Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin teachers expressed an interest in additional time on pedagogical theory than their White peers.

Novice teachers, defined here as teachers with fewer than five years of experience, were also more interested in more time spent on pedagogical theory than teachers with more than 20 years of experience. These differences, as with all involving comparisons between teachers of different experience levels, could reflect a combination of factors, including changes to the actual content of preparation programs over time, differences in teacher sentiments across cohorts, and potentially, recall bias among more experienced teachers who have spent more time away from their preparation program experience.

Most Teachers Were Satisfied with the Amount of Time They Spent Student Teaching

Roughly 90 percent of teachers reported participating in some form of student teaching during their TPPs, and the majority of teachers (59 percent of teachers overall) reported that they spent between one to six months student teaching as a part of their programs. Broadly, teachers were satisfied with the amount of time that they spent student teaching. Most teachers (64 percent) wanted to spend the same amount of time student teaching, although more than one-quarter of teachers (28 percent) indicated that they wanted their student teaching experience to be longer.

However, we found two dimensions along which teachers’ student teaching experiences and preferences differed. First, as shown in Figure 4, teachers who reported spending less than one month student teaching were substantially more likely to indicate that their TPPs should have spent more time on student teaching. Forty-six percent of teachers spending less than one month student teaching indicated that they wished their TPPs had spent more time on

TABLE 1
Activities on Which Teachers Thought Their TPPs Should Have Spent More Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic or Activity</th>
<th>Percentage of Teachers Wanting More Time Spent on Topic or Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to manage student behavior</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and emotional learning</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical strategies to engage students</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to support students with disabilities</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally responsive pedagogy</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to navigate controversial political events in my teaching</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observing my teaching and providing me with feedback</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The knowledge and skills I need to teach in my subject area (e.g., math, ELA, science, social studies)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student teaching</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing for the licensing exam</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical theory</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: This table displays the percentage of teachers who indicated that their TPP should have spent “more time” on each listed topic or activity. Not shown here, teachers were also able to select “less time,” “the same amount of time,” or “my program did not address this topic” (n = 3,332). ELA = English language arts.
student teaching; fewer than 30 percent of all other teachers indicated that they wanted to spend more time student teaching.

The second dimension for which time spent on student teaching sharply differed was the type of TPP that teachers attended. Only 2 percent of teachers who attended a traditional undergraduate preparation program reported that they did not student teach, compared with 20 percent of teachers who attended an alternative certification program or a postbaccalaureate preparation program. Likewise, teachers who did not attend a traditional TPP were also five times more likely (i.e., 5 percent versus 1 percent) to report spending less than one month student teaching.

Interestingly, we find that despite marked differences between teachers who did and did not attend traditional TPPs in their likelihood of having any student teaching experience, there did not appear to be differences by program type in teachers’ preferences for how long the student teaching experience should be. Among teachers who participated in some form of student teaching, whether in a traditional TPP or not, the percentage of teachers who wished to spend more time on student teaching was nearly identical (28 percent versus 29 percent).

Preferences for less time spent on student teaching among teachers that attended alternative certification programs mirror our findings from the previous section; that is, a primary reason teachers opted for alternative programs was that these programs allowed them to get a teaching job more quickly than traditional TPPs.
Coaching and Mentorship Were the Most Helpful Supports forPersisting in a TPP

As noted earlier, the 2022 LTS asked teachers to report whether they had access to a variety of supports during their TPPs and whether each support was, or would have been, helpful for persisting in that program. Relational supports, such as whether teachers had access to peer groups, mentors, or individualized coaching, were generally perceived as helpful for persistence. As shown in Figure 5, two-thirds to three-quarters of teachers indicated that individualized coaching, being paired with a mentor teacher, access to peer groups, and participating in a teacher residency were or would have been helpful in motivating them to persist in their TPPs. Teachers were most likely to have been paired with a mentor teacher during some portion of their TPPs, but they were less likely to have had access to peer groups or to have participated in a teacher residency. Teachers with more than 20 years of experience were significantly less likely to have had access to any of these supports, suggesting that TPPs may have added many of these supports more recently.

FIGURE 5
Reported Supports for Persisting in TPPs

NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: “Did you have access to and use any of the following supports, and to what extent did they help you complete your teacher preparation program?” (n = 3,328). To understand the availability of such supports, we combined responses of teachers who reported having access to and receiving the support, regardless of whether or not they indicated that the support was helpful, in the “Percentage of teachers who reported having access to the support” group (blue bars). Then, to understand the percentage of teachers who found or would find the support helpful, we show the percentage of all teachers who responded, “I had access to this and it was helpful” (dark green bars) and the percentage of all teachers who responded, “I did not have access to this and it would have been helpful” (light green bars). Teachers who indicated that they “did not know whether they had access to the support” are not shown in the figure, but their responses are included in the denominator.
Racial Affinity Supports Were Particularly Helpful for Teachers of Color During TPPs

Additionally, the 2022 LTS asked teachers whether the relational supports they had access to—peer groups, mentors, and teacher leaders—were with teachers who shared their racial or ethnic back-

ground (see Figure 6). Teachers of color were far less likely than White teachers to report having access to (1) being matched with a mentor teacher during their TPPs who shared their racial or ethnic identity and (2) being placed in a classroom led by a teacher who shared their racial or ethnic identity, specifically during the student teaching portion of their TPPs. For example, whereas two-thirds of White teachers

![Figure 6: Racial and Ethnic Affinity Supports]

When I was student teaching, I was placed in a classroom led by a teacher who shared my racial or ethnic background

My TPP had peer groups for prospective teachers who shared my racial or ethnic background

My TPP matched me with a mentor teacher who shared my racial or ethnic background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage of teachers who reported having access to the support</th>
<th>Percentage of teachers who did have access to the support and found it helpful</th>
<th>Percentage of teachers who did not have access to the support but would have found it helpful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latinx</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (including multiple ethnicities)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to state</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: “Did you have access to and use any of the following supports, and to what extent did they help you enter your [TPP]?” (n = 3,328). To understand the availability of such supports, we combined responses of teachers who reported having access to and receiving the support, regardless of whether or not they indicated that the support was helpful, in the “percentage of teachers who reported having access to the support” (blue bars). Then, to understand the percentage of teachers who found or would find the support helpful, we show the percentage of all teachers who responded, “I had access to this and it was helpful” (dark green bars) and the percentage of all teachers who responded, “I did not have access to this and it would have been helpful” (light green bars). Teachers who indicated that they “did not know whether they had access to the support” are not shown in the figure, but their responses are included in the denominator.
reported having access to being placed in a classroom led by a teacher who shared their racial or ethnic background, fewer than one-third of teachers who identified as Black or African American, Hispanic, Latino, of Spanish origin, or Asian or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander reported the same.

Overall, teachers were generally less likely to indicate that they found or would find the affinity supports listed in Figure 6 helpful, compared with general supports for persisting through their TPPs that were not related to racial or ethnic identity (i.e., those listed in Figure 5). To illustrate, while 77 percent of teachers indicated that being matched with a mentor teacher was or would have been helpful, only 45 percent indicated that being matched with a mentor teacher who shared their racial or ethnic background would have been helpful. However, we do find differences by teachers’ racial and ethnic identity on the helpfulness of having a mentor of their same race or ethnicity. For example, whereas 43 percent of White teachers reported that having a mentor teacher of their same racial or ethnic background was or would have been helpful, these rates were noticeably higher among teachers who identified as Black or African American (67 percent) and as Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin (57 percent). We find similar patterns across the three affinity supports listed in Figure 6. Understanding this disparity in peer support and mentorship is critical, particularly because teachers of color have indicated that additional and affinity-based supports during the TPP would have helped them to persist in their training and enter the teaching workforce (Steiner et al., 2022).

Most Teachers Agree That Their TPPs Prepared Them to Support Students, but Had Not Prepared Them to Provide Remote Instruction

Ultimately, TPPs are setting their enrollees up to work daily with students. The 2022 LTS asked teachers to reflect on how effectively they were prepared to support students with diverse learning needs (see Figure 7). Generally, teachers reported being most prepared to support students with disabilities (69 percent) and students performing below grade level (63 percent). They also generally indicated that their TPPs prepared them to provide instruction that was culturally relevant to their students (63 percent). Teachers who attended undergraduate programs for their teacher training were less likely to agree that they were appropriately prepared to support different groups of students, to support students’ social and emotional learning, or provide effective remote instruction. White teachers and female teachers also less frequently indicated that they were well prepared by their TPPs in these respects. Novice teachers—those with fewer than five years of experience—were more likely to report being prepared to support students with disabilities, students of color, and ELLs. They were also more likely to indicate that they were prepared to provide culturally relevant instruction, support social and emotional learning, and provide remote instruction, compared with teachers with more than five years of experience.

Teachers Who Work with Particular Groups of Students Were More Likely to Report Having Been Well Prepared to Support Them

After their preparation, teachers spend their careers working in diverse settings. Some end up in schools with students from affluent families, while others work in schools where nearly all students are living in poverty. Some teachers specialize in serving students with disabilities, and some teach in general education classrooms. Teachers’ responses to whether they agreed that their programs had effectively prepared them to serve particular groups of students is highly related to whether teachers, in practice, work with those students. Specifically, we found that teachers who served a greater proportion of students with disabilities, students of color, and students affected by poverty were more likely to report that their TPPs prepared them well to serve these groups of students. For example, teachers working in schools comprised primarily of students of color are 4 percentage points more likely to agree that their TPPs had effectively prepared them to support students of color. These relationships are all statistically significant. This
finding could indicate that teachers who were better prepared to teach particular groups of students had selected programs that were more targeted to the student populations they would end up serving or that teachers who agreed that they were well prepared to teach specific groups of students were more likely to go on to work with those groups of students during their teaching career. It could also reflect a recall bias—that is, teachers who are currently more familiar with certain student populations might perceive that they were better prepared by their TPP to support those students.

**Transition to the Teaching Workforce**

Lastly, we asked teachers to report on the extent to which their TPPs supported their transition to the teaching workforce (see Figure 8), including preparing them for their licensure examinations and job interviews.

While Most Teachers Had Access to Job Interview Supports Through Their TPPs, Only One-Quarter of Teachers Indicated They Had Access to Program Supports That Would Explicitly Help Them Find a Teaching Job or Place Them in One

The most common transition support that teachers reported access to was assistance with “[assembling] a portfolio or [preparing] for interviews,” which 59 percent of teachers reported receiving through their TPPs. More than three-quarters of teachers,
regardless of whether they reported access to portfolio or interview support, indicated that this type of support would be helpful. Despite most teachers indicating that their programs provided access to interview supports, only one-quarter of teachers reported that their programs provided supports that would explicitly help them find a teaching job or place them in one. Teachers were instead more likely to report having access to job search support from educators in their professional or personal networks (37 percent).

Another dimension of support for transitioning to the classroom was the extent to which TPPs helped candidates complete their licensure exams. Roughly half the teachers in our sample indicated that passing the licensure exam was a necessary condition of graduating from their TPP, but only 4 percent of teachers reported that their program provided them with access to a subsidy for their licensure exam fees. Notably, only 52 percent of teachers reported that having their licensure exam be a required component of their preparation program was or would be a helpful support, lower than the rate of perceived helpfulness among the other supports shown in Figure 8.

NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: “Did you have access to and use any of the following supports, and to what extent did they help you enter the teaching workforce?” (n = 3,324). To understand the availability of such supports, we combined responses of teachers who reported having access to and receiving the support, regardless of whether or not they indicated that the support was helpful, in the “Percentage of teachers who reported having access to the support” group (blue bars). Then, to understand the percentage of teachers who found or would find the support helpful, we show the percentage of all teachers who responded, “I had access to this and it was helpful” (dark green bars) and the percentage of all teachers who responded, “I did not have access to this and it would have been helpful” (light green bars). Teachers who indicated that they “did not know whether they had access to the support” are not shown in the figure, but their responses are included in the denominator.
Teachers Who Had Access to More Transition Supports Were More Likely to Report Working in Schools Where They Were Matched with Mentors During Their First Year of Teaching

A pressing question is whether differences in teachers’ TPP experiences are linked to how well they fit in, and how long they remain, at their first teaching position. Schools and districts often have limited information on the quality of novice teachers (Cannata et al., 2017) and often rely on prior relationships and experiences with specific TPPs to judge which candidates to hire (Engel and Finch, 2015; Goff et al., 2020). Preparation programs can play an important role in improving the match quality between teachers and their first teaching jobs by not only networking candidates to partner districts but also helping teachers identify and prepare for interview opportunities and aligning teachers’ clinical and coursework experiences with the teaching assignments and contexts of schools and districts where they are likely to be hired. Prior research finds evidence that several aspects of teachers’ experiences across both the clinical and coursework phases of their TPPs are linked to whether teachers remain in the profession (Goldhaber et al., 2022; Ingersoll, Merill, and May, 2012; Ronfeldt, 2012).

We have limited ability to explore the linkages between teachers’ TPP experiences and their first teaching positions for several reasons. First, because the 2022 LTS only surveys active teachers, we are unable to examine whether access to transition supports is associated with whether candidates are eventually hired because we do not have survey responses from teachers who never found employment or are not currently employed as a classroom teacher. Furthermore, we are limited in our ability to connect responses about teachers’ TPP experiences with their responses about the working conditions of their first schools because many teachers are likely no longer teaching at their first school after completing their program.

The 2022 LTS asked a limited number of questions about teachers’ experiences during their first teaching positions, such as whether teachers had a mentor teacher in that position; these survey items are distinct from the question on which the response data presented in Figure 5 is based, which asked whether teachers were paired with a mentor teacher while still completing their TPPs. We recognize that this is only one of many possible indicators of the quality of a teacher’s initial teaching position. Nevertheless, we conducted a limited exploration into our hypothesis that access to transition supports during a TPP is linked to higher-quality first teaching positions, defined as having access to a mentor teacher in the teacher’s first year of employment (see Figure 9).

Along one specific dimension of quality—access to a mentor teacher—we do find relationships between the number of available TPP supports and the quality of an initial teaching position. Overall, 70 percent of teachers indicated that they were paired with a mentor during their first year of teaching, with access rates broadly similar by teacher race or ethnicity and gender. We did find evidence of differences, as shown in Figure 9, across the number of transition supports teachers reported being available to them through their preparation programs. Only 53 percent of teachers who reported that they had access to none of the transition supports listed in Figure 8 (e.g., help assembling a portfolio, help finding a teaching job) also reported being matched to a first-year mentor, compared with at least 66 percent of teachers who reported having access to at least one of these transition supports; teachers with access to four transition supports were most likely to report having a first-year mentor (87 percent). These findings were robust to statistical controls for teachers’ race or ethnicity, gender, and years of experience. When looking at which particular transition supports were most likely to lead to teachers being matched with a mentor during their first year of teaching, we found that all transition supports, except for receiving a financial subsidy for teacher license fees, were significantly associated with an increased likelihood of being paired with a mentor teacher. These findings offer promising, but limited, evidence of the relationship between teachers’ TPP experiences and the quality of their first teaching positions, and they call for additional research to further explore these relationships with other aspects and dimensions of teaching positions.
Implications and Recommendations

Through the nationally representative 2022 LTS, teachers reported on their experiences during three phases of their TPPs: (1) program entry, (2) program coursework, and (3) program completion and transition into the teaching workforce. Our findings identify several priorities for policymakers, program developers, and researchers to consider in strengthening teacher preparation. We identify several key findings from this report and discuss implications and recommendations for each below.

Few teachers reported receiving financial supports for entering TPPs or completing their licensure requirements, which suggests a clear role for states to play in promoting a robust teaching workforce. Fewer than one-third of teachers reported that they were provided scholarships or access to a loan forgiveness program to attend their TPP. Likewise, only 4 percent of teachers reported that they received a subsidy for the licensure exams despite nearly three-quarters of teachers indicating that this was or would have been a helpful support. While novice teachers were more likely to report receiving financial supports (68 percent of teachers in their first five years of teaching reported access to at least one financial entry support compared with 45 percent of teachers with 20 or more years of experience), lack of financial aid is likely to remain a persistent barrier for individuals considering teaching as a profession. The provision of financial supports appears to be a particularly important factor in developing a racially diverse teaching workforce. Research using other American Educator Panel surveys (Steiner et al., 2022), suggest that Black or African American teachers are significantly more likely to report that a loan forgiveness program would be an effective strategy for recruiting other teachers of color into the profession. State and federal policymakers, in potential collaboration with philanthropic leaders, should strive to secure and expand the financial aid offered to teacher candidates, particularly through programs and institutions serving large numbers of teacher candidates of color. Several states offer additional
financial supports beyond federal loan forgiveness programs. For example, Delaware provides teachers with up to $2,000 per year in loan forgiveness in exchange for working in high-needs schools or teaching high-needs subjects (Delaware Department of Education, 2022). Additionally, many states, including Connecticut, Florida, and Oregon, provide waivers or reimbursement for licensure exam fees, a support that nearly three-quarters of the teachers in our sample indicated was or would have been helpful (Putnam, 2022). Certain states, such as Connecticut, provide waivers directly to TPPs to allocate as they wish, whereas others, such as Oregon, provide licensure expense reimbursements specifically to teacher candidates of color and candidates whose first language is not English. We recognize that increases to public spending can be difficult to negotiate. However, many states, such as those listed here, provide working models for how a variety of financial supports can be secured to promote a robust teaching workforce.

Teachers want more of their preparation experience to focus on topics beyond general pedagogy and content area expertise. More than two-thirds of teachers indicated that their TPPs spent sufficient time on subject area content, pedagogical theory, and preparing for licensure examinations. Teachers wished that their TPPs had spent more time on managing student behavior, supporting social and emotional learning, and engaging students. Taken together with findings from forthcoming RAND research analyzing results from the American Instructional Resources Survey, teachers spend relatively small amounts of professional learning time developing strategies to manage student behavior and support social and emotional learning; teachers also appear to have little explicit training on classroom management and other essential competencies beyond academic instruction, either through their TPPs or on-the-job professional learning. While teachers selected topics that they wished their TPPs had spent more time on as part of our survey, there was little consensus on what topics TPPs should spend less time on; however, the most common topic that teachers wished to spend less time on was pedagogical theory, which was selected by almost one-quarter of teachers (22 percent). As program developers consider requests for additional content within the TPP experience, they will need to weigh such requests against the potential increase in both the length and cost of their programs. One possible mechanism for addressing potential shortcomings in content could be increased collaboration between TPPs, school districts, and professional development providers to build a more-cohesive framework for topics to address during the preparation process, on-the-job professional learning, and continuing education units that teachers pursue after starting their teaching careers. This coordination would be particularly effective for such topics as classroom management, which may be more effectively addressed in certain stages of a teacher’s preparation or teaching experience (e.g., student teaching, on-the-job training) than in others (e.g., through coursework).

Interpersonal relationships matter for entering and completing a TPP. Teachers frequently highlighted the importance of being able to tap into peer networks during the entry, completion, and transition phases of their preparation experiences. Sixty-nine and 80 percent of teachers, respectively, indicated that having a network of peers for support in selecting a TPP or to find a teaching job after com-
pleting their program would be helpful. Likewise, two-thirds of teachers indicated that access to a peer group of other prospective teachers was or would have been a helpful support for completing their TPP. The importance of personal connections throughout all phases of teachers’ preparation experience suggests that program developers could see positive returns, particularly regarding program recruitment and alumni hiring, from additional investment in program alumni networks.

**More is needed to support teacher candidates of color during their preparation experiences.** While we found that teachers of color, on average, received more or comparable supports for entering TPPs and for transitioning to the teaching workforce, teachers of color received both fewer supports overall than their White peers for persisting in their programs and fewer racial-affinity supports, such as being paired with a mentor who shared their race or ethnicity. This difference in support, in combination with the general importance of interpersonal relationships during teachers’ TPPs that we identified in this report, presents a confounding problem for TPPs: Teacher candidates of color are more likely to enter and complete their TPPs when there are other teacher candidates of color entering and completing those programs. Because of the importance of having both same-race colleagues and mentors in the teaching profession (Dixon, Griffin, and Teoh, 2019; Johnson-Bailey, 2012), our findings support the notion that ensuring the successful transition of teacher candidates of color to the classroom is an important step for improving both the short-term and long-term diversity of the teaching workforce (i.e., more teachers of color enter the workforce immediately and teachers of color can serve as mentors for future teacher candidates). Additional investments in TPPs at institutions that predominantly serve minority communities (Gist et al., 2021), as well as the development of culturally affirming spaces in all TPPs (Williams, 2021), would be welcome steps toward this end.

**TPPs can do more to help teacher candidates find schools where they are more likely to be successful.** We found that teachers who reported having access to a greater number of transition supports on completion of their TPPs (e.g., having assistance creating a teaching portfolio) were more likely to be matched with a mentor teacher in their first year of teaching following their program. This association suggests that TPPs can potentially play a (larger) role in not only helping teacher candidates acquire the certifications required to become a classroom teacher but also in helping teacher candidates get hired in positions where they are most likely to be supported. Access to a mentor teacher is, importantly, only one of many working conditions, and our analysis provides only suggestive evidence of the linkage between TPP experiences and the quality of initial teaching positions, which should be examined in more depth in future research.

**Limitations**

This report uses survey data from a nationally representative sample of educators to identify patterns and trends in TPP experiences of teachers in the current teaching workforce. While these data are useful for describing teachers’ experiences, there are several caveats that readers should consider when reading this report. First, these data capture only the reports and opinions of teachers who were active K–12 classroom teachers at the time the survey was fielded. Notably, they do not capture sentiments among individuals who (1) considered entering a TPP but ultimately did not enroll, (2) entered a TPP but did not complete it, or (3) completed a TPP but did not work as a K–12 classroom teacher. Therefore, the data we report concerning supports that teachers considered helpful for entering, persisting through, and transitioning from their TPPs capture only the opinions of teachers who have successfully completed their programs and stayed employed in the teaching workforce long enough to take the 2022 LTS. Importantly, this finding means that the results we present in this report suffer from survivorship bias because the opinions and preferences of individuals who are currently employed as teachers may not mirror those of individuals who did not successfully transition into the teaching workforce. In conducting research on how TPPs can better attract candidates and see them through to completion of their programs, the perspective of individuals who did not successfully...
enter and complete a program are equally, if not more, important than the perspective of individuals who became teachers.

A second limitation of our analysis is that more-experienced teachers likely are subject to recall bias as they report details about their TPP experiences. Teachers further from such experiences may inaccurately recall the supports and content they were exposed to during their programs, leading to less-reliable estimates of TPP experiences. Additionally, and more troublingly, there is some evidence suggesting a positivity effect might exist, where individuals recalling further away events may be prone to provide positively biased responses (Althubaiti, 2016). While we do not find that more-experienced teachers broadly reported more-positive TPP experiences than more-novice teachers did in our survey, readers should keep in the mind the potential for long recall periods to differentially affect the accuracy of teachers’ responses regarding their TPPs.

Lastly, the 2022 LTS asked teachers to report on whether they “have access to and use” various supports related to entry, persistence, and completion of their TPPs. Because these survey items mix whether (1) teachers had access to various supports and (2) teachers actually used these supports, we interpret these items conservatively and report teachers’ affirmative responses to these items as indication that they only had access to a given support.

How We Analyzed These Data

In this report, we analyze data collected through the 2022 LTS, a nationally representative sample of 3,606 teachers on wide-ranging topics, including teacher preparation, math instruction, and social and emotional learning. The 2022 LTS was administered in March 2022, with state oversamples in California, Florida, New York, Texas, and Washington state.

We focus on survey items in the 2022 LTS related to TPP experiences. Specifically, we analyze teacher reports on (1) supports they had access to during their preparation experience, (2) the helpfulness of those supports, and (3) the quality of their programs’ preparation toward specific content areas (e.g., supporting English language learners, managing student behavior, applying pedagogical theory). The survey asks about teachers’ access to supports tied to different phases of their preparation experience: (1) supports to enter a TPP, (2) supports to complete a TPP, and (3) supports to enter the teaching workforce. These items encompass a wide variety of supports, including financial aid (e.g., scholarships, loan forgiveness, fee reimbursement), peer support groups, mentor teachers, and job search resources (e.g., portfolio preparation). This list of supports are drawn from prior research identifying barriers to and solutions for improving the teacher workforce pipeline (Dixon, Griffin, and Teoh, 2019; Steiner et al., 2022). We also ask teachers specifically whether they had access to peers or mentors with whom they share a racial identity, following prior research on the unique importance of same-race mentorship within the teaching profession (Bristol, 2018; Johnson-Bailey, 2012).

Importantly, the 2022 LTS asked questions on teacher preparation to teachers of all experience levels. Teachers in the first five years of their career account for only 5 percent of the sample; for comparison, teachers with 21 or more years of experience comprise 30 percent of the sample. Therefore, the results we present in this report are meant to describe the preparation experiences of the current K–12 teaching workforce and not, necessarily, the state of current TPPs.

In analyzing our data, we explored whether teachers’ responses differed according to their demographic characteristics, school context, or the characteristics of the students in their school. Unless otherwise noted, we describe differences among teacher subgroups that are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). For brevity, we do not provide specific estimates for all subgroups across all items analyzed in this report; these estimates can be provided by the authors on request. Readers interested in the composition of the 2022 LTS sample are encouraged to refer to Learn Together Surveys: 2022 Technical Documentation and Survey Results (Doan et al., 2022), which provides weighted and unweighted sample characteristics in addition to univariate frequency tables for all 2022 LTS survey items.
Notes

1 The survey does not further define “mentor teachers” for respondents and could be interpreted broadly by respondents to refer to people in several roles or positions, including university-based mentors, retired teachers, and active teachers from local school districts.

2 The Delaware Department of Education (DDoE) defines high-needs schools as those whose student populations are in the state’s top quartile in three or more of the following percentages: low-income students; English learner students; students with disabilities; or underrepresented minority students, or if more than 90 percent of their students are low-income, English learner, or underrepresented minority (DDoE, undated). As of 2022, the DDoE lists several high-needs subjects, including middle and high school math, science, and English; multilingual learner education; special education; and business, agriscience, family consumer science, and technology education (DDoE, 2022).

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About This Report

In this report, we look at responses from a nationally representative sample of 3,606 K–12 teachers who took the 2022 Learn Together Survey to see what teachers said about how well their preparation programs provided the training, experiences, and resources needed to transition to the classroom. We drew these responses from the American Teacher Panel (ATP), which is a nationally representative sample of more than 22,000 teachers across the United States. The ATP is one of three survey panels that comprise the American Educator Panels (AEP), which are nationally representative samples of teachers, school leaders, and district leaders across the country. The panels are a proud member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research’s Transparency Initiative. For more information about any of the survey panels, visit www.rand.org/aep.

For technical information about the survey and analysis presented in this report, please see Learn Together Surveys: 2022 Technical Documentation and Survey Results (RR-A827-9, www.rand.org/t/RRA827-9). If you are interested in using AEP data for your own surveys or analysis or in reading other publications related to the AEP, please email aep@rand.org or visit www.rand.org/aep.

RAND Education and Labor

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