



Growing California's Own: How Two Communities Are Reimagining Teacher Preparation Through Apprenticeship

Designing PK-12 Certificated Teacher
Registered Apprenticeship Programs

Fall 2025

Executive Summary

California is grappling with a pressing educator workforce challenge: certified teacher shortages, high turnover and inequities in who can afford to enter the profession. Enrollment in traditional preparation pathways has not kept pace with local district needs, particularly in rural or high-need communities. Statewide hiring needs are projected at approximately 23,000 for the 2025-2026 school year, while the number of teachers lacking full certification remains alarmingly high. Between 2021 and 2024, approximately 32,000 teachers of record were not fully certified each year. This data reveals the extent to which districts have relied on hiring underprepared teachers to meet their staffing needs.

In January 2023, the California Labor & Workforce Development Agency launched a multi-stakeholder initiative to develop a roadmap for implementing and scaling registered apprenticeship programs (RAPs) in teaching. Interested in opportunities to make their teacher residency models more sustainable, Santa Clara County Office of Education and Tulare County Office of Education decided to take the initiative to develop California's first PK-12 certificated teacher RAPs. These programs combine paid on-the-job classroom-based training with teacher preparation coursework to create accessible, practice-driven pathways into teaching.

Each county office of education began addressing its most urgent educator workforce needs by layering the registered apprenticeship model onto existing teacher residency pathways. The county office of education, district, educator preparation program partners and labor unions, with support from the Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS), collaborated closely to translate the existing residency models into PK-12 teacher apprenticeships while also reflecting on their programs to identify ways to strengthen the pathway and make it more accessible for aspiring teachers.

The early lessons are clear: connect early with DAS, identify an organizing partner, align on a shared vision and include all partners early to build trust, center high-quality practices from existing teacher preparation models, ensure the program is accessible to aspiring teachers and start small to plan for sustainability. Through apprenticeship, Santa Clara and Tulare County Offices of Education are proving that growing teachers from within their communities can strengthen their teacher pipeline and, possibly, improve teacher retention.

This case study was developed based on interviews conducted in fall 2025 with leaders from Santa Clara County Office of Education, Gavilan College, Morgan Hill Unified School District, Tulare County Office of Education, Hanford Joint Union High School District and the California Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS).

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Introduction

Across California, some districts struggle to fill teacher vacancies, particularly in high-need certification areas and in rural geographies. Retirements and turnover, exacerbated by the lack of a healthy pipeline of well-prepared, certified teachers, have created a chronic teacher shortage. Statewide hiring needs are projected at approximately 23,000 for the 2025-2026 school year, while the number of teachers lacking full certification remains alarmingly high.¹ Between 2021 and 2024, approximately 32,000 teachers of record were not fully certified each year. This data reveals the extent to which districts have relied on hiring underprepared teachers to meet their staffing needs.²

Meanwhile, the financial and logistical barriers of obtaining an associate's or bachelor's degree and enrolling in educator preparation programs often exclude the very people best positioned to fill staffing needs and stay in the district long term: paraprofessionals, classified staff and high school graduates who are already deeply embedded in their schools and communities.

In January 2023, the California Labor & Workforce Development Agency (LWDA) launched a multi-stakeholder initiative to develop a roadmap for implementing and scaling registered apprenticeship programs (RAPs). Education First facilitated a statewide working group to design a system in which the registered apprenticeship model could layer onto existing teacher preparation pathways (i.e., integrated undergraduate, traditional post-baccalaureate, residency and intern) to reduce the financial and logistical burden for candidates seeking their teacher certification. To support this vision, Education First developed the [*Earning by Learning: A Toolkit for Developing, Launching and Sustaining RAPs in PK12 Teaching in California*](#) (*Earning by Learning Toolkit*).³ This toolkit provides comprehensive guidance to help interested partners design a high-quality registered PK-12 certificated teacher apprenticeship program. This toolkit provided the blueprint that leaders in Santa Clara and Tulare counties needed to re-envision how aspects of high-quality preparation could translate into the apprenticeship model.

This case study tells the story of how these two county offices of education (COEs) and their partners designed California's first PK-12 certificated teacher RAPs, highlighting both the collaboration and technical work required and offering lessons for other districts, COEs, labor unions and educator preparation programs interested in developing their own PK-12 certificated teacher RAPs.

¹ [California Department of Education](#) (2025)

² [California Department of Education](#) (2025)

³ [Education First](#) (2025)

Vision and Motivation

For leaders at both the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) and Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE), apprenticeship is a strategy to grow PK-12 teachers from within the community.

“We know that school districts want to grow their own and find more teachers, paras, or staff who [are already effective at] supporting students. And these programs allow opportunities for people who may not have had the resources to complete an [educator preparation] program. So that's really a big part, is lifting people's ability to go to college and removing those barriers.”

– Lisa Lorona

Assistant Director of Apprenticeships & Pathways, SCCOE

Leaders at SCCOE and TCOE, both part of the Statewide Residency Technical Assistance Center (SRTAC), saw the PK-12 certificated teacher apprenticeship model as an opportunity to enhance their existing residency models to make them more sustainable. “Residency has very similar components to an apprenticeship program,” explained Brooke Berrios, Residency Program Coordinator for the California Center on Teaching Careers at TCOE. “So it seems that this layered approach has been the best way for us to start.... It was a no-brainer.” Although there are some distinct differences (e.g., employment status, progressive pay, minimum training time), the two models share many components of high-quality residencies.⁴ The PK-12 certificated teacher apprenticeship model provides these SRTAC leaders with an opportunity to pilot a model that they believe could ensure residency programs are not only effective in addressing teacher workforce shortages but also built for long-term sustainability.

SCCOE’s motivation was also grounded in the desire to strengthen partnerships by bringing in key partners beyond the district and the educator preparation program. Jeanna Perry, Director of the SRTAC at SCCOE, noted, “Apprenticeship fills that gap because it requires union leaders at the local level to be engaged from the very beginning, working together with district leaders and university partners in a coordinated way to build the program, rather than being brought in after the program has been designed.”

In both regions, the COEs, which operate residency programs, approached district leaders and educator preparation program partners to present the idea of a PK-12 certificated teacher RAP. It did not take much convincing for others to become invested.

District leaders are invested in strengthening their teacher pipelines and are hopeful that PK-12 certificated teacher apprenticeship programs can support them. In Kings County, where the Hanford Joint Union School District is partnering with TCOE, the need is immediate. Principal Jamie Rogers of Sierra Pacific High School explained, “In the

⁴ [Yun & Fitz](#) (2025the)

next five years, I'm going to have a lot of retirees. I need [well-prepared, certified teachers] to fill those gaps."

Rebecca O'Brien, Director of Special Education at Morgan Hill Unified School District in Santa Clara County, noted that "being able to have people who already work in classrooms become special education teachers is a good model. And some of the best special ed teachers that we have who have gone on to be administrators were paraprofessionals first. In fact, in one of the districts I worked in, the superintendent was a paraprofessional first."

Local labor partners saw apprenticeship as a way to make the education career, both the teaching assistant and certificated teacher professions, more accessible for staff who already serve students. Elisa Garcia, a union representative for classified staff at Morgan Hill Unified School District in Santa Clara County, said, "It's actually an opportunity for growth in the position that we have now for the para. [And] it's a step up, especially for those who cannot [easily] afford higher education." Lori Shoemaker, representing certificated teachers for Morgan Hill Unified School District, added, "We're working with [paraprofessionals] who are already in those classrooms...They're working with teachers. They're already seeing what adjustments to make, what to do to be successful in the classroom." She noted that having these prerequisite experiences means that newly prepared teachers via the apprenticeship pathway will be well-prepared for their roles.

Educator preparation program partners are aligned on this vision to make the education profession more accessible and higher quality. Gavilan College provides the apprenticeship entry point through its Associate of Arts (AA) degree for candidates interested in becoming teachers one day. Dean Chacko at Gavilan College noted their "interest is pretty much to make sure we are providing well-prepared local educators... And as a community college, we know how difficult it is to get diverse educators in the area, so we wanted to support as much as possible."

Across both counties, the shared vision was clear: provide multiple entry points into teaching, reduce financial and logistical barriers for aspiring teachers and create pathways that tap local talent to support long-term retention.

Identifying Partners for a Pilot

While many districts are deeply invested in strengthening the teacher workforce, not all districts and educator preparation partners are well-positioned to take on the work of designing a new model. The COEs spearheading the design of PK-12 certificated teacher RAPs in their regions selected partners based on three key considerations:

- **Organizational Readiness:** COEs prioritized districts that had the organizational capacity to design and implement a PK-12 certificated teacher RAP. They specifically looked for districts with existing structures to support teacher preparation (e.g., paid residencies), ensuring there was already a foundation upon which partners could build or layer the RAP model.
- **Identified Teacher Workforce Needs:** Partner districts had a clear understanding of the specific pipeline needs the PK-12 certificated teacher RAP could address. It was also critical whether the educator preparation program partner was well-positioned to train apprentices to fill those specific teacher workforce needs
- **Partnership Strength:** The COEs sought partners with whom they already had a working relationship. A shared history meant partners could collaborate more effectively. Key indicators for assessing readiness to partner in designing a PK-12 certificated teacher RAP included a preparation program's willingness to adjust its coursework to meet district priorities and a strong history of collaboration between districts and their local labor unions.

Partnering with DAS

Becoming a RAP requires careful alignment with the Division of Apprenticeship Standards' (DAS) program standards. Both counties worked with DAS throughout the design process to ensure the decisions they made were well aligned with DAS's requirements and state credentialing requirements.

Ryan Jefferson, Strategic Business Advisor at DAS, noted how important it is for interested partners to know that DAS "serves as the convener, but where we really shine is being the technical authority during the design and the registration process. So we guide our sponsors through the apprenticeship registration process. We ensure the related and supplemental instruction providers meet the standards for related instruction. We try to help and verify that districts are set up to provide high-quality on-the-job learning."

The COEs, who both served as organizing partners on the design team, maintained consistent contact with DAS, starting with informing DAS of their intention to design PK-12 certificated teacher RAPs, keeping DAS informed of progress and seeking DAS's advice on navigating the sticking points. DAS was available to the COEs whenever needed. In Tulare, Brooke met with DAS between design meetings to debrief the previous meeting and prep for the upcoming one.

"Every other week, I've met with [DAS]. I was very fortunate to have that."

- Brooke Berrios

Residency Program Coordinator for the California Center on Teaching Careers, TCOE

Once partners have aligned on all program information required by DAS, they are ready to submit the registration materials. Both counties noted that DAS's expectations for

apprenticeship programs are more rigorous than what is required by the federal Department of Labor (DOL). If partners focus on the DAS requirements, they are also likely to already meet the DOL's requirements. As a best practice, partners should complete the DAS registration process prior to registering with the federal DOL to ensure all rigorous state program standards are firmly in place.

According to DAS, bringing partners together to design an apprenticeship program can take between six and eight months.

Collaborative Design Teams

Building a PK-12 teacher apprenticeship program required deep collaboration across the partnership. Both SCCOE and TCOE followed the multi-step process outlined in the [Earning By Learning Toolkit](#), establishing design teams that included leads from the COEs, district and school leaders, local labor partners and educator preparation program partners.⁵

As a critical first step, both SCCOE and TCOE contacted a Strategic Business Advisor at DAS. They knew that collaborating with DAS was fundamental to ensuring their program design met rigorous state requirements. One of DAS's first key pieces of advice was to ensure all of the right partners were in the room.

"The best programs function in practice, not just on paper. Where programs stall is when alignment doesn't happen early—when people start designing without all the right partners in the room."

– Ryan Jefferson
Strategic Business Partner, DAS

For TCOE, figuring out who needed to be at the design table took some time. "We had about 14 folks on our design team, which is a lot. But because we met so frequently, we realized there were voices missing," noted Brooke Berrios of TCOE. The team realized they needed perspectives from every angle of the teacher preparation experience. "We had a voice from the employer, the union, the sponsor. We were meeting all those criteria," but then they realized they needed perspectives from a previous mentor and from a former resident. Berrios noted these additions helped identify what TCOE "could enhance" through the PK-12 certificated teacher RAP.

To ensure that decisions were made by those closest to those components, TCOE established smaller working groups to help maximize each partner's time and voice. TCOE served as the organizing lead, facilitating all design meetings, tracking decisions from each working group and bringing the working group's prototypes to the full design team for confirmation.

⁵ [Education First](#) (2025)

Similarly, SCCOE relied on an iterative process involving both the full design team and smaller subcommittees representing the multiple entry points they were building and the associated RSI providers. A SCCOE leader would meet with subcommittees to draft prototypes for each program segment, present them to the full design team for their feedback and then make requested revisions. SCCOE found it most efficient to meet with subcommittees composed of individuals closest to those components of the program, and then return the updated model to the full design team for final review.

“This is uncharted territory for us, and the fact that we had so many voices at the table, I think, has been very helpful.”

- Diana Taveres

Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, Morgan Hill Unified School District

To help guide decision-making, design teams followed program quality recommendations outlined in the [Earning by Learning Toolkit](#):

- **On-the-Job Training and Mentorship (OJT):** Structured support with gradual release into teaching responsibilities.
- **Related and Supplemental Instruction (RSI):** Competency-based coursework aligned to California Teacher Performance Expectations (TPEs) and [California Standards for the Teaching Profession \(CSTPs\)](#).
- **Wages:** Apprentices are compensated via reallocation of vacant positions and receive a living wage.
- **Partnerships:** Early engagement of all stakeholders—including unions, districts, COEs and educator preparation partners—to co-design the program.

Each partner brought unique expertise: COEs typically served as the organizing partner and coordinated logistics, facilitated the design conversations, applied for grants and liaised with the Strategic Business Advisor from DAS; districts defined the job responsibilities of an apprentice and, in partnership with their labor partners, worked to determine the appropriate progressive wage structure. The educator preparation program partners reviewed coursework to ensure it not only continues to align with the CSTPs, but also meets the DAS’s requirements for related instruction.⁶

Program Design

Both SCCOE and TCOE followed the seven-phase design process outlined in the [Earning by Learning Toolkit](#).

Phase 1: Conduct Research on RAPs in Teaching and Phase 2: Prepare for the RAP in Teaching Design Process

⁶ [California Department of Education](#) (2025)

In the early phases of the work, partners developed their understanding of PK-12 certificated teacher RAPs and analyzed their workforce needs to determine who needed to join the design teams.

Morgan Hill Unified and SCCOE chose to develop a layered apprenticeship program to create multiple entry points for aspiring teachers that would provide consistent support across professions. Whether a candidate is starting at the associate's degree or already has a bachelor's degree and is ready for the teaching credential, the design team knew that involving both the certificated and classified union representatives would be necessary as candidates moved from teaching assistant positions to the teacher position through the apprenticeship and residency program.

For Hanford Joint Union, a district in central California, the teacher shortage is acute. Together with TCOE, they decided to launch their PK-12 certificated teacher RAP with a focus on preparing special education and single-subject teachers, specifically in science and math. However, they intend to expand to other licensure areas when the program is ready to scale. For these partners, starting small was intentional. They wanted to ensure that what they designed is also grounded in instructional practices that the district would like to see newly prepared teachers adopt and scale more widely across the district. To do this, Ward Whaley, the Assistant Superintendent of Administrative Services, aligned talent needs with academic needs by bringing in his academic counterpart (Bobby Peters, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services) and a principal known for driving student achievement at her school (Jamie Rogers) onto the RAP design team.

"Jamie [Rogers] has an educational pathway at her site and is a strong instructional leader. I saw her willingness to embrace the residency model we were bringing, and that is why I brought her in as a participant on our design team."

—Ward Whaley
Assistant Superintendent of Administrative Services, Hanford Joint Union School District

Phase 3: Design the RAP in Teaching

Designing the PK-12 certificated teacher RAPs was the most time-intensive phase. Decision points were complex. Program standards, which articulate the key components of a PK-12 teacher apprenticeship program, had to satisfy both DAS's and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing's (CTC) requirements. This process also required developing entirely new components mandated by DAS but not traditionally required by the CTC, such as defining the apprenticeship job description or progressive wage structure.

Given the number of decisions they had to make together, the partners leveraged DAS to understand the technical requirements and used the resources available to guide their decision-making. Brooke Berrios recalled using the design tracker to help track and codify

these decisions. “The design tracker, while overwhelming, was very helpful. I loved it. [I] used a lot of the vision mapping. I spent a lot of time with that. Sample templates for meetings were super helpful.”

Defining the starting point

While both counties aimed to make the teaching profession more accessible, they took different approaches for their initial programs.

For TCOE, the move to apprenticeship was about creating a system with entry points for any aspiring teacher (Image 1). Brooke Berrios explained that developing a PK-12 certificated teacher RAP first would allow them to build backwards to create a stackable model, “So we started with the residency (focused on post-bachelor’s candidates)... but the vision is to leverage the residency foundation to address gaps at the paraprofessional level and eventually reach into high schools.” The ultimate goal is to create “a workforce pathway with clear on and off ramps from high school through induction.”

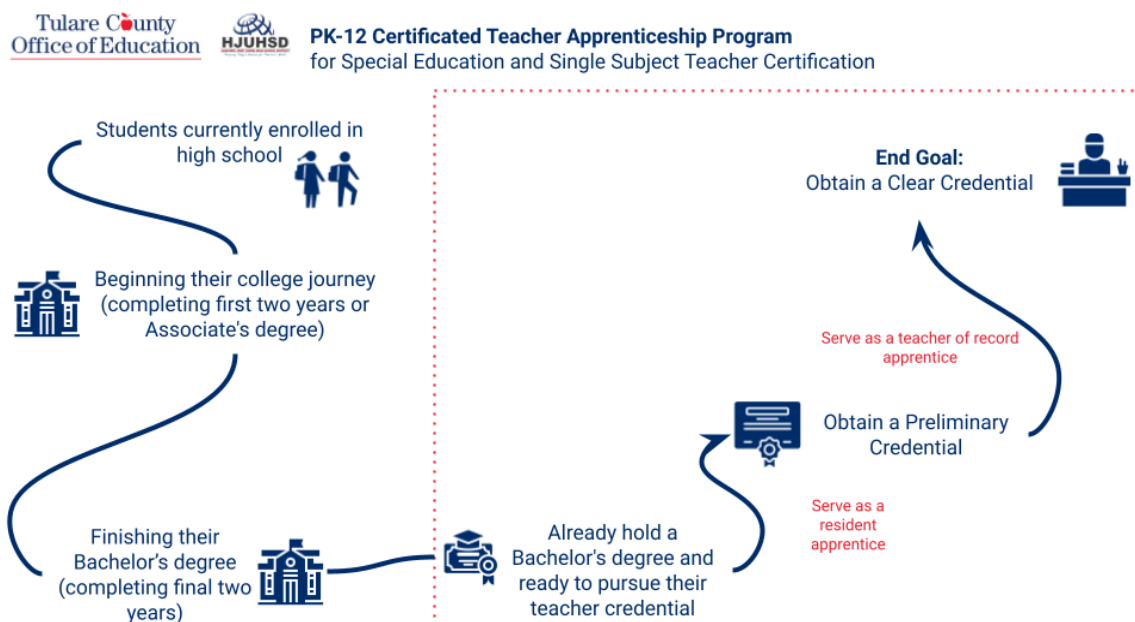


Image 1. The Tulare County Office of Education and the Hanford Joint Union School District aim to create a comprehensive teacher certification RAP that would allow multiple entry points, including starting in high school. This year, the partnership focused on designing a PK-12 certificated teacher RAP for candidates who already hold a bachelor’s degree, aligning the design with the current residency entry point (highlighted in red).

SCCOE decided to address two entry points simultaneously (Image 2). Lisa Lorona of SCCOE noted that the idea of a “pathway from pre-associate’s degree all the way to post-bachelor’s [candidates] working on their special education credential” was a selling point for partners. By focusing on both the pre-associate and post-bachelor’s degree entry points early, they ensured immediate options for candidates at different stages to enter the profession.

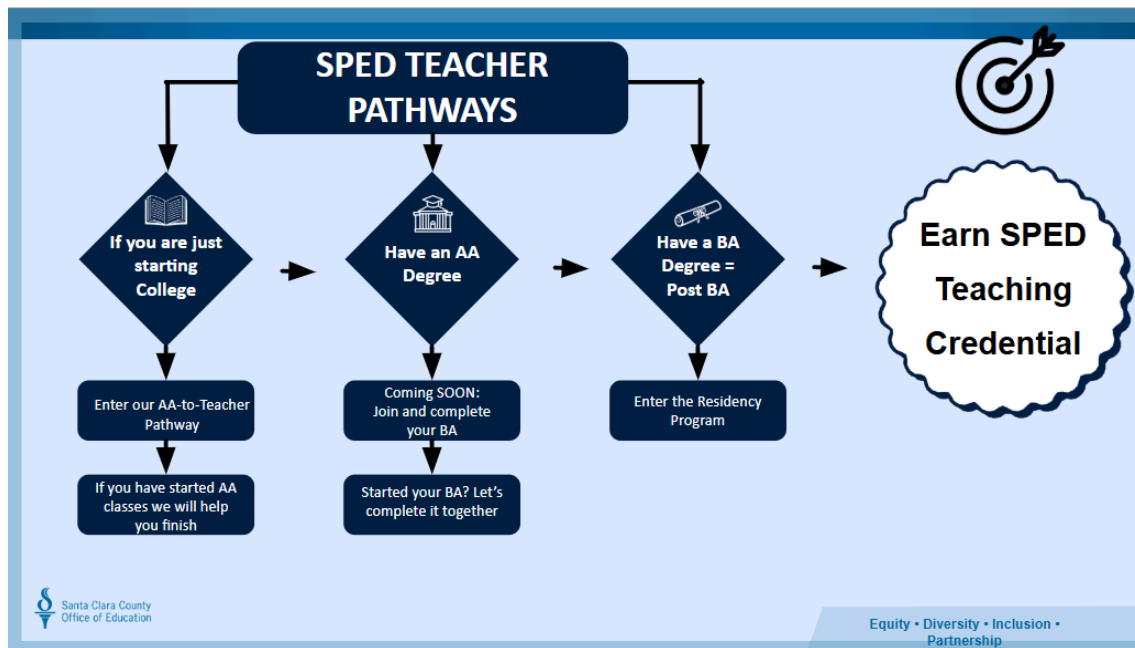


Image 2. The Santa Clara County Office of Education and Morgan Hill Unified School District are developing a stackable apprenticeship model to offer multiple entry points for the special education teacher credential. This year, the partnership focused on two candidate groups: those beginning or early in their college journey and those who already hold a bachelor's degree.

Aligning On-the-Job Training and Coursework

The apprenticeship model consists of two intertwined components: on-the-job training (OJT) competencies (also known as the Work Process Schedule) and coursework (also known as Related Supplemental Instruction or RSI).

In both cases, partners agreed to align the on-the-job learning competencies for their PK-12 teacher apprenticeship programs to the California Teacher Performance Expectations and California Standards for the Teaching Profession.

Rebecca O'Brien, Morgan Hill Unified School District, recalled the process for developing the Special Education Teaching Assistant and Special Education Teacher apprentice OJT competencies. "It was a little bit challenging because we had to think about [what] we want to see as far as competency, and what does that realistically look like? So we did kind of extrapolate from the California standards for teaching and teacher performance expectations. And then we looked at what does that look like for a paraprofessional who's just learning?"

To clarify expectations among partners for what they can expect from an apprentice in their first year, TCOE developed a week-by-week roadmap outlining the training activities and focus competencies for the teacher apprentice, aligned with the TPEs and CSTPs.

Once the design teams developed the on-the-job learning competencies, the educator preparation program partners had to review their coursework to ensure it would support apprentices in their on-the-job learning. Gavilan College noted that they had to review their course sequencing and make some adjustments to better align with on-the-ground experiences. Since both counties had existing residency programs, educator preparation program partners were mostly able to leverage their existing programs of study for the PK-12 teacher apprenticeship model. There are still outstanding questions, predicated on the program size, that partners will need to answer as they move toward implementation, such as: Will there be a separate section of courses offered just for apprentices? Should faculty teach courses onsite in the school district? Could the college allow apprentices to take a heavier courseload over the summer?

Diana Taveres, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources at Morgan Hill Unified School District in Santa Clara County, was grateful that Gavilan College was open to hosting courses “right here in Morgan Hill versus going to a college campus.” For apprentices, having courses available on district grounds will make the pathway even more accessible. “That willingness means a lot,” and Taveres attributes it to having the right partners at the table.

Defining the Apprenticeship Role and a Wage Structure

Once the competencies were developed and the coursework clarified, the districts had to define the role of an apprentice by adopting an existing job description or developing a new one. Partners recalled the challenge of crafting a job description that honors the learning and development process while still outlining clear employment responsibilities. In both counties, for resident apprentices (candidates who already have their bachelor's degree), districts selected roles that offer apprentices opportunities to practice and build their craft over time.

For both SCCOE and TCOE, the apprentice will serve as a “resident apprentice” in their first year after obtaining a bachelor's degree. Apprentices will be required to accumulate at least 600 hours of on-the-job learning in their resident apprentice year. By mandating at least 600 hours of on-the-job learning, the districts ensured that resident apprentices would satisfy the CTC's clinical practice requirement for a Preliminary Credential, which will enable them to become a teacher of record apprentice in the two subsequent years. During the following two years, the apprentice will become a “teacher of record apprentice” with a Preliminary Credential, officially adopting the teacher job description. The apprentice will need to complete at least 2,000 hours of OJT across years 2 and 3 as part of their induction to complete the apprenticeship requirements. Throughout this period, apprentices receive ongoing coaching and support until they complete all PK-12 certificated teacher RAP requirements.

After defining the job descriptions, partners had to address the progressive wage schedule. At Morgan Hill Unified, district leaders and labor partners reviewed existing agreements and decided to utilize the current paraprofessional salary schedule for apprentices before they obtain their Preliminary Credential, as the roles are identical. However, for veteran paraprofessionals already at the top of that pay scale who become apprentices, the district

may offer a stipend to ensure there is appropriate compensation. Special Education Teacher apprentices will be placed on the paraprofessional salary schedule during their first year after obtaining a bachelor's degree (their resident apprentice year), then transition to the teacher salary schedule in the following years upon obtaining their Preliminary Credential and becoming a teacher of record apprentice (see Table 1).

Similarly, TCOE and Hanford Joint Union adopted a similar progressive wage structure for their PK-12 teacher apprentice, but in their first year, resident apprentices may have the opportunity to boost their earnings by serving as substitute teachers at the standard district rate.

Table 1. Apprentice wage progression structures for SCCOE with Morgan Hill Unified School District for candidates who already hold their bachelor's degree and are pursuing their teaching certification.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
	Resident Apprentice	Teacher of Record Apprentice	
Special Education Teacher Apprentice (for candidates who already hold their bachelor's degree and can pursue their teaching certification)	Placed on the paraprofessional salary schedule <u>or</u> Move up a step on the paraprofessional salary schedule if already employed by the district as a paraprofessional	Move to Step 1 of the teacher salary schedule	Move up a step on the teacher salary schedule

Identifying the Mentorship Component

For special education teacher apprentices in Santa Clara, mentors must be teachers of record on-site, as is currently required for the residency program. "In order for us to have highly effective, highly qualified mentors in place, [the mentor] needs to have [at least] three years of experience... [and] we're fighting our own systems in California. We're hiring interns or alternative credentials to fill these shortage areas, and therefore, you don't have the experienced mentors to provide the mentoring that's needed out at all school sites," Jeanna Perry of SCCOE explained.

In both counties, apprentices will receive robust support from their mentors or journeyworkers (experienced, fully certified mentors for apprentices), including monthly coaching sessions and opportunities to co-plan, analyze student work and reflect on practice together. Mentors are responsible for fostering a positive climate and fully integrating apprentices into the school culture as teaching assistants or teachers.

Bobby Peters is the Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services at Hanford Joint Union School District in Kings County. As part of the partnership with TCOE, he believes the supports

for apprentices need to go beyond their immediate mentor. He works with all of the academic coaches and will encourage them to “get their eyes on the apprentices.” Not only will this give apprentices support from an instructional coach in addition to their mentor, but it’s a hiring strategy, allowing leaders to see whether the apprentice would “potentially [be] a really good fit.” Both counties currently provide mentors a stipend for hosting a teacher resident, and they will replicate this stipend structure for the PK-12 certificated teacher RAPs.

Both SCCOE and TCOE have put in a lot of thought about apprenticeship supports to ensure they are robust. In addition to all of the supports described above, SCCOE will dedicate an FTE to support apprentices. This person will serve as the central point person for the apprentice, whether they have a transportation challenge, would like additional tutoring for courses, need to access mental health support or childcare services, or need access to technology to do their jobs or complete their coursework. Lisa Lorona of SCCOE noted the program will “look at whatever their needs are, and we could go find what they need and get them that support. Because the whole point [of] the apprenticeship program is to make sure they're successful.”

Phase 4: Register the RAP in Teaching and Phase 5: Prepare to Implement and Launch the RAP in Teaching

At the time of this case study, partners were on Phase 4, having recently submitted materials to DAS to register their PK-12 teacher and teacher assistant apprenticeship programs. Partners were also beginning Phase 5 by confirming which members of the design team will continue on to the Joint Apprenticeship Committee (the governance committee that will implement and oversee the RAP), building a recruitment and selection plan, developing marketing materials and exploring funding.

Funding and Sustainability

As the design teams pushed the PK-12 certificated teacher apprenticeship programs from concept toward reality, one large question remained: how to pay for it. There is no single funding stream to cover apprentice wages, journeyworker or mentor stipends, tuition for coursework and wraparound supports for apprentices. Ryan Jefferson at DAS noted, “Some of the struggles that I've seen [for RAP partners]... they often emerge around funding streams. Who's going to pay for what?”

SCCOE and TCOE have taken the lead in planning for program sustainability. “There’s no pot of gold waiting for you after registration,” said Brooke Berrios. “Someone has to front the cost. You have to braid funding and think long-term.”

For Santa Clara and Tulare, blending and braiding funding will become both a strategy and a necessity. State grants (e.g., California Apprenticeship Initiative or CAI, Teacher Residency Implementation and Expansion or TRIE), Title II allocations, district contributions for wages and workforce development dollars will need to be used to cover the program’s multiple

components. Districts will handle apprentice salaries, while SCCOE and TCOE will initially manage stipends for mentors, tuition and wraparound services.

“The RSI (Related and Supplemental Instruction or coursework) reimbursement for community colleges allows [apprentices who will pursue their associates first] to go to college tuition-free, which is huge,” noted Lisa Lorona, SCCOE. “The California Apprenticeship Initiative or CAI grant will allow the partners to fund someone to help support the students who are in the program,” but these funds will only be available for about three years. “We’re also looking at how districts could use their own resources to create a similar system over time.”

For teacher apprentices who already have an associate degree or have completed their first 60 postsecondary credits, covering tuition can be trickier. Jeanna Perry of SCCOE shared, “The RSI reimbursement [will] not be enough to cover tuition” for a teaching credential. Perry further explained that this funding will likely need to come from district partners, and “that’s where partners have to show that this is a return on investment worth contributing to that tuition.” District leaders recognize this challenge and realize they will need to navigate it together. Bobby Peters of Hanford Joint Union, TCOE’s partner in Kings County, noted, “If we can show a return on investment in terms of well-prepared teachers who stay in the district, it’s worth it.”

Both pilot programs intend to register with the Division of Apprenticeship Standards and with the federal Department of Labor. Doing so will allow programs to apply for grants and funding streams available at the federal and state levels. To see a list of possible funding sources for RAPs in teaching, see the [Earning by Learning Toolkit](#).

Sustainability isn’t just about funding; it is also about staffing. Santa Clara discussed potentially establishing a hybrid role to serve as an adjunct or teach some classes for the PK-12 teacher apprenticeship pathway while also supervising apprentices. This staffing model would allow a single person to serve as the PK-12 teacher RAP lead and assess program quality.

Given how new PK-12 teacher apprenticeships are, all partners will continue to explore potential funding sources and methods for blending and braiding funds to promote the apprenticeship programs’ sustainability.

Lessons Learned

By the time both SCCOE and TCOE submitted their DAS applications, one thing was clear: the process had been as much about building relationships as designing a program.

Over the course of the design process, several key lessons emerged, many of which centered on the quality of partnerships:

- Connect early with DAS and engage external partners for support.
- Identify an organizing partner.
- Start with relationships; trust-building among partners is foundational.
- Include all partners, including representatives from the certificated and classified unions, early to ensure alignment and buy-in.
- Leverage existing programs, such as a residency, as a foundation.
- Center the apprentice; programs must prioritize learning and support.
- Start small and plan for sustainability from the beginning.

Connect early with DAS for support. Navigating the RAP model presented a learning curve for both SCCOE and TCOE. They relied heavily on DAS for their expertise on technical requirements and used available resources, such as a design tracker, to guide decision-making. Partners emphasized that those exploring PK-12 teacher RAPs should engage DAS at the very start. DAS provided essential technical guidance to navigate the design and registration process.

Identify an organizing partner. To effectively make decisions during the design process, design teams need one member organization to take the lead coordination role. This individual or group of individuals must have the capacity to complete the critical tasks associated with the sponsor role, including coordinating design team meetings, liaising with DAS on behalf of the design team (and eventually the Joint Apprenticeship Committee once registered), registering the program with DAS and DOL and managing state-level and federal-level data reporting. This partner will also lead efforts to apply for grants and to develop a plan for blending and braiding funding. Ryan Jefferson at DAS noted how key it is for programs to have an organizing lead or a central coordinator, “If there's a program that doesn't have a champion that's driving this initiative, then that's where we see a lot of stalling in the registration process.”

Start with relationships and include all partners, including representatives from the certificated and classified unions, early to ensure alignment and buy-in. Lisa Lorona of SCCOE recalled, “From the very first meeting, we realized that the early work was all about relationships.... Everyone came with different systems, languages and timelines. We had to slow down and learn how to listen to one another.” Similarly, TCOE partners spent significant time engaging in vision mapping to develop a shared purpose, ensuring all key partners, including representatives from the certificated and classified unions, were at the table at “conversation zero.” Because both counties experienced design team transitions due to retirements or late additions, they both emphasized the importance of involving key partners early and often.

Leverage existing programs as a foundation. Partners across counties noted that many decisions were easier to make because they were building upon their existing residency models. Rather than starting from scratch, they were able to adapt high-quality components of their residencies, such as their monthly coaching structure, to fit the apprenticeship

framework. This allowed the design teams to focus on the specific technical requirements of the apprenticeship model, such as wage progression and the work process schedule, without reinventing the wheel in terms of teacher preparation quality.

Center the apprentice; programs must prioritize learning and support. To function as a truly accessible pathway rather than just a short-term staffing solution, programs must prioritize apprentices' experiences to design learning and support structures. This ensures the model effectively prepares new teachers for the profession so they are more likely to stay. By placing the apprentice's experience at the forefront, programs can successfully address the logistical and financial barriers that prevent high-potential candidates from obtaining their teaching credentials.

Start small and plan for sustainability from the beginning. Because they were building something new, partners felt it was critical not to overreach by taking on too much at once. Both counties identified their most critical teacher shortage areas and began there to establish a proof of concept, with the intention of scaling later. This intentional, smaller start also allowed them to think through how these programs will be funded in the long term. By avoiding a large initial rollout, the partners could focus on identifying necessary costs, clarifying partner contributions and securing and blending or braiding funds to support the program.

When asked to reflect on the design process overall, Brooke Berrios of TCOE shared, "I'm glad we took our time. You can't build something like this fast, but you can build it right." From her perspective, TCOE's success hinged on aligning on a shared vision and having strong partnerships. "I think over and over, I say, you have to spend so much time on partnership. My why is not always their why," Berrios explained.

"The best applications are the ones where the collaboration is real, where you can see the partners functioning together. That's when we know this is going to last."

— Ryan Jefferson
Strategic Business Advisor, DAS

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