

# Providing Perspectives on a Residency Educator Preparation Program: Growths & Challenges

Brianne Shea (Advisor: Dr. Tricia Stewart)

Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership, Western Connecticut State University, Danbury, CT 06810

## ABSTRACT

The teacher shortages are larger than ever before, with teachers leaving the profession at an increasing rate. At the same time, a lack of teachers entering the profession paired with the departure of veteran teachers has created a gap of qualified teachers creating a large impact on the learners in our classrooms. Additionally, an ongoing lack of educators of color creates classrooms where many students are taught only by White Teachers. The teacher shortage has prompted novel pathways to creating a new workforce via alternate routes to certification and non-traditional educator preparation programs. Increasingly, all professions and industries are calling for an increase in the diversity of their staff, education included. Therefore, this program evaluation seeks to understand the implementation of best practices around one specific type of creative educator preparation program that encompasses an alternate route to preparing and providing diverse educators for school systems. The program under evaluation is based on a residency model that was created to break down barriers for teacher candidates of color. Of particular interest are the ways that program supports exist to support residents in their career aspirations and the rate of retention in the teaching field that is one indicator of success (Hansen, Quintero & Feng, 2018).

## INTRODUCTION

Education has a high burnout rate, and many educators leave the profession after the first year. This rate is even higher in teachers of color (Carver-Thomas, 2019). Therefore, it is necessary to find a way to support teachers of color to retain these teachers. One such support is to offer alternative teaching preparation specifically geared towards certifying and supporting teachers of color. Such is the case, with the teacher residency program that is the focus of this implementation program evaluation. An alternative teaching program is being evaluated because of the realization that the current systems in which individuals learn to be teachers is not working for all students. An accepted premise is that the cycle of systemic racism in the educational system can be improved through an effective recruitment system and teacher preparation programs that understand and accommodate the needs of a diverse population (Samuels, 2018).

## MATERIALS & METHODS

Program evaluation is inherently mixed methods given the importance of a range of data that includes stakeholder input (Rossi, Lipsey, & Henry, 2019) and data can be obtained from various sources. The data that is collected across these is intended to represent the experiences of the stakeholders related to the topic of study. The data collected in this study is in narrative form, taken from interviews and existing Improve Access program and a data matrix of the research questions with alignment of the interview protocol questions is provided. Each participant interview is considered an individual data point, in order to represent the perspectives of the many different stakeholders within the program, three different stakeholder group interviews were conducted, which are be used in conjunction with existing program data.

Existing program data points include: instructor and program coach evaluation and feedback surveys, Resident surveys, Mentor surveys, candidate interview responses and Resident certification data.

## METHODS

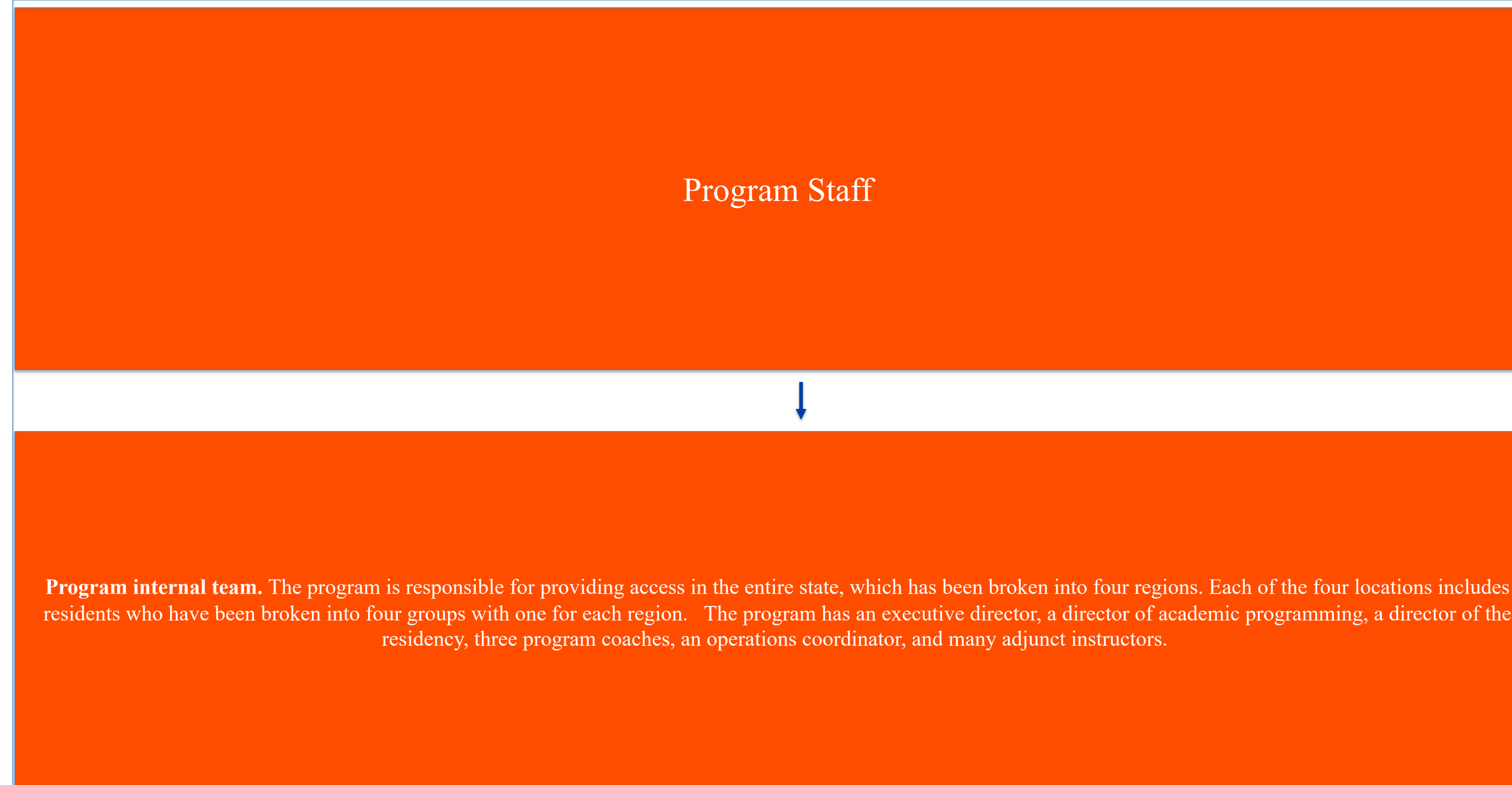


Figure 1. Interview Protocols. Access is gained to three stakeholder groups. Credibility of the study is assured via transcription of recorded interviews verbatim to verify responses, the coding procedure and through the use of triangulation. Interview protocols will show transparency where the questions will be cross-referenced in conjunction with the research questions in this study (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002, p. 31).

## PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

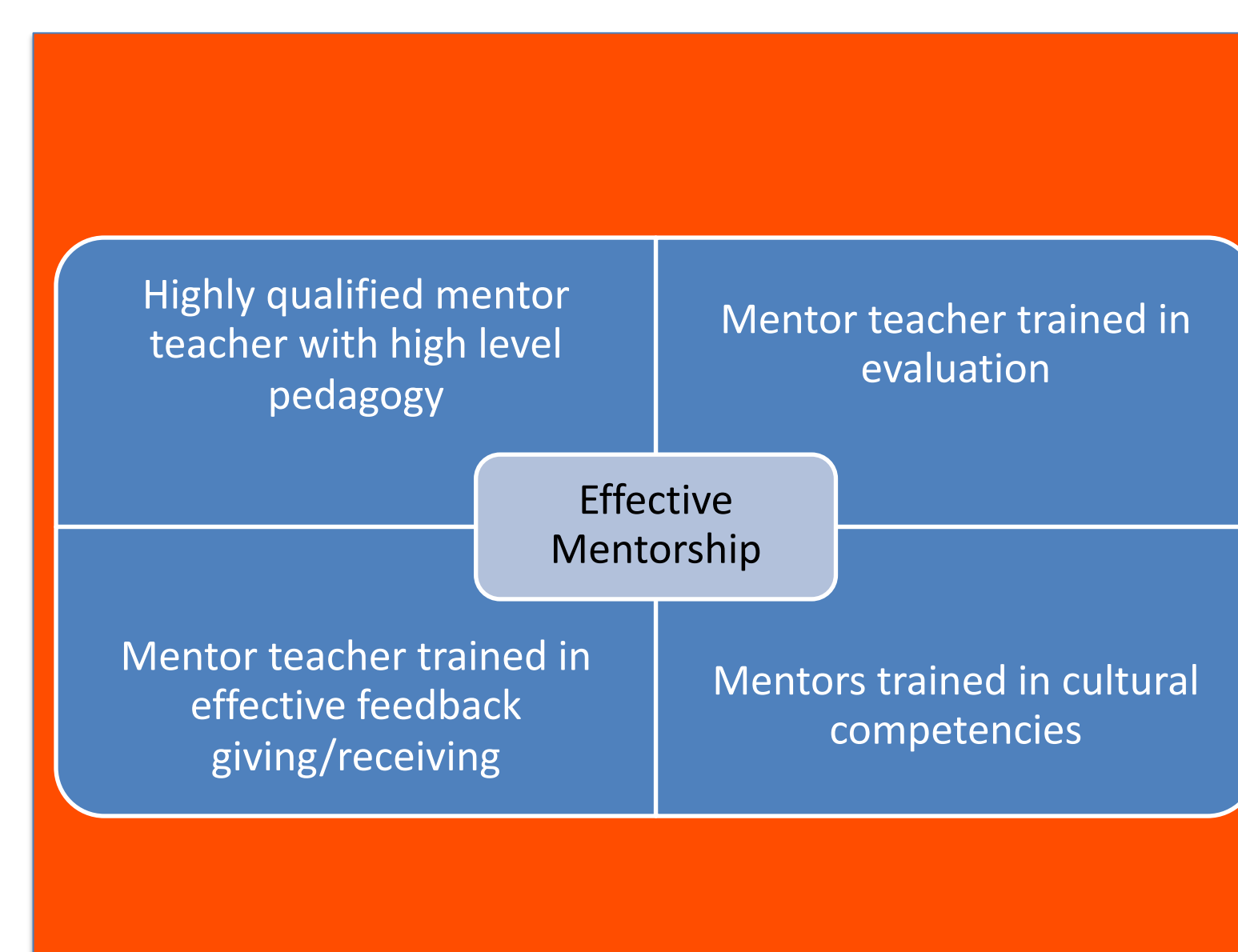


Figure 2. Descriptive Skilled Mentorship. Preliminary findings support critical role of mentor teacher as model for resident.

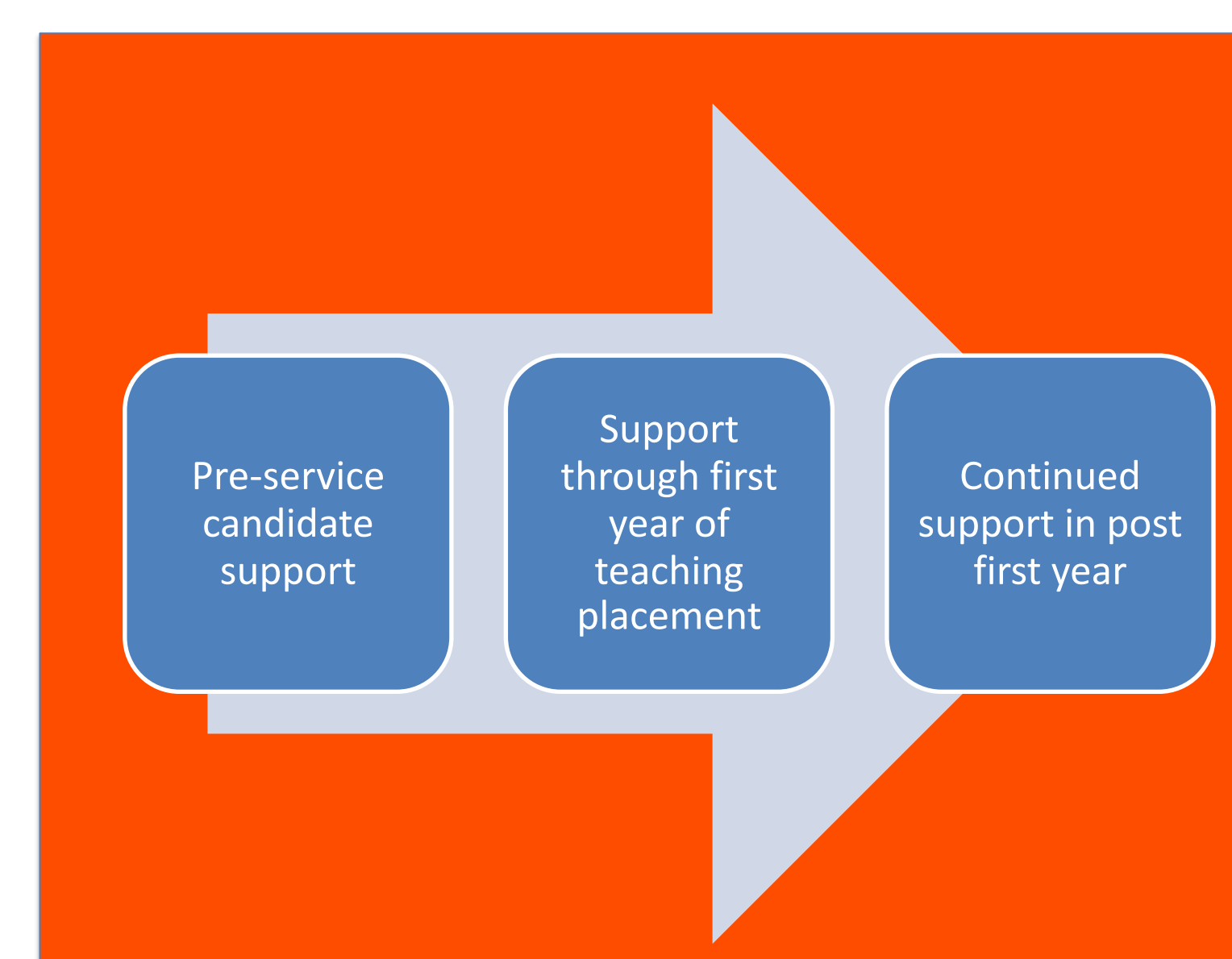


Figure 3. Continued Support. Preliminary findings indicate importance of continued support in years 1-3 of teaching

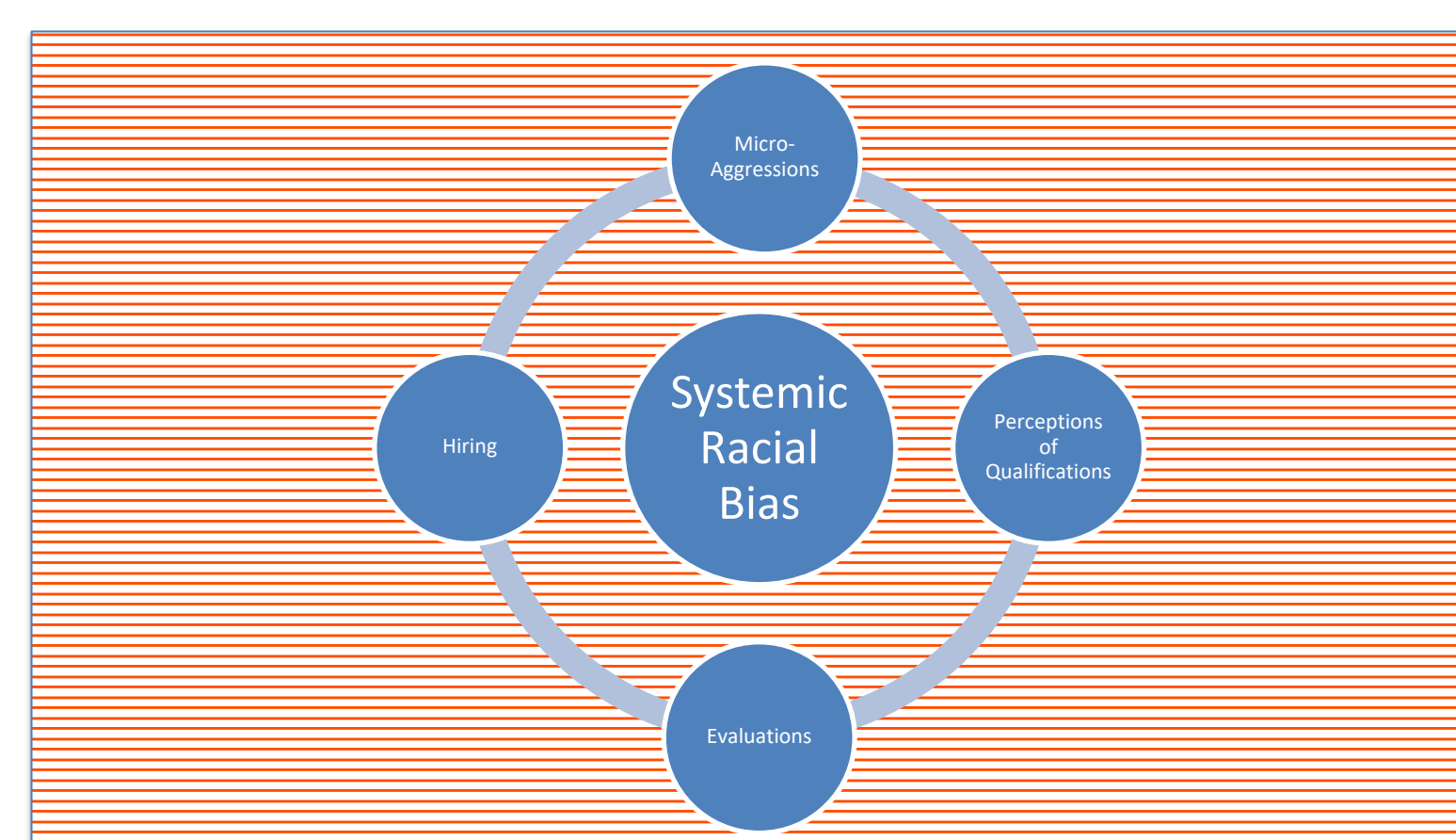


Figure 3. Racial Bias in Systems. Preliminary findings. Resident feedback points towards perceived racial bias in educational systems.

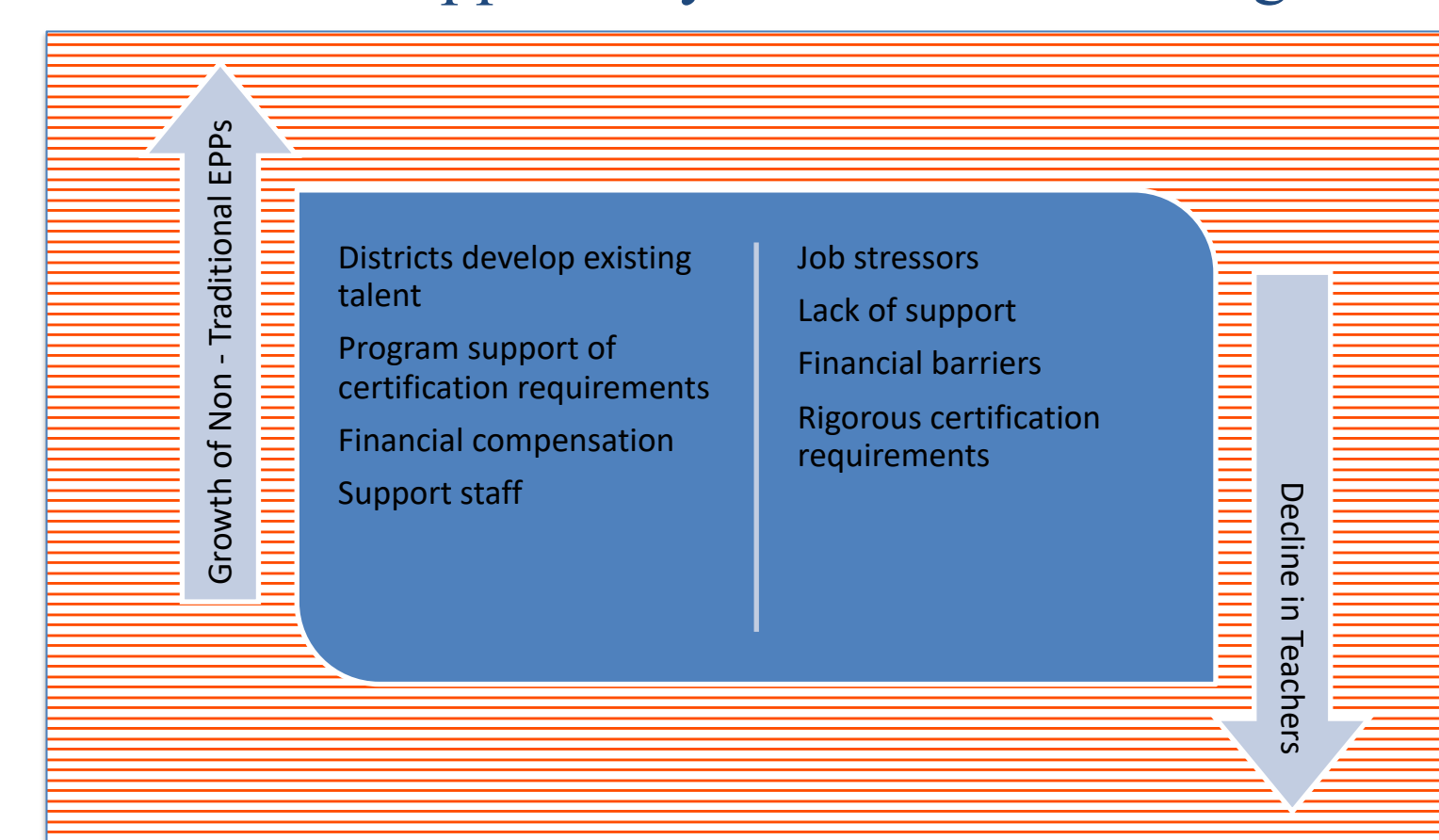


Figure 4. Grow Your Own Programs. Preliminary findings lean towards a growth in a need for non-traditional routes to teacher preparation.

## DISCUSSION

The preliminary findings of this implementation program evaluation indicate many trends across the interview data:

- Continued need for representation of marginalized populations in the education field at a certified level,
- Supports needed for early teaching professionals such as mentors, support groups, social emotional and health networks, financial advisement and safe spaces of peer groups,
- Increased public and professional understanding of rigor, caliber and training adhered to in alternative education preparation programs,
- Broad avenues for hiring and retaining diverse staff,
- Rigorous training of DEI topics and racial bias training,
- Support of students in the program is reported as effective and necessary for the success of the candidates,
- Certification exam study supports and resources provide candidates with more effective tools to pass the requirements,
- The free to no-cost aspect of the program while candidates earn an income and are provided health insurance removes a financial barrier to entry into the field while some other barriers exist such as transportation and childcare.

Preliminary recommendations for the Increase Access Program based on the preliminary findings:

- Increased support for in-service teachers and continued professional development for beginning teachers. Program continuation and coaching in years 1-3 should continue with checkpoints and networking groups, with access to the original cohort.
- Program training that is more in depth in DEI areas for white mentors, principals and instructors to support the mission of the program and the success of the teacher candidates entering as marginalized people in a traditionally white space.
- Program exploration of ways to remove other barriers such as: lack of a bachelor's degree, certification as opposed to a Master's in a state that later requires the degree to maintain a certification.
- Program continuity of district partnerships to promote grow your own models for communities to develop and promote members tied to the community.

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