Evaluation of Georgia State University's CREATE Teacher Residency Program—Cohorts 6 through 8

A FINAL REPORT OF A QUASI-EXPERIMENT IN GEORGIA

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Since 2015, Empirical Education has served as the external evaluator of the Compassion, Reflection, and Equity for Atlanta Teacher Effectiveness (CREATE) teacher residency program, conducting quasi-experimental and descriptive studies to understand the implementation and impact of CREATE and offer formative feedback to CREATE leaders and professional learning (PL) facilitators. CREATE is a teacher development and support partnership between Georgia State University (GSU) College of Education and Human Development (CEHD), Atlanta Public Schools (APS), and several community organizations, working toward their vision of having "a critically-conscious, compassionate and skilled educator for every student" (GSU, 2020). Specifically, CREATE is designed to meet three overarching goals:

1) recruit and retain a diverse group of new teachers through preparation, support, and social connections;
2) support experienced educators through deep learning, connection, and opportunities for leadership; and
3) strengthen effective educator development through university-district-community shared learning and collaborative action.

To accomplish these goals, CREATE offers a series of PL opportunities and curriculum for pre-service and experienced educators across APS to deepen their equity-centered and compassion-based practices and strengthen their mentorship and leadership roles. This report focuses specifically on the implementation and impact of CREATE's teacher residency model (Goal 1).

CREATE TEACHER RESIDENCY MODEL

CREATE's three-year residency model offers intensive support and mentorship experiences for pre-service and early career teachers working in APS. To recruit new CREATE residents, prospective educators in the GSU CEHD's Early Childhood and Elementary Education (ECEE) and Middle and Secondary Education (MSE) departments are invited to apply in the spring before their final year of enrollment in the CEHD. [1] During their first year in the program (Year 1), residents complete their fieldwork requirement by serving as student teachers in K–8 classrooms within CREATE partner schools in APS, working alongside a CREATE-trained Cooperating Teacher (CT), and meeting regularly with a CREATE-trained University Supervising Coach (USC). CREATE continues to support residents into their first year as teacher-of-record (Year 2), where they can co-teach with a fellow resident and receive support from an Instructional Mentor (IM) and School-Based Mentor (SBM), both of whom are trained by CREATE in equity-centered and compassion-based coaching practices. In the final year of the residency (Year 3), CREATE residents serve as the sole teacher-of-record and continue to receive support from their IM and SBM. Each summer throughout the three-year experience, residents attend a Summer Resident Academy (SRA) to further develop their instructional skills, community ties, and ability to create an inclusive classroom culture. Throughout each of the three school years, they also meet regularly with their cohort in PL sessions called Together Time (TT). The purpose of TT is to build social connections; engage in equity-centered and compassion-based PL opportunities; explore racial identity, equity, and social justice in education; and focus on critical reflection and

[1] CREATE recruits students who are entering into their final year of pursuing their Bachelor of Science in Education (BSEd) in Birth Through Five (B-5), Elementary Education, and Middle Level Education, and those pursuing their Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT) in Elementary Education, Middle Level Education, or K-12 ESOL.

solving school-based dilemmas.[2] The residency program follows a staggered cohort model, admitting approximately 20–25 residents each school year. This approach distributes resource needs over time, for example, allowing CREATE to recruit and fund a smaller group of trained CTs and other mentors annually. It also fosters stronger community and connection among residents by enabling smaller cohorts to progress together while ensuring that a new group of CREATE-trained residents joins APS each year.

CREATE hypothesizes that these support and mentorship experiences will foster teacher well-being; build teachers' culturally and historically responsive pedagogical skills; strengthen support networks of connection, reflection, and problem-solving; and improve classroom climate and relationships with students and colleagues. In turn, CREATE expects that these teacher- and classroom-level outcomes will lead to positive effects on the pedagogical effectiveness of the learning environments and learning experiences, student achievement, and a committed and diversified teacher workforce (see Figure 1: Program Logic Model). [3]

[2] Appendix A includes further details about the programming CREATE offers for novice and experienced educators.

[3] The CREATE program has evolved over the years. The logic model in Figure 1 reflects the CREATE program at the time of the study.

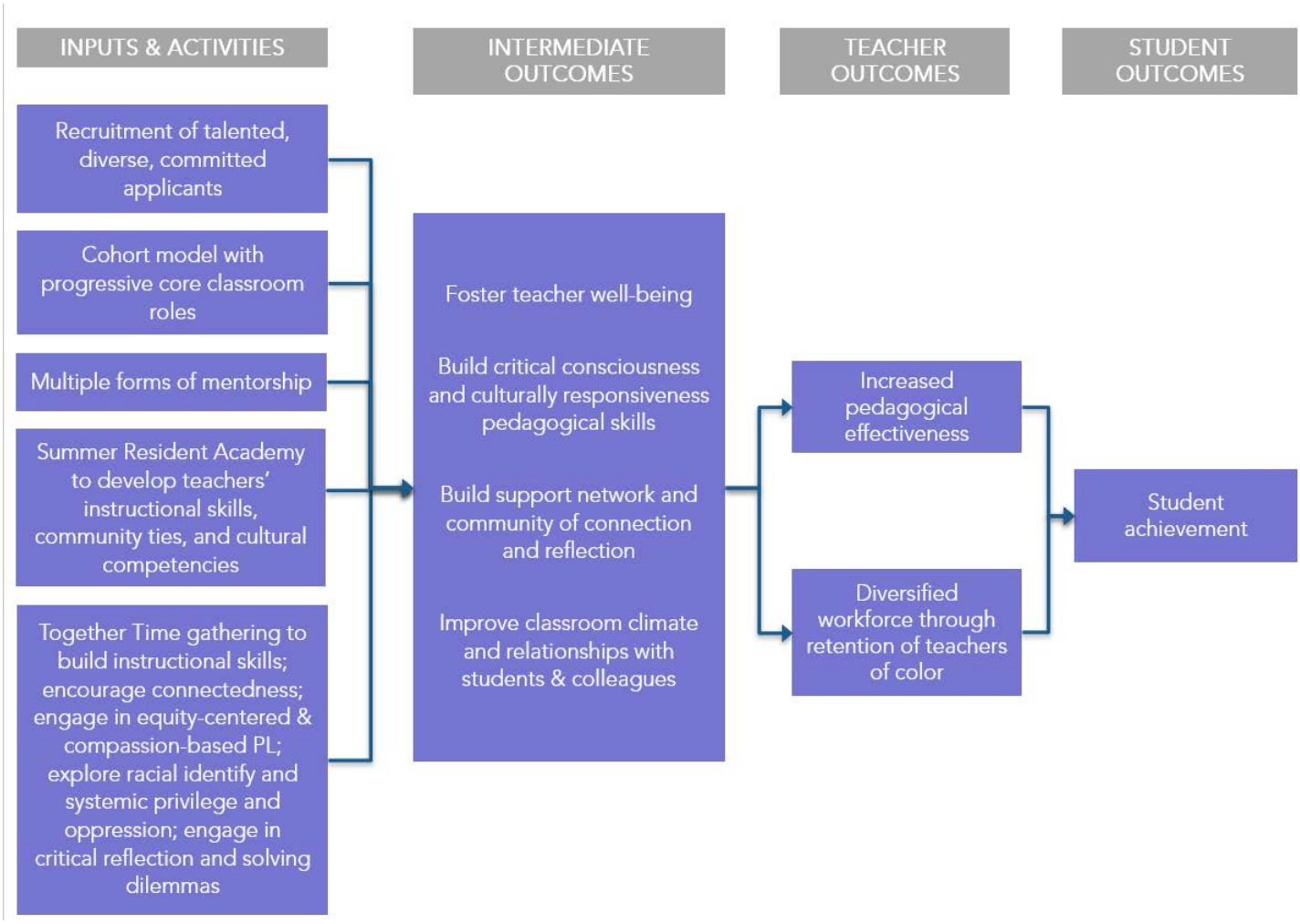


FIGURE 1. CREATE TEACHER RESIDENCY PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL

PRIOR FINDINGS ON THE IMPACT OF CREATE

Empirical Education's evaluation of CREATE began in 2015 under an Investing in Innovation (i3) grant with the first two cohorts of CREATE residents. Our evaluation continued with funding through three Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) grants awarded to CREATE in 2017, 2020, and 2022. Across these grants and 10 cohorts of CREATE residents, we have applied quasi-experimental methods to determine whether the CREATE teacher residency program has a positive impact on key teacher intermediate outcomes and student achievement. The studies have compared the three-year experiences of CREATE residents to those of comparison group participants in the traditional credentialing program at GSU CEHD, who are not CREATE participants. Results across these studies inform teacher preparation, effectiveness, and retention practices and policies across Georgia and the nation. The findings also contribute to a growing body of research on the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs (Fitz & Yun, 2024; Bardelli et al., 2023; Patrick, et al., 2023; Meadows & Theodore, 2012), and, particularly, of residency programs that support a racially diverse educator workforce.

Resident Cohorts 1 and 2

Our study design and analysis under the five-year i3 grant followed the first two cohorts of CREATE residents and a matched comparison group for each cohort. Cohort 1 began their residency with CREATE during their student teaching year in the 2015–16 school year, and Cohort 2 began in the 2016–17 school year. The study followed participants for three years, through their second year as a teacher-of-record (2017–18 and 2018–19 school years, respectively).

We did not find statistically significant impacts of CREATE on the full sample of teachers on measures of resilience, mindfulness, self-efficacy in teaching, commitment to teaching, or stress management. However, across all five outcomes, we found positive impacts for the subsample of Black educators, and positive differential impacts for Black educators, during their first year of teaching and second year of residency. For the subgroup analysis, the impact on stress management was statistically significant (p = .042). For the differential impact analysis, resilience (p = .021) and self-efficacy (p = .016) were statistically significant.

Teacher effectiveness was measured using teachers' scores on the Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards, or TAPS (the observation component of the teacher evaluation system in Georgia that includes 10 performance standards, each rated on a four-point scale). We found no statistically significant effect of CREATE on the TAPS instructional strategies professional standard (ES = -0.339, p = .221) or on the positive learning environment performance standard (ES = -0.557, p = .192). The vast majority of CREATE and comparison teachers in our study rated at a Level II (proficient). We speculated that the low level of variability observed in TAPS scores points to a broader difficulty in evaluating early career teachers and the limitation of existing rating systems—both in avoiding extreme judgments of behaviors of early career teachers and in the technical limitations of the instrument themselves—in effectively distinguishing between low- and high-performing teachers (Kraft & Gilmour, 2017; Weisberg et al., 2009).

We also did not find statistically significant effects of CREATE on students' ELA achievement (ES = -0.122, p = .454), math achievement (ES = -0.175, p = .569), or general (ELA and math) achievement (ES = -.139, p = .234), as measured by the Georgia Milestones Assessment System (Georgia Milestones). However, given limited data availability from specific grades (4–8) and content areas, the sample size for these analyses was very small and increased the likelihood that the result reflects mostly random sampling error.

Importantly, our analysis of teacher retention revealed promising trends. Exploratory analyses showed a positive and statistically significant impact on undisrupted retention over three years—from GSU CEHD graduation through the second year of teaching—for the CREATE group compared to the comparison group (p = .038). We also observed that higher continuous retention among Black educators in CREATE, relative to those in the comparison group (p = .021), was a driver of the favorable impact.

For more information about the evaluation of Cohorts 1 and 2, please refer to the full i3 grant report of results and the associated appendices.

Resident Cohorts 3 Through 5

The 2017 SEED grant funded the evaluation of Cohort 3 through 5 CREATE residents across three years of residency between the 2017–18 and 2021–22 school year, alongside a sample of matched comparison participants for each cohort. The 2017 SEED grant also included new evaluation components, such as assessing the effectiveness of cross-organizational, community-centered, evidence-based PL opportunities offered by CREATE to experienced educators in APS.

Throughout the 2017 SEED grant evaluation, we expected CREATE's focus on racial equity work and collaborative spaces to strengthen its impact on multiple measures of wellness for new educators. By the end of their second year of teaching, we found that CREATE residents in Cohorts 3 through 5 trended towards higher levels than comparison participants on measures of self-compassion (ES = .51, p = .06), stress management and empathy related to teaching (ES = .34, p = .25), and personal accomplishment as a dimension of teacher burnout (ES = .29, p = .31). We also found that CREATE teachers trended towards lower levels of emotional exhaustion (ES = -18, p = .52) and depersonalization (ES = .27, p = .34), both also dimensions of teacher burnout. The effect sizes are noteworthy in terms of their magnitude and direction; however, the observed differences did not reach conventional levels of statistical significance. Descriptively, a higher proportion of Cohort 5 CREATE residents (89%) reported being *very* or *extremely* confident in their understanding of race- and equity-related concepts in schools, than comparison teachers (67%). Additionally, 78% of Cohort 5 CREATE participants reported *frequently* or *almost always* being encouraged to think deeply about race- and equity-related issues in their schools, while only 44% of Cohort 5 comparison participants reported the same.

We did not find a statistically significant impact of CREATE on student achievement in ELA (ES = .18, p = .53), as measured by the Georgia Milestones in grades 3 through 8. We also did not find a statistically significant impact on teacher retention; however, we note that during this grant period, graduation rates for both CREATE and comparison group participants were very high (>90%). We were unable to assess the impact of CREATE on students' math achievement and teacher effectiveness (using TAPS) for Cohorts 3 through 5, as these data were not collected by districts during the COVID-19 pandemic. We highlight the importance of interpreting the findings from this study in the larger national context taking place during these school years: the COVID-19 pandemic, political action, disagreement about what teachers can or cannot teach in schools, calls to action against police brutality and towards racial equity and justice, ongoing concerns about school safety, and nationwide teacher shortages.

For more information about the evaluation of Cohorts 3 through 5, please refer to the entire 2017 SEED grant report, associated appendices, and the research summary.

CURRENT REPORT

Resident Cohorts 6 Through 8

In 2020, CREATE received a second SEED grant to support three additional cohorts of CREATE residents (Cohorts 6 through 8). This is the focus of the current report, which describes the results of a quasi-experimental study of residents across these school years. The 2020 SEED grant extended PL opportunities to enhance experienced educator effectiveness across APS; however, new to this grant was a research component examining CTs who receive intensive CREATE training and mentor a resident as their student teacher. We examined a comparison group of non-CREATE mentor teachers and their student teachers as well. The 2020 SEED grant also included funds for an economic evaluation.

The 2020 SEED grant was only funded for three school years (where the i3 and 2017 SEED grants were funded for five years each). Funding began in the 2020–21 school year and covers the evaluation of Year 1 (pre-service teaching year) for Cohort 6, Cohort 7, and Cohort 8 (see Table 1 below); the evaluation of Year 2 (first year as teacher of record) for Cohort 6 and 7; and the evaluation of Year 3 (second year as teacher-of-record and final year in CREATE) for only Cohort 6. Table 1 visually displays the school years and corresponding cohorts funded by this SEED grant.

TABLE 1. CREATE RESEARCH STUDY TIMELINE FOR COHORTS 6, 7, AND 8

	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Cohort 6	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3		
Cohort 7		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	
Cohort 8			Year 1	Year 2	Year 3

Note. Light blue cells indicate years that were funded under the 2020 SEED grant, which is the focus of this report. Funding for the additional years for Cohort 7 and 8 (as well as two additional cohorts) is through a 2022 SEED grant to CREATE, as noted in gray font.

This report offers an analysis of the impact of CREATE on Cohorts 6 through 8, as we have done with previous cohorts.

CONTEXT FOR THE RESEARCH

As mentioned above, the research conducted under the 2020 SEED grant began during the 2020–21 school year, the first full school year after the COVID-19 pandemic emerged worldwide. The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and Georgia Department of Public Health (Georgia DPH) partnered to develop a recovery plan for Georgia's schools that outlined the recommended instructional model for district and school responses based on the degree to which the COVID-19 virus was spreading within the community (GaDOE & Georgia DPH, n.d.). As a result, participants in the study taught through various modalities that year: distance learning, in-person learning, and a hybrid model during.

During the 2020–21 school year, it was common for classrooms and schools to frequently transition between different teaching modalities as COVID-19 transmission rates and policies changed. Regarding the cohorts evaluated within this study, Cohort 6 CREATE residents and comparison participants were completing their final year at GSU CEHD and student teaching during the 2020–21 school year. During the first semester of that year (August–December 2020), 100% (16/16) of the Cohort 6 CREATE residents and 76% (16/21) of the Cohort 6 comparison group participants reported completing their student teaching experience either entirely virtually or in a hybrid model (virtually and in person). It is clear that Cohort 6 CREATE residents and comparison participants had a student teaching experience unique from the traditional experience, in which all pre-service teachers complete their student teaching in person. Additional changes to credentialing requirements—such as the state of Georgia's decision to eliminate the Education Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA) as a requirement to obtain a teaching credential in June 2020—further impacted the teacher preparation experience for educators included in Cohort 6 of the study, who were the first group of educators to experience these changes. All pre-service and early career teachers included in the 2020 SEED evaluation experienced first-hand uncertainty on personal, school, district, and community levels around effective approaches to education in consideration of public and community health.

Within the CREATE program itself, changes in its structure and programming during the evaluation years uniquely shaped residents' experiences in Cohort 6 through Cohort 8. In spring 2022, the CREATE program moved from a leadership model consisting of an executive director and a principal investigator to one consisting of five co-directors and one principal investigator. Before the shift in leadership structure, CREATE had been led by two founding members of the program, both White women. During this same period, however, Black women who did not hold

formal leadership titles led the program's work. CREATE's restructuring of leadership created five co-director roles, each focusing on a different area of program development, all filled by Black women. Through this shift, CREATE formally recognized their leadership and enabled the leadership team to more accurately reflect the identities of the teachers and youth it serves. Along with the reorganization of leadership structure, the CREATE team hoped to strengthen their commitment to fostering Black joy and genius, providing critical mentorship and leadership opportunities, and offering financial and emotional support to educators. These shifts in leadership were intended to disrupt traditional power dynamics within the education system, and to contribute to creating more equitable and supportive environments for educators, particularly those committed to serving marginalized youth (Albright et al., 2023). The leadership restructure also aimed to elevate all components of the residency model by distributing expertise across co-director roles, including educator development, community partnerships, sustainability and finance, and dedicated research leadership. Notably, the shift (while well-intended) was difficult for some residents and school partners, as discussed in Chapter 6. Established school partners and alumni had developed regular communication channels and deep bonds with the original leadership team and felt that the transition disrupted their connection to the CREATE program.

Following the shift of CREATE to its new co-director leadership model was a refocusing of curriculum and programming with a set of values centered around critical theories and liberation. In the spring of 2023, CREATE launched a new set of PLs that more closely aligned with the CREATE project's updated mission and vision. Prior to spring 2022, CREATE's main equity-centered PL opportunity was the Equity-Centered Critical Friendship (ECCF) Institute, and its compassion-based PL opportunity was Presence, Power, Impact (PPI). In spring 2023, CREATE held its first CREATE 101, designed to help participants "develop their dispositions, skills, and embodiment of abolitionist teaching, anti-racism, and equity-centered well-being practices" (GSU CEHD, 2022). CREATE also developed the Healing Centered Justice retreat, an opportunity to "engage in theories and practices of culturally-relevant, trauma-informed pedagogy and contemplative practices to enhance pedagogy" (GSU CEHD, 2022). As active participants in an evolving program, both new and experienced teachers engaged in real-time as the CREATE team practiced responsive, flexible, and transparent decision-making, continuously refining the program to best align with its mission.

More broadly, participants in this study were entering the teaching profession amid intensifying political scrutiny over classroom content and the enactment of several restrictive education policies in Georgia. In spring 2022, the Georgia House passed HB 1084, banning educators from "espousing" so-called "divisive concepts" related to race and discrimination. It was enacted alongside HB 1178—the "Parents' Bill of Rights," which grants parents greater control over curriculum and student records—and SB 226, which enables the removal of school materials deemed "harmful to minors," particularly those addressing gender and sexuality (Georgia General Assembly, 2022-a; Georgia General Assembly, 2022-b). These laws created a climate of fear and uncertainty among many educators, some of whom faced lawsuits or termination for addressing topics deemed divisive or harmful (Gonzalez, 2024; Dalton, 2022; York et al., 2024). Though the laws stop short of outright bans on discussing topics like race or gender, their vague language blurred the line between "espousing" personal beliefs and simply teaching factual or historical information, leading teachers to fear potential repercussions. CREATE participants, committed to fostering critical consciousness, grappled with how to navigate these constraints. In interviews conducted with CREATE participants in the summer of 2023, one participant expressed concern about how to address direct questions from students about historical events if the response could be interpreted as a discussion of "divisive concepts." Another participant expressed despair over how government policies could "find an issue with leveling the playing field" as educators strive toward equitable

outcomes. In other words, this resident is naming a tension between efforts to advance equity—what they describe as "leveling the playing field"—and policy contexts that position such efforts as problematic or suspect. Others noted feeling supported by school leadership despite the tense political climate.

This contextual information is provided as a backdrop to the results presented in this report. CREATE residents and comparison participants alike exercised adaptability and determination as they dealt with uncertainty and potentially adverse conditions in their journey through the already-challenging process of becoming teachers. It is essential to consider the geo-social, political, and community level context when seeking to understand the experience of educators in this study.

CONTENTS OF REPORT

Our study examines the implementation and impact of the CREATE teacher residency program, funded through the SEED 2020 grant. Following an overview of the study methodology, participant recruitment, and data collection sources (Chapter 2), Chapter 3 presents findings on the fidelity of implementation (FOI) of the program's key components, along with descriptive results about the experiences of CREATE and comparison group participants. Research questions include:

1. Were the key components of the CREATE teacher residency logic model implemented with fidelity?
2. What is the experience of study participants in the CREATE teacher residency program and in the comparison group, specifically with regard to level of support and mentorship?

Chapter 4 shares the background, approach, and promising findings related to the impact of CREATE on the well-being of early career teachers. Research questions address the impact of CREATE on key intermediate outcomes related to teacher well-being, including:

3. fostering individual teacher well-being, characterized as:
    a. mindfulness skills and habits of the mind,
    b. self-compassion, and
    c. well-being in the context of being an educator?
4. building a support network and community of connection and reflection toward wellness?
5. developing critical consciousness and understanding of social justice issues in education?

Chapter 5 presents the impact of CREATE on graduation from GSU CEHD and on early career teacher retention. Research questions include:

6. What is the impact of CREATE, compared to the BAU teacher credentialing program at GSU CEHD, on educators':
    a. graduation from GSU CEHD?
    b. employment as a teacher-of-record in the first academic year after graduation?
    c. retention as a teacher-of-record into the second academic year after graduation?

7. What are the impacts of CREATE among Black educators for each of the three outcomes above?

Chapter 6 describes findings from a series of interviews with CREATE participants about the potential for the program to scale. Research questions include:

8. How do CREATE participants embody CREATE's mission and vision in their professional roles?
9. What school-level supports and barriers do CREATE participants experience when attempting to embody CREATE's mission and vision?
10. In what ways does the district support or impede the implementation of CREATE's mission and vision?

Chapter 7 offers our discussion about the implications of the study's findings.

Additionally, we planned to examine the impact of CREATE on student achievement, as measured by the Georgia Milestones, but due to delays in obtaining necessary data (described in Chapter 2), we are unable to present those findings in this report. We also worked with the program developers to conduct an economic evaluation of the CREATE residency program and summarize the status, challenges, and complexities of completing that part of the study in the report discussion.

Chapter 2. Study Methods

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Empirical Education's evaluation of the CREATE teacher residency program includes descriptive and qualitative analysis of the program's implementation (Chapter 3) and opportunities to scale (Chapter 6), as well as a quantitative methods using a quasi-experimental impact study to evaluate the effect of CREATE on pre-service and early career teachers' well-being (Chapter 4) and retention (Chapter 5).

The quasi-experimental evaluation compared outcomes for residents who voluntarily enrolled in CREATE with those of pre-service teachers enrolled in the same teacher credentialing program at GSU CEHD who did not join CREATE. This chapter presents general information about the study participants, data collection, and the quasi-experimental analysis approach. In the subsequent chapters presenting study findings, we include additional detail about the specific methods, data collection, and analysis used to address the research questions.

PARTICIPATION TIMELINE

The quasi-experimental evaluation follows three cohorts of study participants over three consecutive school years (see Table 1 in Chapter 1). The three years of study participation comprise participants' pre-service teaching year (Year 1), followed by their first two years as full-time classroom teachers (Years 2 and 3). CREATE expects residents to spend three years working in APS, first as student teachers and then as teachers of record. While CREATE encourages residents to teach in APS for three years to receive full program support, it does not require stipend repayment if participants leave early. This policy reflects a commitment to ensuring that residents remain in teaching by choice rather than financial obligation, distinguishing CREATE from many residency programs that tie retention to repayment requirements. Study participants in the comparison group serve as student teachers and then teachers-of-record in APS and other public school districts in Georgia. The 2020 SEED grant funded the participation of the sixth ("Cohort 6"), seventh ("Cohort 7"), and eighth ("Cohort 8") cohorts in the study, spanning the 2020–21 to 2022–23 school years. Appendix B provides information about the process of recruiting CREATE and comparison participants for the study.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER PREPARATION EXPERIENCE AT GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

Study participants in the comparison group complete the traditional credentialing program at GSU CEHD in the ECEE or MSE Bachelor's programs, or a Master's program. In ECEE and MSE, all study participants were enrolled in either the Elementary Education or Middle Level Education degree programs, described below.

- **Elementary Education**: This program prepares teachers to work with children in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, leaning on research and evidence-based practice in early childhood education, elementary education, and teacher education. Dual certification in special education is an offering (GSU CEHD, n.d.-a).
- **Middle Level Education**: This program prepares teachers to work with children in grades 4–8 and requires initial certification in two of the following areas: (a) English language arts (ELA), (b) mathematics, (c) science, or (d) social studies (GSU CEHD, n.d.-b).

Across all Bachelor's programs, students complete core coursework on learning and teaching, critical and contemporary issues in education, and socio-cultural perspectives on diversity in educational contexts during their sophomore year. Students then complete major coursework to specialize in elementary or middle-level grades pedagogy and content, which is the primary focus of their junior year coursework. Master's students have more flexible courses of study, and

academic advisors review their undergraduate coursework upon entry to ensure they have the requisite content knowledge background for middle grades teaching. Master's students then engage in an intensive summer session to complete coursework that aims to build teaching expertise in a grade band of their choice, such as secondary science education (GSU CEHD, n.d.-c).

During their final two semesters in the program, all participants—Bachelor's and Master's—student teach in a field placement as part of their GSU CEHD program. While some comparison participants in Cohorts 6–8 completed their student teaching requirement in APS, the majority (43/55 or 78%) completed their field placement across nine neighboring districts in the Atlanta metropolitan area. During this time, they work alongside a mentor teacher (who may or may not be trained in mentorship, depending on the district's typical practices), and GSU CEHD assigns them a university coach who provides support around university and credentialing requirements in the context of their field placement (as mentioned previously, CREATE residents are provided CREATE-trained mentor teachers and USCs instead). After graduating and obtaining their teaching credential, graduates can be hired as full-time teachers-of-record and do not receive additional support from GSU CEHD.

SAMPLE

At the time of recruitment, all study participants were:

1) enrolled in GSU CEHD in the Elementary Education or Middle Level Education programs pursuing their Bachelor of Science in Education or a Master of Arts in Teaching,
2) completing their student teaching requirement during their first year in the study,
3) planned to graduate from GSU CEHD at the end of their first year of the study, and
4) planned to teach in core subject areas (math, ELA, science, social studies) in kindergarten through eighth grade in Georgia public schools following graduation.

Eighteen CREATE residents and 34 comparison study participants agreed to participate in the study in Cohort 6, 27 CREATE residents and 19 comparison study participants agreed to participate in Cohort 7, and 16 CREATE residents and 16 comparison study participants agreed to participate in Cohort 8. The analytic samples differ across outcomes, depending on available data and response/participation rates. Appendix C details participant participation/attrition from the study across the three years for each cohort.[4]

Notably, during the 2021–22 school year, CREATE piloted a one-year pathway for the residency program with Cohort 7. This one-year pathway focused on matching residents with CREATE-trained CTs during their student teaching year and was designed to support pre-service teachers who were interested in additional equity-centered, compassion-based support but would only commit to a one-year residency. Five participants in Cohort 7 were in the one-year pathway at four CREATE partner schools. The one-year pathway was discontinued after the 2021–22 school year based on reflection by the internal CREATE team about how well the one-year pathway aligned with their mission and values. The pilot year of the one-year pathway raised questions about what long-term commitment to the program and its values looks like, as well as how long-term support for early career teachers can best serve educators, their students, and their schools.

[4] These values will vary to some extent from the numbers used to track attrition in the chapter on retention outcomes. For retention outcomes, we triangulated teaching status using multiple sources, including public records.

CREATE decided that the care and resources they provide to new teachers are best when offered continuously over a longer period of time. We analyzed study participants from CREATE's one-year pathway, with the treatment (CREATE) group having received one year of exposure to the CREATE program.

DATA SOURCES AND COLLECTION

This report uses multiple sources of data including public teacher certification and district personnel records; data collected from GaDOE, GSU CEHD, and districts; and participant surveys and interviews (see Figure 2). We also collected participant background information through the study consent process and program data directly from the CREATE team, including enrollment rosters, attendance logs, and mentor observation logs.

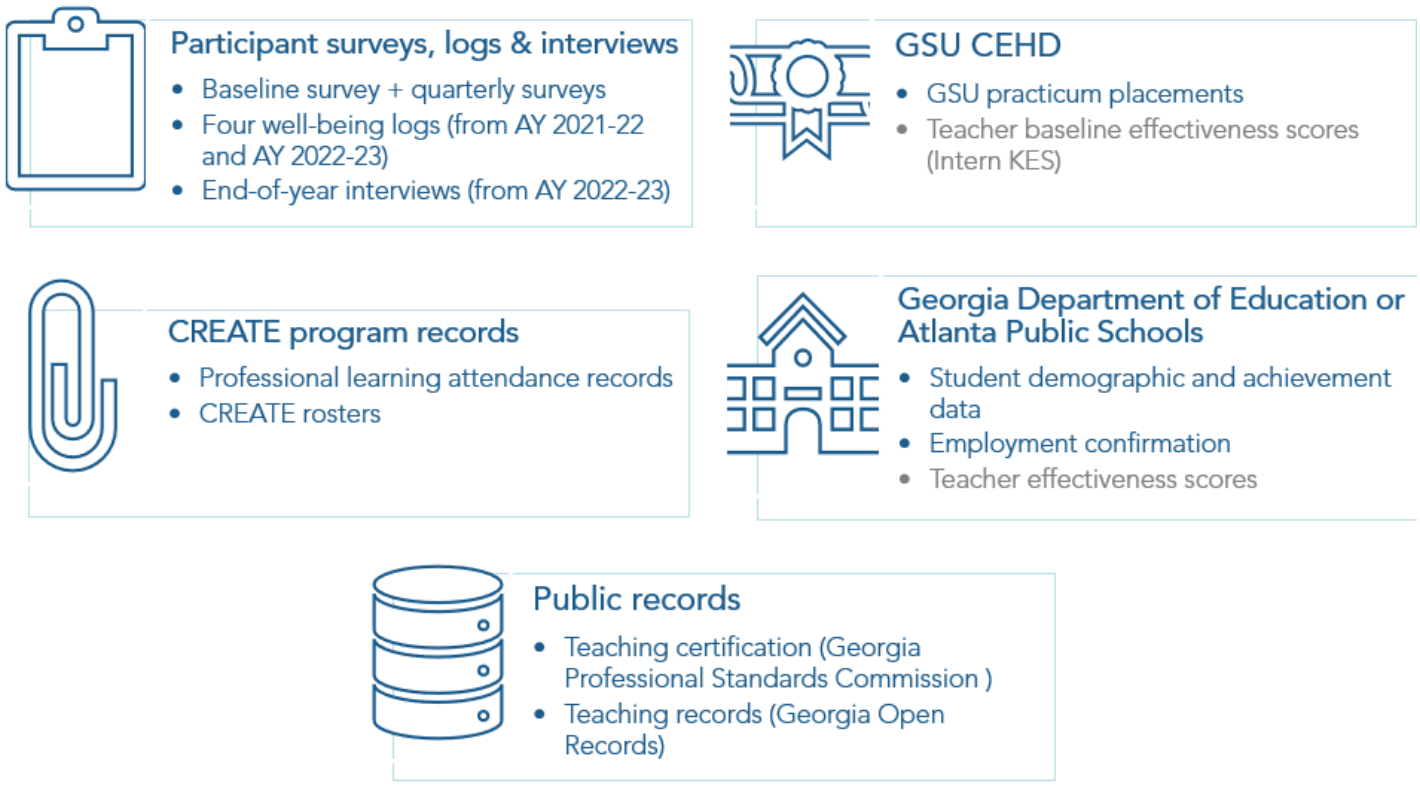


FIGURE 2. DATA SOURCES FOR CREATE RESEARCH STUDY

Note. Gray text indicates planned data collection that was not available. AY = academic year.

Along with participant consent forms indicating agreement to take part in the study, we collected a one-time baseline survey, followed by four online surveys (referred to as quarterly surveys) and well-being logs (WBLs) during each of the three school years of study participation. The consent form and baseline survey determine study eligibility and collect background information about participants (e.g., major, demographic characteristics), as well as information about their teaching interests. The four quarterly surveys include questions about the support participants received at their student teaching sites and schools of employment (such as through one-on-one mentorship or co-teaching), PL opportunities, classroom roles and experiences, perceptions of social capital and collaborative support, financial support, and plans to

stay in teaching. WBLs included items about focus, attention, momentary/ecological well-being, sense of support and hope, sense of equity in role and experience, burnout, and self-regulation. We deployed these logs on four occasions in the spring of 2022 and on four occasions during the 2022–23 school year.

From CREATE administrators, we collected program data including PL meeting schedules and attendance lists, resident rosters with information about classroom placement and assigned mentors, and mentor logs that document meetings between residents and mentors.

Previous evaluations of CREATE relied on data from GaDOE, including TAPS scores to assess teacher effectiveness and Georgia Milestones scores to assess student achievement, when available. However, as discussed in Chapter 1, the limitations of the TAPS rubric and the overwhelming tendency for teachers to receive the same rating made it challenging to assess teacher effectiveness using that measure. In response, we began planning a classroom observation study using the Danielson Group's Framework for Teaching (FFT) to examine the impact of CREATE on teacher effectiveness. Specifically, we aimed to evaluate potential differences between CREATE and comparison teachers in their first and second years of teaching in terms of their Learning Environments (Domain 2 of the FFT) and Learning Experiences (Domain 3 of the FFT). During this grant period, we began (a) hiring classroom observation specialists to be trained by the Danielson Group on how to use the FFT in a valid and reliable manner, (b) revising our research agreements with school districts who consented to classroom observations, and (c) obtaining the necessary security clearance from participating districts. Due to COVID-19 protocols restricting external researchers from entering schools, we were unable to collect classroom observation data during the 2021–22 school year when Cohort 6 participants were in their first year of teaching. When Cohort 7 was in their first year of teaching (spring 2023), we piloted classroom observation data collection, but ultimately did not have a large enough sample to examine impacts. We continued collecting classroom observation data from CREATE and comparison group participants under CREATE's third SEED grant to increase the sample size; however, the Department of Education terminated the grant funding in February 2025, before we could complete data collection.

Regarding student achievement data, CREATE had a longstanding memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the GaDOE to access that data; however, the MOU needed to be renegotiated during this grant. The MOU process was complex but ultimately successful. GSU CEHD and GaDOE agreed to share data for study purposes with our research team for most participating districts—except APS. At the request of APS, we signed a separate data-sharing agreement to access their student and teacher data for study purposes. At the time of publication, we were unable to obtain all of the necessary data to evaluate the impact of CREATE on student achievement. If we obtain the remaining data and have the resources to analyze them, we will append a supplemental chapter with those findings. For more information about our efforts to collect students' academic achievement data, see Appendix D.

Finally, researchers also collected publicly available data about participants regarding their certification status and teaching status from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) and Open Georgia.

Appendix D includes detailed information about various forms of data collection and specific scales used in the study. Appendix E includes the deployment schedule of each survey and WBL completed by Cohort 6 through 8 participants between the 2020–21 and 2022–23 school years, as well as response rates for each data collection activity.

GENERAL DESIGN

To address questions about the impacts of CREATE on teacher intermediate outcomes and student achievement, we used a quasi-experimental design with a matched comparison group to obtain impact estimates.[5] This approach is preferrable when random assignment of participants to conditions is not possible, as is the case in this study.

With a matched comparison group design, the goal is to find a similar comparison group participant for each CREATE participant. In this study, we used baseline survey responses to three characteristics: (1) motivation for entering teaching, (2) confidence in general teaching skills, and (3) resilience (measured through the CD-RISC scale [Davidson & Connor, 2016]). If matching is successful, the composition of the CREATE and comparison groups will be similar at the start of the study. Any changes observed in subsequent outcomes are likely to result from the CREATE intervention rather than from pre-existing differences between the groups. In other words, it supports the claim that the effect of CREATE is not confounded with these variables, which strengthens the validity of the inference that CREATE caused the difference in outcomes between conditions.[6]

We followed guidance from the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC, 2022) stating that the difference between groups at the start of a study should be less than 0.25 standard deviations on any baseline measure. If the study meets this condition, the groups are considered similar at the start. Ideally, we should make this comparison using pre-intervention measures of the outcome variables. However, in this study, we do not have baseline measures of the posttest, therefore, we used three other variables as substitutes (with the exception of the emotional exhaustion outcome of our teacher well-being study, which is considered a sub-construct of resilience and for which the CD-RISC is a valid pretest measure; we discuss this case in greater detail below). To include participants in analysis, each CREATE and comparison group participant had to have non-missing values of the three baseline characteristics (for matching and in covariate adjustments, discussed below) and of the given outcome variable.

Where possible, specifically with the analysis of impacts on survey and WBL outcomes, we conducted matching within-cohort. This means we matched CREATE and comparison participants in Cohort 6, who had non-missing outcome data in their first year as teachers of record (spring 2022), on the three baseline variables within that cohort. Likewise, we matched CREATE and comparison participants in Cohort 7, who had complete outcome data in spring 2023, on the three baseline variables within-cohort. The same approach was used with Cohort 8. For analyzing impacts on graduation and retention in teaching in the first and second year after graduation, we didn't achieve baseline equivalence on the three variables within each cohort; therefore, we matched across Cohorts 6–8 in order to achieve baseline equivalence.

In addition to the explicit matching steps described above, we can have greater confidence that the CREATE and comparison groups are similar on other unobservable (unmeasured) variables because they followed a very similar selection process leading to their decision of whether to join CREATE or not. Study participants in both the CREATE and comparison groups were from a pool of students enrolled in GSU CEHD. This ensured that the comparison group

[5] The descriptive analysis of survey questions related to implementation (Chapter 3) is based on responses collected from *all* CREATE and *all* comparison teachers who completed the surveys. The sample was not limited to matched cases, as we describe in the General Design section.

[6] We used propensity score matching (PSM) with the default "nearest neighbor" method using the matchit function of the MatchIt package in R.

participants were similar to the CREATE residents in terms of important characteristics, including motivation to enter the teaching profession in metro Atlanta and qualifications for entering the pre-service teaching program at GSU CEHD. The comparison group participants chose not to join CREATE for various reasons. For example, a comparison group participant may not have been aware of CREATE or may have been interested in joining CREATE but did not want to teach in APS due to the distance from their home. Likewise, while they may have been committed to long-term teaching, they may not have wanted to commit three years to a specific program. We preferred to have a comparison group that was similar to the CREATE group in terms of being from a common pool of students enrolled in GSU CEHD rather than if we had selected a comparison group of study participants in colleges of education in other institutions or states.

In the chapters reporting impact on surveys, WBLs, and retention outcomes, we report achieved baseline equivalence for the matched samples, as well as the impact findings.

GENERAL APPROACH TO ANALYSIS

We calculated impacts of CREATE on surveys and well-being outcomes using one-level (teacher) linear regression models. This approach adjusts the estimate of the effect of CREATE for any remaining imbalance on the covariates that we used for matching. The model for analyzing impacts on survey outcomes (limited to Cohorts 6 and 7) had the following form:

$$y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 CREATE_i + \beta_2 MOTIVATION_i + \beta_3 CONFIDENCE_i + \beta_4 RESILIENCE_i + \beta_5 COHORT7_i + e_i \qquad (1)$$

y_i is the outcome for study participant i obtained through the final survey or well-being outcome measure in a given year.

$CREATE_i$ is coded 1 if participant i is in CREATE and 0 if s/he is in the comparison group.

$MOTIVATION_i$ is person i's baseline score on the scale measuring motivation to teach.

$CONFIDENCE_i$ is person i's baseline score on the scale measuring confidence in teaching.

$RESILIENCE_i$ is person i's baseline score on the scale measuring resilience.

$COHORT7_i$ is coded 1 if person i belongs to Cohort 7, and 0 otherwise.

β_0 is the intercept.

β_1 represents the effect of CREATE.

β_2 represents the change in the outcome for each unit-increase in the scale measuring motivation to teach.

β_3 represents the change in the outcome for each unit-increase in the scale measuring confidence in

teaching.

β_4 represents the change in the outcome for each unit-increase in the scale measuring resilience.

e_i represent the random deviation of person i's score from the average.

The effect of CREATE is estimated in terms of β_1.

We included a small number of covariates because the samples were predominantly small. We focused on the variables that were plausibly related to the outcome. Additional variables, such as "math anxiety" at baseline, were very weakly

related to the outcome, and their estimation would have needlessly used up degrees of freedom for estimating the effect of CREATE and reduced the precision of that estimate.

We expressed the impact of CREATE as a standardized effect size; that is, we divided the estimate by the pooled standard deviation of the outcome variable. This is the same metric used to express baseline equivalence that we described earlier.

We used a similar model to the one above to estimate the probability of graduation from GSU CEHD and retention into the first and second years of teaching; however, the outcome, $p(Y_i = 1|\boldsymbol{X_i})$, represents the probability of graduating (or being retained in teaching), indicated by $Y_i = 1$, conditional on being in the CREATE condition, and on scores on the other covariates in equation 1 above. That is, we used a linear probability model. (The right-hand side of the model is the same as in equation 1 above, except the model for probability of graduation used two variables to indicate the three cohorts. The model for teaching into the second year did not include a cohort effect because only Cohort 6 was included in that analysis.) We also verified the results using a logistic regression, with the log odds of graduation or retention expressed in terms of the same independent variables. We then converted the natural log of the odds ratio to a quantity (lnOR(*Cox*)), which expresses the impact in a metric that is very close to a standardized effect size (WWC, 2022).

Chapter 3. Study of Implementation of the CREATE Teacher Residency Program

In this chapter, we present findings related to FOI for Cohort 6 through 8 participants who were active in the study between the 2020–21 and 2022–23 school years. To present a more robust narrative of implementation, we also provide descriptive data from surveys about perceived levels of support for teaching, perceived success as teachers, mentorship experiences, and participation in TT meetings (described in Chapter 1). Due to the staggered cohort model and the limited timeframe of the 2020 SEED grant evaluation, the Year 1 results include participants from Cohorts 6 through 8, the Year 2 results include participants from Cohorts 6 and 7, and the Year 3 results include participants from Cohort 6 (see Table 1).

✨ Research Questions for the Implementation Study ✨

1. Were the key components of the CREATE teacher residency logic model implemented with fidelity?
2. What is the experience of study participants in the CREATE teacher residency program and in the comparison group, specifically with regard to level of support and mentorship?

FIDELITY OF IMPLEMENTATION

Approach to Measuring Fidelity of Implementation

We used the same approach to measuring FOI as we have with prior CREATE evaluations, using the methodology set by the i3 grant program. First, we worked with the CREATE program team to establish *key components* for FOI based on CREATE's logic model (see Figure 1), which represent essential program activities. For each key component, we then identified a series of measurable *indicators* that defined whether the component was implemented with fidelity. For each indicator, we defined the *unit* of implementation (e.g., the resident, CT, mentor, or the CREATE program). We then established a *unit-level fidelity threshold* for adequate implementation (e.g., the CT attends 2 days of summer training) and a *sample-level fidelity threshold* for adequate implementation, considering all individual units as a group (e.g., 90% or more of all CTs attend 2 days of summer training). Lastly, we established a *component threshold score*, calculated through aggregate indicator scores, to assess *component-level fidelity* (i.e., all indicators met or exceeded the threshold for adequate implementation at the sample level).

We collected data on the following key components and calculated whether CREATE met fidelity for each.

1. **Progressive core classroom roles**: residents' gradual progression in classroom responsibilities as they advance from Year 1 (pre-service teacher) to Year 3 (sole classroom teacher)
2. **Recruitment and training of CTs**: the number of experienced educators recruited to mentor Year 1 residents each year, as well as CTs' attendance at mentor training before and during mentorship
3. **Multiple forms of mentoring when teaching in Year 2 and Year 3**: IM and SBM training prior to mentoring residents, as well as resident engagement (meetings, observation cycles) with these mentors
4. **Summer Resident Academy**: resident attendance at SRA

5. **Equity-centered PL**: the number of equity-centered PLs offered by CREATE to experienced educators (via district-wide PL sessions) and residents (via TT), as well as their attendance
6. **Compassion-based PL**: the number of compassion-based PLs offered by CREATE to experienced educators (via district-wide PL sessions) and residents (via TT), as well as residents' attendance

We assessed FOI using CREATE rosters as the primary data source and residents' self-reported attendance on surveys to fill in any cases in which data were missing from the rosters. The unit-level, sample-level, and component-level fidelity thresholds used for FOI are in the FOI matrix in Appendix F. The FOI analysis includes active CREATE residents in a given year. See Appendix C for more information about reasons residents left the CREATE program.

Below, we present results that show which indicators within the key components met fidelity thresholds when implemented during the three years of CREATE programming for Cohorts 6, 7, and 8. This includes three years of results for Cohort 6, two years of results for Cohort 7, and one year of results for Cohort 8. Detailed results are in Appendix G.

Fidelity of Implementation Findings

Component 1: Progressive Core Classroom Roles

The CREATE team met component-level fidelity thresholds for one of the six key components of the CREATE residency program—progressive core classroom roles (Component 1)—in all three years. We analyzed the FOI of Component 1 based on unit-level scores for Indicator 1 (regarding each resident's field or teaching placement, depending on their year in the residency), Indicator 2 (regarding the teaching certification of a resident or their mentor teacher), and Indicator 3 (regarding each resident's placement in a CREATE partner school).

Across the years and cohorts analyzed, CREATE met or surpassed component-level fidelity thresholds, ensuring that all residents as a group had progressive core classroom roles throughout their residency (see Table 2). In Year 1, this involved placing residents in the same school buildings as other CREATE residents in their cohort and in the classroom of experienced educators trained in mentoring (CTs). In Year 2, this involved pairing residents with another resident in their cohort (or with an experienced educator who has attended CREATE trainings) as co-teachers in shared classrooms. In Year 3, CREATE supported residents in securing teaching assignments as the solo teacher of record. In Years 2 and 3, CREATE also met sample-level fidelity thresholds by placing residents in teaching positions where they taught the subject and grade level for which they were certified. Additionally, CREATE met sample-level fidelity thresholds for Year 1 and Year 2 with residents working in CREATE partner schools, but fell short of the threshold for Cohort 6 in Year 3 with 10/12 (83%) of the teachers working in CREATE schools. Two teachers were teaching in APS, but not in CREATE partner schools.

TABLE 2. FIDELITY OF IMPLEMENTATION COMPONENT 1: PROGRESSIVE CORE CLASSROOM ROLES

Indicator description and unit-level fidelity threshold		Sample-level fidelity threshold	Sample-level results: Resident Year 1 (C6, C7, C8)	Resident Year 2 (C6, C7)	Resident Year 3 (C6)
1: Residents are placed in progressive core classroom roles	**Year 1**: placed in the same building as another Year 1 resident **Year 2**: co-teach as a teacher of record **Year 3**: teach solo as a teacher of record		63/71 (89%)	23/28 (82%)	12/12 (100%)
2: Residents are placed in the appropriate classroom	**Year 1**: placed with a CREATE-trained Cooperating Teacher **Year 2** + **Year 3**: teach in their certified subject(s) and grade level(s)		70/71 (99%)	27/28 (96%)	11/12 (92%)
3: Residents are placed at CREATE partner schools	**Year 1**: student teach in a CREATE partner school **Year 2** + **Year 3**: employed in a CREATE partner school		71/71 (100%)	28/28 (100%)	10/12 (83%)
Overall component level threshold	**Resident meets fidelity thresholds on 2+ indicators**	**% of residents that must meet fidelity on 2+ indicators:** **Year 1: 90%** **Year 2: 80%** **Year 3: 85%**	**70/71 (100%) Fidelity threshold met**	**28/28 (100%) Fidelity threshold met**	**12/12 (100%) Fidelity threshold met**

Note. Green = met fidelity threshold. Red = did NOT meet fidelity threshold. C6 = Cohort 6 CREATE residents, C7 = Cohort 7 CREATE residents, and C8 = Cohort 8 CREATE residents.

Component 2: Recruitment and Training of Cooperating Teachers

Component 2 examined the recruitment and training of CTs who worked with Year 1 residents during their field placement. We added this component in collaboration with the CREATE team in the 2021–22 school year to reflect a renewed focus of CREATE programming on CT mentorship. We measured Component 2 for Year 1 of Cohort 7 and Cohort 8 (corresponding to the 2021–22 and 2022–23 school years), but not for Cohort 6 (because Cohort 6 completed Year 1 before the introduction of this component).

For Cohorts 7 and 8 combined, the CREATE team met the Indicator 1 sample-level fidelity threshold that requires a minimum number of experienced educators to be recruited as CTs and matched with Year 1 residents. CREATE also met

the Indicator 2 sample-level fidelity threshold for Cohorts 7 and 8 combined, which requires 90% of all CTs to attend two days of summer training before mentoring residents. Notably, some CTs fulfilled the summer training requirement by attending in prior summers, as they were returning CTs who had previously mentored a resident.

However, CREATE did not meet the Indicator 3 sample-level fidelity threshold, which requires 90% of all CTs to attend CREATE mentor training throughout the mentoring year. In both the 2021–22 and 2022–23 academic years, CREATE offered seven training sessions for CTs through Mentor Teacher Workshops and Coaching Calls. CTs were required to attend at least three sessions, which could be a combination of Workshops and Coaching Calls. However, because Year 1 resident placement at school sites can take time due to CT recruitment and administrative processes, it is possible that some CTs did not join CREATE or match with student teachers until after the first training days of the school year occurred. We found that 79% of Cohort 7 resident CTs met the attendance expectation, while 100% of Cohort 8 resident CTs met the attendance expectation. The Indicator 3 sample-level fidelity threshold is 90%. Unlike Indicator 2, we only included attendance during the measured school years (2021–22 and 2022–23) in score calculations for this indicator.

The component level threshold requires that the sample-level thresholds are met across the three indicators. Because the Indicator 3 sample-level threshold was not met, the component-level threshold was also not met (see Table 3).

TABLE 3. FIDELITY OF IMPLEMENTATION COMPONENT 2: RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF COOPERATING TEACHERS

Indicator description and unit-level fidelity threshold	Sample-level fidelity threshold	Sample-level results Resident Year 1 (C7, C8)
Indicator 1: Recruit new Cooperating Teachers each academic year	2021–22: ≥12 Cooperating Teachers 2022–23: ≥24 Cooperating Teachers	2021–22: 37 Cooperating Teachers 2022–23: 29 Cooperating Teachers
Indicator 2: Cooperating Teachers attend 2+ days of summer training	90% of Cooperating Teachers	48/50 (96%)
Indicator 3: Cooperating Teachers attend 3+ days of training during the school year	90% of Cooperating Teachers	44/50 (88%)
Overall component threshold	**All three indicators met fidelity thresholds**	**Fidelity threshold not met**

Note. Green = met fidelity threshold. Red = did NOT meet fidelity threshold. C7 = Cohort 7 CREATE residents and C8 = Cohort 8 CREATE residents.

Component 3: Multiple Forms of Mentoring While Teaching

Component 3 measures multiple forms of mentoring while teaching. We measured this component in Year 2 and Year 3, while CREATE residents were classroom teachers-of-record. Meeting the component threshold score requires meeting sample-level fidelity thresholds for all four indicators.

CREATE did not meet component-level thresholds for Component 3 for either Year 2 or Year 3 for the cohorts and years measured (see Table 4). Indicator 1 measures the participation of CREATE SBMs in mentor trainings prior to mentoring residents. We found that 82% of Year 2 residents and 67% of Year 3 residents had SBMs who attended the expected number of mentor trainings prior to the mentoring year, while the targeted sample-level fidelity threshold was 90%. The threshold was, therefore, not met for Year 2 or Year 3 residents. Both Indicator 2, which measures SBM participation in mentor trainings during their mentoring year, and Indicator 3, which measures the number of semi-monthly meetings residents have with their SBM or IM, met fidelity for both Year 2 and Year 3. Regarding Indicator 3, 100% of Year 2 and Year 3 residents met the sample-level fidelity threshold. Indicator 4 measures the number of IM-resident observation cycles that residents engaged in. Observation cycles consist of structured activities which include a pre-observation, observation, and debrief meetings. While 93% of Year 2 residents met the sample-level fidelity threshold for Indicator 4, only 50% of Year 3 residents did the same. We note that while CREATE did not meet the fidelity threshold for Year 3 residents, the residents did frequently meet with their IMs. The number of meetings ranged from four to 31.

TABLE 4. FIDELITY OF IMPLEMENTATION COMPONENT 3: MULTIPLE FORMS OF MENTORING WHILE TEACHING

Indicator description and unit-level fidelity threshold	Sample-level fidelity threshold	Sample-level results	
		Resident Year 2 (C6, C7)	Resident Year 3 (C6)
1: School-Based Mentors attend 1+ training before mentoring	90% of residents have mentors who meet fidelity	23/28 (82%)	8/12 (67%)
2: School-Based Mentors attend 2+ days of training during their mentoring year	90% of residents have mentors who meet fidelity	28/28 (100%)	11/12 (92%)
3: Residents attend meetings with their Instructional Mentor and School-Based Mentor (25+ in Year 2, 12+ in Year 3)	90% of residents	28/28 (100%)	12/12 (100%)
4: Residents complete 2+ observation cycles with their Instructional Mentor	Year 2: 90% of residents Year 3: 80% of residents	26/28 (93%)	6/12 (50%)
Overall component level threshold	**All four indicators meet fidelity thresholds**	**Fidelity threshold not met**	**Fidelity threshold not met**

Note. Green = met fidelity threshold. Red = did NOT meet fidelity threshold. C6 = Cohort 6 CREATE residents, and C7 = Cohort 7 CREATE residents.

Component 4: Summer Resident Academy

The CREATE team implemented Component 4 with fidelity in Year 2 for Cohort 6 and Cohort 7 combined (see Table 5). However, CREATE did not meet the component-level threshold score in Year 3 for Cohort 6 because resident attendance at SRA prior to Year 3 (their second year of teaching as credentialed teachers) did not meet the threshold. While the

sample-level fidelity threshold is that 80% or more residents attend at least 85% of the days of SRA, only 50% of Cohort 6 residents met the threshold. We note that all Cohort 6 residents in Year 3 attended five or more days (out of 10) of SRA.

TABLE 5. FIDELITY OF IMPLEMENTATION COMPONENT 4: SUMMER RESIDENT ACADEMY

Indicator description and unit-level fidelity threshold	Sample-level fidelity threshold	Sample-level results	
		Resident Year 2 (C6, C7)	Resident Year 3 (C6)
1: Residents attend at least 85% of Summer Resident Academy days	80% of residents	27/28 (96%)	6/12 (50%)
Overall component level threshold	**80% or more residents earn a score of 1 at the unit level**	**Fidelity threshold met**	**Fidelity threshold not met**

Note. Green = met fidelity threshold. Red = did NOT meet fidelity threshold. C6 = Cohort 6 CREATE residents, and C7 = Cohort 7 CREATE residents.

Component 5: Equity-Centered Professional Learning

Component 5 measures the FOI of equity-centered PL that focuses on identity, privilege, and oppression in education. The CREATE team implemented equity-centered PL with fidelity in Year 1 of programming for Cohorts 6 through 8, and in Year 2 of programming for Cohorts 6 and 7 (see Table 6). In Year 3 of programming for Cohort 6, the CREATE team did not meet the component threshold score.

For all three grant years, CREATE met the sample-level fidelity threshold for Indicator 1, which measures the number of equity-centered PL meetings that CREATE offers to experienced educators in and around Atlanta, and requires two or more equity-centered PL meetings each year. CREATE also met the sample-level fidelity threshold for Indicator 2, which measures experienced educator attendance at equity-centered PL, because at least 85% of experienced educators who attended were present at more than 50% of the meeting days comprising each PL.

CREATE did not meet sample-level fidelity thresholds in Year 1 and Year 3 for Indicator 4, which measures the number of TT meetings that residents attended during a school year, at which they engaged in training on equity-centered practices. The sample-level fidelity threshold for this indicator is that at least 95% of active residents in each cohort receive equity-centered training through CREATE by attending the minimum number of TT meetings. The minimum number of meetings varies depending on the residency year: eight meetings in Year 1, six meetings in Year 2, and five meetings in Year 3. Specifically, Cohort 7 residents did not meet the sample-level fidelity threshold in their Year 1 or Year 2, and Cohort 6 residents did not meet the sample-level fidelity threshold in their Year 3 of residency.

Despite individual cohort scores not meeting sample-level fidelity thresholds for Indicator 4, we feel compelled to note that the efforts and commitment to educator development by both CREATE and its residents are evident in attendance numbers. Only one of eleven Cohort 7 residents failed to meet the unit-level fidelity threshold for Indicator 4 in Year 2; 27 out of 28 (96%) active Year 2 residents in Cohort 6 and 7 attended six or more TT meetings. In Year 1, 65 out of 71 (92%) of the active Cohort 6 through 8 residents attended eight or more TT meetings, and in Year 3, 75% of the twelve active Cohort 6 residents met the unit-level fidelity threshold (5+ meetings). Also of note is that a number of the TT meetings that residents missed were documented as excused absences for reasons including medical appointments, family emergencies,

and being scheduled at field placement sites. We speculate that the multitude of changes and adjustments made to the academic, professional, and personal lives of residents because of the COVID-19 pandemic and social and political challenges during the grant years directly affected attendance and program engagement more broadly.

CREATE also did not meet the sample-level fidelity threshold for Indicator 3, which measures residents' attendance at CREATE PL opportunities other than TT meetings during their second or third years of residency. The sample-level fidelity threshold is that 30% or more of residents attend at least 50% of the meeting days of a CREATE PL opportunity. By Year 3, 17% of Cohort 6 residents had met this attendance expectation, falling short of the set threshold. Notably, though, CREATE leadership did not actively recruit residents to these PL sessions with experienced educators, as some of the content in TTs overlapped with the content of the PLs. Instead, they encouraged residents to participate in these PLs as alumni of the residency program.

TABLE 6. FIDELITY OF IMPLEMENTATION COMPONENT 5: EQUITY-CENTERED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Indicator description and unit-level fidelity threshold	Sample-level fidelity threshold	Sample-level results		
		Resident Year 1 (C6, C7, C8)	Resident Year 2 (C6, C7)	Resident Year 3 (C6)
1: CREATE hosts 2+ equity-centered PLs per year	2+ per year	CREATE hosted 3 equity-centered PLs yearly in 2020–21, 2021–22, and 2022–23		
2: Experienced educators attend 50% of equity-centered PL days	85% of experienced educators	127/131 (97%)	82/86 (95%)	30/33 (91%)
3: Residents attend at least 50% of a CREATE PL (other than Together Time) in Year 2 or Year 3 of residency	30% of residents	N/A	N/A	2/12 (17%)
4: Residents attend Together Time meetings (8+ in Year 1, 6+ in Year 2, 5+ in Year 3)	95% of residents	65/71 (92%)	27/28 (96%)	9/12 (75%)
Overall component level threshold	**Y1 & Y2: Indicator 1 and at least one other indicator meet fidelity thresholds** **Y3: Indicator 1, Indicator 3, and at least one other indicator meet fidelity thresholds**	**Fidelity threshold met**	**Fidelity threshold met**	**Fidelity threshold not met**

Note. Green = met fidelity threshold. Red = did NOT meet fidelity threshold. N/A = not measured that year. C6 = Cohort 6 CREATE residents, C7 = Cohort 7 CREATE residents, and C8 = Cohort 8 CREATE residents. PL = professional learning.

Component 6: Compassion-Based Professional Learning

Component 6 considers CREATE's implementation of compassion-based PL, which supports social emotional learning (SEL), emotional regulation, and compassion towards self and others. The CREATE team met component-level thresholds for the compassion-based PL component (Component 6) in Year 2 of programming for Cohort 6 and Cohort 7 combined, but not for Year 1 or Year 3 (see Table 7). For all three grant years, CREATE met the sample-level fidelity threshold for Indicator 1, which measures the number of compassion-based PL opportunities CREATE offers the broader community of APS educators each school year. Indicator 2 measures CREATE residents' engagement in compassion-based PL through attendance at TT meetings. CREATE met sample-level fidelity thresholds for Year 2 (Cohort 6 and 7), but not for Year 1 (Cohort 6–8) or Year 3 (Cohort 6). Although CREATE did not meet the component threshold score, the vast majority (65 out of 71, or 92%) of Cohorts 6–8 Year 1 residents received training in compassion-based practices through attendance at TT meetings.

TABLE 7. FIDELITY OF IMPLEMENTATION COMPONENT 6: COMPASSION-BASED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Indicator description and unit-level fidelity threshold	Sample-level fidelity threshold	Sample-level results		
		Resident Year 1 (C6, C7, C8)	Resident Year 2 (C6, C7)	Resident Year 3 (C6)
1: CREATE hosts 1+ compassion-based PLs per year	1 PL per year	CREATE offered 1+ compassion-based PLs each year: 2 in 2020–21, 3 in 2021–22, 1 in 2022–23		
2: Residents attend Together Time meetings (8+ in Year 1, 6+ in Year 2, 5+ in Year 3)	95% of residents	65/71 (92%)	27/28 (96%)	9/12 (75%)
Overall component level threshold	**All indicators meet fidelity thresholds**	**Fidelity threshold not met**	**Fidelity threshold met**	**Fidelity threshold not met**

Note. Green = met fidelity threshold. Red = did NOT meet fidelity threshold. C6 = Cohort 6 CREATE residents, C7 = Cohort 7 CREATE residents, and C8 = Cohort 8 CREATE residents. PL = professional learning.

Summary of Fidelity of Implementation Results

FOI calculations show which components of the CREATE program met fidelity thresholds and which components fell short of the developers' expectations. CREATE consistently met expectations for providing residents with experiences and opportunities in progressive core classroom roles (Component 1) throughout their three-year residency. CREATE met fidelity expectations for recruiting and training CTs prior to the school year, but did not meet expectations for CTs attending mentoring training during the school year (Component 2). Regarding IM and SBM mentorship in Years 2 and 3 of residency (Component 3), CREATE consistently met fidelity thresholds for SBMs attending training during the mentoring year, and for the expected number of mentor-resident meetings (IM or SBM) during the school year. CREATE did not meet the sample-level fidelity thresholds for indicators related to SBM attendance at mentor training prior to the

start of the school year, or for the completion of observation cycles by IM-resident pairs in Year 3. For years during which we measured the SRA component (Component 4), CREATE met the sample-level fidelity threshold for resident attendance at the SRA that occurred between Years 1 and 2; however, CREATE did not meet this threshold for the SRA that occurred between Years 2 and 3. CREATE met expectations for hosting equity-centered PL opportunities for experienced educators and fulfilled the expected sample-level fidelity threshold for educator attendance at these PL meetings (Component 5); however, CREATE experienced difficulty meeting sample-level fidelity thresholds for resident attendance at equity-based training, including both at TT meetings and at other equity-based PL opportunities. CREATE also designed the same TT meetings to provide CREATE residents with compassion-based training, but CREATE did not meet the sample-level fidelity threshold for residents due to lower-than-expected attendance at TT meetings (Component 6); however, CREATE did consistently meet the sample-level fidelity threshold for hosting compassion-based PL opportunities for experienced educators.

Overall, the FOI analysis points to the need for supporting consistent resident attendance at both TT meetings and other PL opportunities. Support for CTs and SBMs around meeting training expectations could also increase, as well as ensuring IM observation cycles with residents. This may include adapting the communication of mentor expectations, offering training at various times to accommodate summer schedules, changing the stipend rules or schedules, or allowing more time for onboarding mentors and pairing them with residents. Additionally, these results may point to a need for CREATE to revise fidelity thresholds to consider the training needs for new vs. experienced CREATE mentors who serve in mentor roles year after year, in order to allow for more flexible training expectations. Many of the sample-level fidelity thresholds around attendance were ambitious (e.g., 90%+).

EXPERIENCES OF CREATE AND COMPARISON GROUP EARLY CAREER TEACHERS

As a program that continues to evolve based on new promising insights and practices in the field of teacher preparation, CREATE adjusts programming each year, resulting in a continued need to assess whether program elements produce the desired results (see Figure 1: the logic model in Chapter 1).

In this section, we present descriptive findings from additional survey data across the three years of the study where both CREATE and comparison participants responded to the survey questions. The summary of select survey measures seeks to describe how CREATE evolved while serving Cohorts 6, 7, and 8 and includes an overview of how the experiences of CREATE residents and comparison participants differ. Each of the three years of the CREATE teacher residency program experience is unique in terms of expectations and content. Thus, we look across cohorts and within each year of the residency to see how resident experiences may differ as they progress through the program. Specifically, we examine the following measures.

- Experiences co-teaching as a first-year teacher
- Access to multiple forms of mentorship
- Collaboration with other educators
- School site support

We also provide additional descriptive detail about CREATE residents' access to unique supports, including experiences with various PL opportunities (including SRA and TT) and financial support.

Co-teaching Experiences as First-year Teachers

In Year 2, during their first year as a teacher of record, CREATE residents have the option to co-teach in classrooms as pairs. A small sample of CREATE residents co-taught with more experienced educators, as one of the CREATE partner schools uses a co-teaching model school-wide. Co-teaching provides a scaffolded experience in which residents have support from a peer as they navigate their first year of teaching. This co-teaching arrangement is designed to prepare residents to serve as sole teachers-of-record in Year 3 with full responsibility for their class(es).

During Year 2, we asked study participants whether they were sharing their classroom with a co-teacher, serving as the sole teacher of record, or teaching in a different arrangement. Across Cohorts 6 and 7, 86% ($n = 18$) of CREATE participants reported sharing their classroom with a co-teacher for at least part of the year, while 45% ($n = 9$) of comparison participants reported the same. Meanwhile, 14% ($n = 3$) of CREATE participants and 55% ($n = 11$) of comparison participants served as the sole teacher of record in their classroom for the entire duration of their first-year teaching (see Figure 3). Of the two additional participants who had previously been residents in CREATE's one-year pathway program, one reported working with a co-teacher during their first year of teaching, while the other reported solo teaching. CREATE considered residents' needs and preferences in classroom arrangements and honored residents' choices around whether they desired a co-teaching arrangement or preferred to teach a class independently.

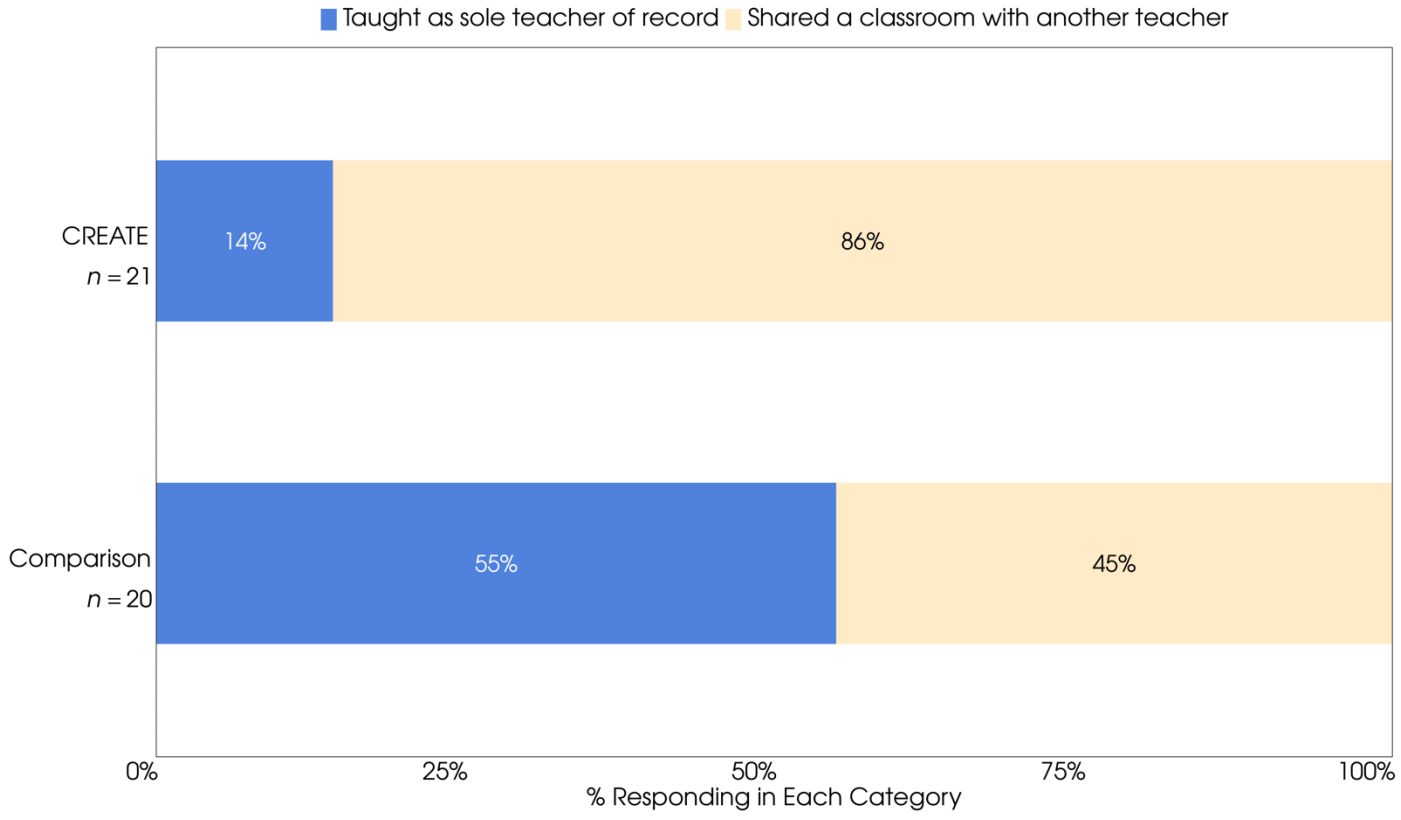


FIGURE 3. YEAR 2 EXPERIENCES OF SHARING A CLASSROOM OR SERVING AS THE SOLE TEACHER OF RECORD FOR COHORTS 6 AND 7

Source: Quarterly surveys

We also asked survey questions about the co-teaching experience to all CREATE residents and comparison participants who had indicated that they co-teach at least some of the time. Specifically, we asked them to reflect on the benefits and challenges of co-teaching/sharing a classroom with another teacher.

CREATE residents mentioned many benefits to co-teaching, including engaging in effective communication to establish teaching and classroom management systems that worked for their students, a decreased workload, and sharing a heavy caseload of students. Residents also mentioned that their co-teachers provided (1) different perspectives and ideas about teaching approaches, (2) support for one another's professional growth, and (3) emotional support. Participants expressed their appreciation for having someone with whom they had a shared experience and who was in the same shoes as them. CREATE residents also named the processes of learning to build a partnership, speaking up, using their voices, and exercising patience as benefits of the co-teaching process. Residents paired with experienced educators shared that having a seasoned mentor in the classroom who could offer suggestions and support made navigating challenging situations with parents, students, and colleagues more manageable.

Residents also acknowledged several challenges to the co-teaching model, including difficulty navigating differences in teaching or organization styles, opposing opinions or values, shared space and materials, and the time and effort required for collaborative teaching. Many residents also mentioned that achieving the level of communication needed to successfully share a classroom and students was challenging. Some residents shared a class with multiple teachers, with varying levels of experience, which added to the need for communication and collaboration and sometimes caused tension when teachers with different backgrounds wanted to teach from their own identities and experiences. Challenges specific to co-teaching with experienced educators included having responsibilities disproportionate to the expectations of a first-year teacher, working through a sense of insecurity when using teaching styles and practices different from those of the experienced educator, and having the more experienced educator overstep and undermine their capabilities.

Comparison participants named similar benefits and challenges to the co-teaching process. Comparison participants felt that they benefitted from collaborating with a co-teacher on planning and differentiating instruction, being able to provide more support for students who needed it, and having access to insight and different ideas from their co-teachers. Challenges of co-teaching frequently mentioned by comparison participants included feeling like their decisions and approaches were incorrect if their teaching style differed from that of their experienced co-teacher. Comparison participants also mentioned that getting to know another teacher and their teaching methods required additional effort on top of their workload.

Access to Multiple Forms of Mentorship

Mentorship as a Student Teacher

In Year 1 of residency, CREATE residents receive mentorship and support from a CREATE-trained CT and a USC. Comparison group student teachers also receive support and mentorship from a CT[7] (not trained by CREATE) and GSU

[7] Some districts referred to this role as a "mentor teacher" (for student teachers), but we use the term CT throughout to refer to the teacher whose class participants were in during their student teaching experience.

CEHD university coach (not trained by CREATE). To gain a deeper understanding of mentorship from the perspective of CTs, refer to the following shaded text.

A Closer Look at the Cooperating Teaching Experience

During the 2021–22 school year, we began collecting data to evaluate CREATE's impact on the CT experience. That year, we recruited CREATE-trained CTs into the study who were working with CREATE residents (Cohort 7) and other CTs from APS who were working with non-CREATE student teachers from GSU CEHD. We refer to this group as Cohort 1 in the CT study. In 2022–23, we recruited CREATE CTs who were working with Cohort 8 resident study participants, but we were unable to recruit new comparison CTs. We refer to this group as Cohort 2 in the CT study. Some Cohort 1 CTs continued mentoring in 2022–23, allowing us to maintain both treatment and comparison conditions in the second year.

Teaching Experience and Background

CREATE Cooperating Teachers

Across Cohort 1 (2021–22) and Cohort 2 (2022–23) CREATE CTs, teaching experience varied. Overall, 38% (n = 15) had 11+ years of experience, 31% (n = 12) had 6–10 years, 23% (n = 9) had 3–5 years, and 8% (n = 3) had less than 3 years of experience. Male CTs made up 15% (n = 6) of the combined group. Black CTs were well represented across both cohorts, with 67% (n = 26) identifying as Black. Prior exposure to CREATE PL was common, with 49% (n = 19) having attended CREATE PL before serving as a mentor.

Comparison Group Cooperating Teachers

Cohort 1 comparison group CTs also had varying degrees of experience as educators, with 56% (n = 5) having 11+ years of experience, 22% (n = 2) having 6–10 years of experience, and 22% (n = 2) having 3–5 years of experience. All comparison CTs (n = 9) identified as female, and 78% (n = 7) identified as Black. No comparison CTs joined the study in the 2022–23 school year.

Cooperating Teachers' Experiences with Their Student Teachers

Across both years of the study, a greater proportion of CREATE CTs (87%, n = 48) reported being *very confident* or *extremely confident* in their understanding of how to be an effective mentor to pre-service or novice teachers, compared to comparison CTs (77%, n = 10). CREATE CTs also seemed to meet more frequently one-on-one outside of active teaching time in the classroom, with 85% (n = 39) of CREATE CTs meeting *daily* (46%) or *more than one day per week* (39%), compared to 50% (n = 3) of comparison CTs who reported meeting *daily*.

When CREATE CTs met one-on-one with their residents, they reported most often talking about (1) curriculum standards and/or lesson planning, (2) feedback for their resident, and (3) relationships with students, parents, other teachers, and/or administrators. Comparison CTs reported most often discussing (1) curriculum standards and/or lesson planning, and (2) classroom procedures and logistics. Interestingly, classroom procedures and logistics was 8th in terms of what CREATE CTs and residents discussed most frequently, behind (4) addressing student behavior and discipline, (5) resident well-being, (6) resident reflections on classroom experiences, and (7) pedagogical and/or academic approaches. Also of note, across the two years, 17 (35%) CREATE CTs reported discussing identity with their resident, compared to two (20%) comparison CTs.

At the end of the spring semester, we asked CREATE and comparison group CTs about the most positive and challenging aspects of working with student teachers.

Positive Aspects of the Mentorship Experience

CREATE CTs emphasized several key aspects of their mentorship experience: (a) witnessing and supporting their residents' growth, (b) their residents' positive attitudes and eagerness to learn, and (c) their own personal and professional growth through collaboration and mutual learning. A recurring theme was CREATE CTs' joy in watching their residents develop throughout their field placement. One CREATE CT described this transformation, saying: "My mentee went from shaking from nervousness to taking over the classroom (even if it wasn't required)."

In addition, CREATE CTs were particularly impressed by their residents' positive attitudes and willingness to learn, which often translated into building meaningful relationships with students and facilitating classroom instruction. Notably, many CREATE CTs reflected on how the mentorship process contributed to their own growth as educators. They reported learning new instructional strategies and discovering innovative ways to connect with their students through their collaboration with their residents:

> I feel more competent knowing that I have to perform and provide high-quality instruction, because I know that someone is watching and depending on me. I try to create an ideal classroom experience that benefits all learners. My mentee has also taught me a lot. She has new and refreshing ideas. I find myself collaborating and asking her questions just as much as she depends on me for answers. (a CREATE CT)

Coinciding with this, a theme of personal and professional bonding emerged from CREATE CTs' narratives, as they frequently discussed the professional relationships they developed with their residents:

> We have a true friendship. We teach on the same grade level. It has been really nice seeing her blossom into the teacher that she is. It has been lovely being able to collaborate with her when we plan as a team and see her ideas validated. (a CREATE CT)

In contrast, comparison group CTs did not mention experiences of self-reflection, personal or professional growth, or bonding with their student teachers. This could, in part, be reflective of the relationship-first approach that CREATE emphasizes with their residents and CTs. However, comparison CTs frequently highlighted their student teachers' positive attitudes, eagerness to learn, and satisfaction in observing their student teachers' progress and development. Further demonstrating their dedication to supporting their mentee's growth, they also mentioned enjoying modeling effective strategies for their student teacher.

Challenges of the Mentorship Experience

CREATE CTs identified several challenges of mentoring a resident, including (a) determining how to best support their residents, (b) navigating time limitations, (c) having clarity around expectations and guidelines for their residents, and (d) managing shared space and relinquishing control of their classrooms.

When it came to supporting their residents, some CREATE CTs noted that their residents struggled with balancing responsibilities across GSU CEHD, CREATE, their field site, and personal life. Additionally, CTs found it challenging to strike a balance between offering support and allowing residents the "autonomy" to learn through their own

challenges and experiences. As one CREATE CT explained, it was difficult to "let them find their own way" without "providing a blueprint based on my experience."

Time constraints emerged as another hurdle. Some CREATE CTs found it challenging to carve out sufficient time to plan collaboratively, discuss the curriculum, and have "sacred time" with their residents. For some, there was an added struggle in balancing their own commitments with those of their residents, further complicating the mentoring process.

Clarity around expectations and guidelines for residents was also a recurring theme. Some CREATE CTs expressed the need for more explicit guidelines regarding their residents' roles and responsibilities at the field site. Others highlighted a desire for increased communication and alignment between GSU CEHD, CREATE, and the field site, particularly around assignment expectations, pacing, and the integration of field site and program goals.

Finally, some CREATE CTs noted challenges related to sharing space and relinquishing classroom control. Some CREATE CTs found it difficult to step back and allow their residents to take charge, but also acknowledged that giving up control of the classroom was necessary for their residents' growth. As one CT put it, they had to work through the difficulty of "relinquishing control over my classroom to allow [them] to grow."

Comparison group CTs experienced similar challenges including time limitations, noting limited time to model teaching practices and give feedback, and a need to clarify expectations from GSU CEHD. One comparison group CT noted that it was difficult to help their student teacher stay organized and on track:

> Maintaining expectations. My student teacher had trouble completing [their] lesson planning ahead of time. It was hard to motivate [them] to go above and beyond. Often times [they] waited until the last minute to lesson plan. In addition, would miss out on professional developments and I would have to remind [them] of when events in school were happening instead of [them] checking [their] school email frequently. (a comparison group CT)

While CREATE CTs also noted challenges with helping their resident stay organized and on track, this theme was not as prominent as the other challenges listed above.

Overall, CREATE CTs and comparison CTs were similar in terms of their satisfaction with the work of mentoring student teachers. Across both years, 91% of CREATE CTs were *somewhat satisfied* (18%, $n = 17$) or *completely satisfied* (73%, $n = 69$) (the two highest ratings on the Likert scale) with their mentorship experience; whereas 88% of comparison group CTs were *somewhat satisfied* (6%, $n = 1$) or *completely satisfied* (82%, $n = 14$).

Mentorship as a Teacher of Record

In Year 2 and Year 3 of residency, CREATE residents receive support from a CREATE-trained SBM who works at the same school site, as well as a CREATE-trained IM who has a small caseload of residents to support. Residents meet regularly with both their SBM, who provides support with social integration into the school and a sense of connection at the school site, and their IM, who provides support around content mastery, implementing equity-centered instructional practices, and using compassion-based mindfulness skills. IM meetings *can* include observation cycles, but most often do not. CREATE expects Year 2 residents to have at least 25 meetings with their SBM or IM throughout the school year, and all

Cohort 6 and 7 CREATE residents (n = 28) met or exceeded that expectation. CREATE expects Year 3 residents to meet with their SBM or IM at least 12 times during the school year, and all Cohort 6 residents (n = 12) met or exceeded that expectation.

To gain an understanding of how this experience with mentoring contrasts with that of a comparison participant, we asked Year 2 and Year 3 comparison participants whether they have a mentor they meet regularly with, and if so, how many times they meet per school year. During their first year of teaching as credentialed teachers (Year 2 in the study), 85% (n = 17) of comparison participants across Cohort 6 and Cohort 7 reported having an assigned mentor teacher at their school whom they regularly met with. These participants attended an average of twelve meetings with their mentors during the school year. During their second year of teaching, 78% (n = 7) of Cohort 6 participants reported having an assigned mentor they worked with. However, on average, these participants met with their mentors less than once during the school year.

Collaboration with Other Educators

Throughout their three years of residency, CREATE residents attend monthly TT meetings with the other members of their cohort. TT meetings are designed to (1) foster well-being, (2) encourage connectedness among peers, (3) teach emotional regulation, self-compassion, and compassion skills, and (4) facilitate exploration around racial identity and systemic privilege and oppression. TT meetings also provide residents with opportunities to process issues and triumphs of their teaching practice with cohort members and IMs.

CREATE residents often cited TT experiences as a particularly helpful support in improving their practice as an educator. In Year 1 of residency, 98% (n = 49) of Cohort 6 through 8 residents rated lessons in instructional skills taught during TT as *more than moderately* or *very helpful* at some point in the year. Likewise, in Year 2, 90% (n = 19) of Cohort 6 and 7 residents rated lessons at the same level. In Year 3, 100% of Cohort 6 residents (n = 8) found lessons in instructional skills taught during TT to be *more than moderately* or *very helpful*.

To gain a sense of how the experience of non-CREATE student teachers compares to that of CREATE residents, we surveyed comparison participants about whether they had been attending regularly-scheduled meetings centered on sharing teaching practices and collaboration. During their final year enrolled at GSU CEHD (Year 1), an average of 47% (n = 25) of comparison participants across Cohorts 6 through 8 reported attending meetings centered around sharing practice and collaboration outside of their GSU CEHD courses. During Year 2 of the study, or their first year as credentialed teachers, 65% (n = 13) of comparison participants attended such meetings. Of the two additional participants who had been residents in CREATE's one year pathway during Year 1 but were no longer part of CREATE in Year 2, one reported attending meetings for sharing practice and collaboration in Year 2, and the other did not attend such meetings. In Year 3, their second year as a teacher of record, 67% (n = 6) of Cohort 6 participants attended meetings intended for sharing practice and collaborating with other educators. These results indicate that the programming CREATE provides to its residents fosters opportunities to learn and grow alongside other educators at similar stages in their professional journey in a manner that comparison participants may not have access to. Comparison participants engage in more meetings with other educators at which they share dilemmas of teaching practice during their first two years of teaching than during their student teaching year. In comparison, CREATE provides consistent opportunities for its participants to engage in collaboration with like-minded colleagues starting earlier in their teaching journey; CREATE residents start receiving this form of support during their student teaching year when they start working on their teacher identity and approach, and into their second year of teaching, during which they are continuing to learn and grow as professionals.

School Site Support

On each of the quarterly surveys, we asked both CREATE and comparison participants how supported they feel at their student-teaching placement or school site. Overall, a higher percentage of CREATE participants reported feeling *very supported* at their student-teaching placement and school site across the three years. The degree to which both CREATE and comparison participants reported feeling supported at their sites, however, did decrease with each year as participants progressed further into their teaching careers, with a higher percentage of CREATE residents reporting feeling *more than moderately supported* or *very supported* than comparison participants (see Figure 4 through Figure 6).

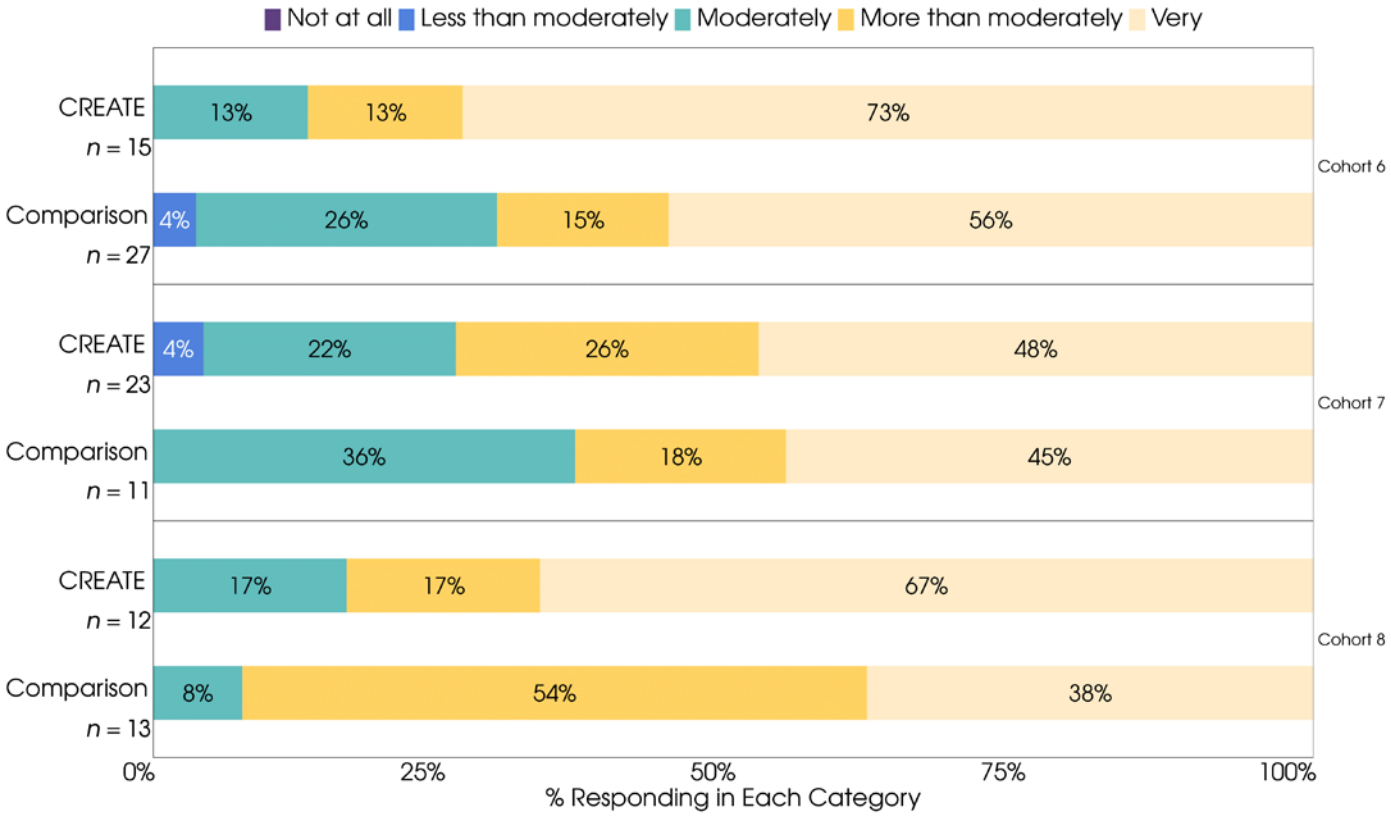


FIGURE 4. LEVEL OF SUPPORT AT FIELD PLACEMENT OR SCHOOL SITE FOR COHORTS 6, 7, AND 8 IN YEAR 1

Source: Quarterly surveys

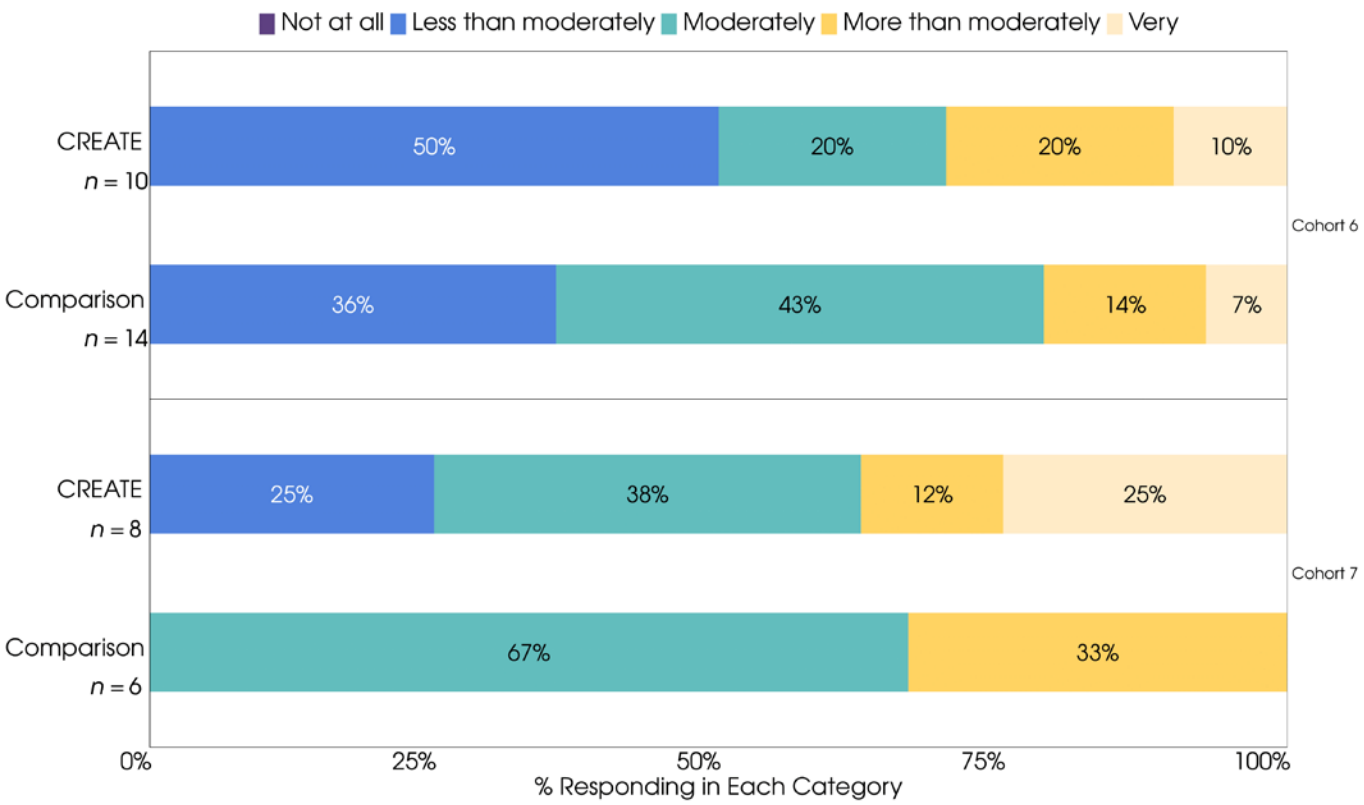


FIGURE 5. LEVEL OF SUPPORT AT FIELD PLACEMENT OR SCHOOL SITE FOR COHORTS 6 AND 7 IN YEAR 2

Source: Quarterly surveys

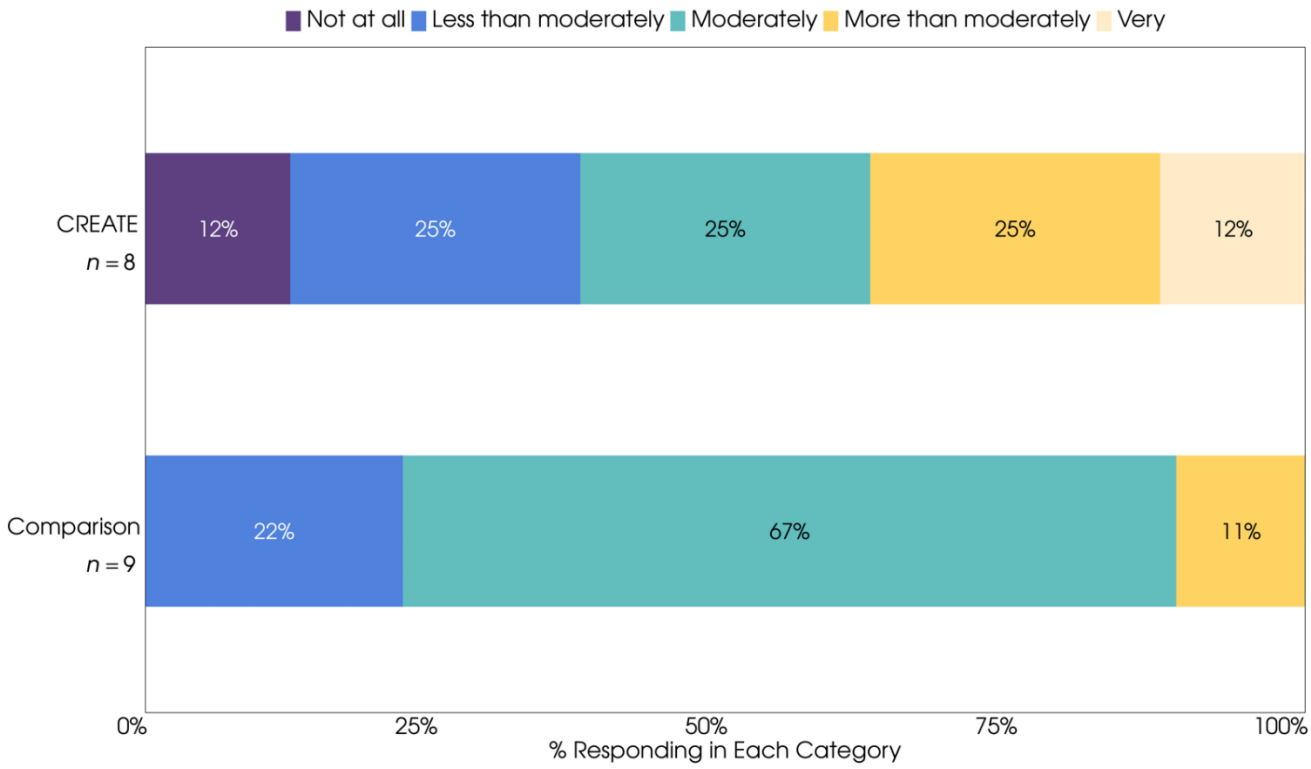


FIGURE 6. LEVEL OF SUPPORT AT FIELD PLACEMENT OR SCHOOL SITE FOR COHORT 6 IN YEAR 3

Source: Quarterly surveys

In Year 3, we surveyed Cohort 6 residents and asked them to explain the ways in which the level of support they received through CREATE impacted their development as second-year teachers. Participants praised the continued opportunities they had to (1) reflect and build upon their teaching practices, (2) develop their confidence in teaching, and (3) collaborate with other educators. Many participants mentioned benefiting from having mentors who provided more formal feedback and support around classroom management, planning, culture, and climate, as well as less formal opportunities to debrief experiences they were having at their school sites with a nonjudgmental person. Residents found value in having access to experienced teachers whose classroom practices they could observe, and who formed relationships with their students. Residents also reported benefiting from scaffolded support in applying and adapting the theoretical concepts they learned at GSU CEHD and the teaching tools, ideas, protocols, and skills learned in their previous CREATE years. Additionally, residents mentioned the positive impact of having consistent check-ins with fellow early career educators at TT meetings, where they felt open to speak freely and comfortably.

In an open-ended question about what teaching supports participants wished their schools or districts offered, CREATE residents mentioned more action plans around behavior issues, involvement of teachers in policymaking, and services for families facing the effects of systemic racism and gentrification. CREATE residents also desired supports around using the curricula and platforms they were using.

In response to the same question about what additional teaching supports they wished their schools or districts offered, comparison participants also mentioned behavioral support. Multiple comparison participants also reported a desire for

meetings with a cohort or support group of other new teachers and teachers new to their grade level or subject. Comparison participants said they would like more collaboration with teachers at other schools and opportunities to observe other teachers.

CREATE Summer Resident Academy

SRA is a paid summer academy facilitated by university faculty, CREATE leaders, and district representatives that prepare residents for the upcoming school year. Year 1 SRA occurs in the summer after the first year of residency, prior to CREATE residents' first year of being credentialed teachers. During Year 1 SRA, residents gain experience teaching in summer school with their co-teacher while learning how to create an inclusive classroom environment. Residents also engage in discussion about and make connections between materials on equity, justice, privilege, and oppression and their experiences at their schools and in their classroom. This experience allows residents to practice applying their learnings to their experiences in the classroom, and to learn how to manage their emotions and stress around teaching in a supported environment. For Cohort 6, Year 1 SRA was four weeks long, while Year 1 SRA spanned three weeks for Cohort 7.

On the first survey during Year 2, we asked CREATE residents participating in the study to answer the following question. "How valuable was the Summer Resident Academy to your practice as a classroom teacher?" The majority of CREATE residents—67% (n = 8) of Cohort 6 and 88% (n = 7) of Cohort 7—reported that the intensive summer training they participated in during the summer prior to their first year of teaching was *more than moderately valuable* or *very valuable* (see Figure 7).

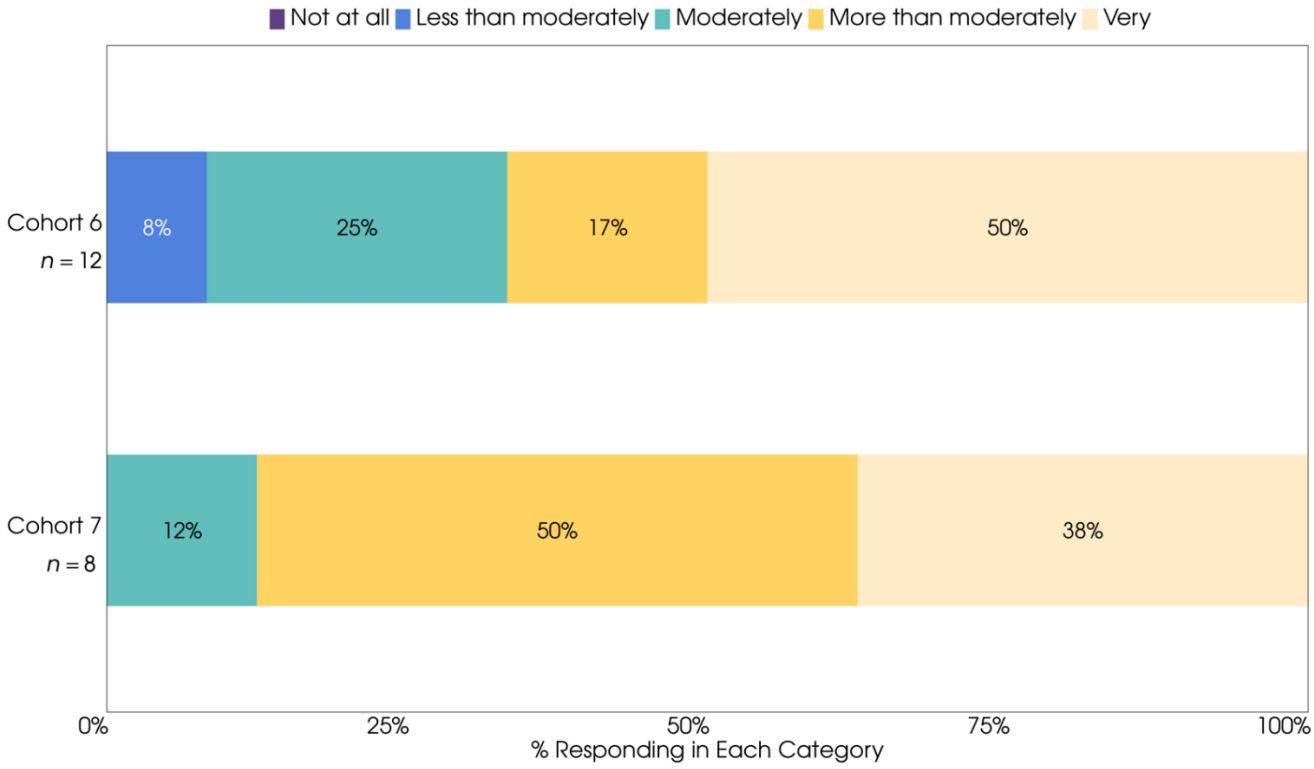


FIGURE 7. CREATE RESIDENTS' RESPONSE TO THE VALUE OF YEAR 1 SUMMER RESIDENT ACADEMY TO PRACTICE AS A CLASSROOM TEACHER

Source: Quarterly surveys

Through an open-ended question, we asked participants to elaborate on their Likert scale response by describing what they did and did not find valuable about their Year 1 SRA experience, with respect to their practice as a classroom teacher. In response to this question, residents frequently mentioned that the benefits of participating in Year 1 SRA included having the opportunity to (1) start developing a relationship with their co-teachers, (2) find their teacher voice, and (3) practice implementing strategies and co-teaching in an actual classroom with students. Residents reported benefiting from gaining experience with instructional and classroom strategies they learned about, including the processes of making class rules, building relationships with students, and creating lesson plans, as well as engaging in reflective conversations during Year 1 SRA about how to use the tools they learned and what potential outcomes could be. Additionally, residents thought Year 1 SRA was helpful to their development as teachers because it provided a chance to learn how to (1) present themselves as professional teachers, (2) navigate co-teacher relationships, and (3) lean on colleagues for support. Residents also valued the connections they made with students, residents, and other teachers in the Atlanta area.

One of the challenges surrounding the Year 1 SRA mentioned by residents was the added stress of having to plan for and spend time with their summer class at a time when it felt more pressing to be thinking about their own classroom. Another challenge was feeling like the information shared was too focused on general education students. One participant recommended including more content about working with students with disabilities, because teachers of all students would benefit from learning strategies that accommodate student needs. One participant also mentioned experiencing administrative issues that prevented them from working in the classroom, which limited the benefits they reaped from SRA, despite a fruitful experience during the rest of SRA.

After CREATE residents completed their first full year of teaching (typically with a co-teacher), they participated in the two-week Year 2 SRA in the summer prior to their third and final year in the residency, which is their second year of teaching, and typically their first year teaching as the sole teacher in the classroom. Year 2 SRA focuses on (1) reflection on the previous year of teaching and (2) planning for promoting student academic growth, SEL, and development as critically-conscious, engaged citizens during the next school year.

When asked about their experiences at Year 2 SRA, the majority of residents rated it as *more than moderately valuable* or *very valuable*, with 38% (n = 3) of Cohort 6 study participants reporting that Year 2 SRA was *more than moderately valuable*, and another 38% reporting Year 2 SRA was *very valuable*. Residents specified that the value of Year 2 SRA included (1) learning about practices they could implement in the classroom, (2) the opportunity to prepare for the upcoming school year through lesson planning and coming up with routines and procedures, (3) learning about SEL skills, and (4) networking and engaging in pedagogical discourse with colleagues. Cohort 6 residents also shared that some concepts covered in Year 2 SRA felt less concrete, and therefore less applicable to the classroom.

CREATE Equity-Centered Professional Learnings

Through the summer of 2022, CREATE referred to the equity programming they offered residents as part of their TT meetings as ECCF. ECCF practices were designed to guide educators in engaging in identity work, and to equip educators with the ability to identify and address issues of privilege and oppression in their schools at the ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internal levels. CREATE residents were also able to register for and attend the ECCF Institutes that CREATE held for experienced educators to deepen their practice. We asked CREATE Cohort 6 and Cohort 7 study participants about the extent to which they agreed with the three following statements regarding the ECCF protocols they experienced during TT.

1. My teaching/instructional skills have improved as a result of Equity-Centered Critical Friendship protocols.
2. Equity-Centered Critical Friendship protocols have contributed to a greater sense of social support and belonging for me.
3. Equity-Centered Critical Friendship protocols are contributing to a more reflective practice on my part.

Figure 8, Figure 9, and Figure 10 show the extent to which participants agreed with each of the above statements toward the end of their first semester of Year 1, a point in the residency at which all residents would have received training around ECCF protocols through TT meetings. The majority of residents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with these statements.

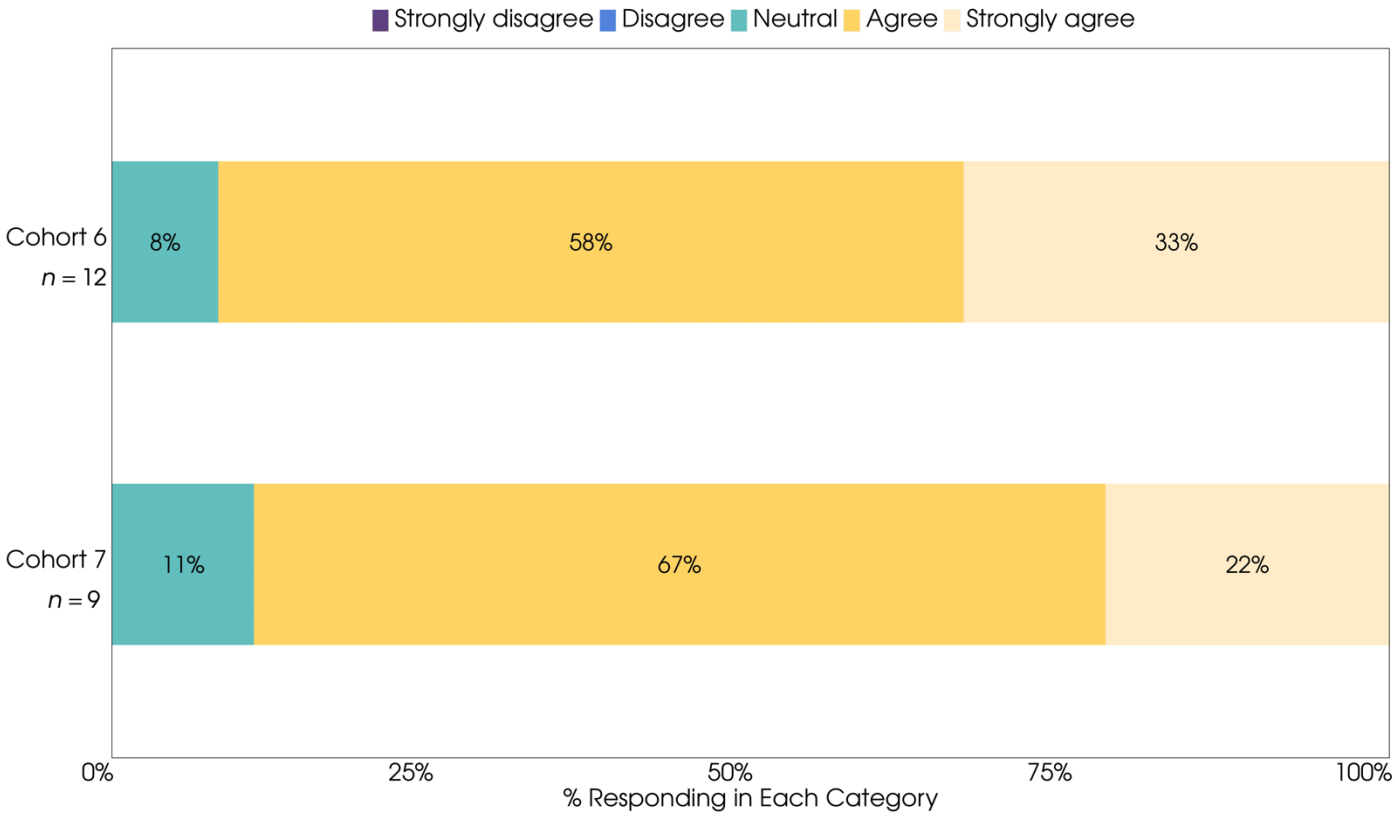


FIGURE 8. YEAR 1 CREATE RESIDENTS' RESPONSES TO "MY TEACHING/INSTRUCTIONAL SKILLS HAVE IMPROVED AS A RESULT OF EQUITY-CENTERED CRITICAL FRIENDSHIP PROTOCOLS"

Source: Quarterly surveys

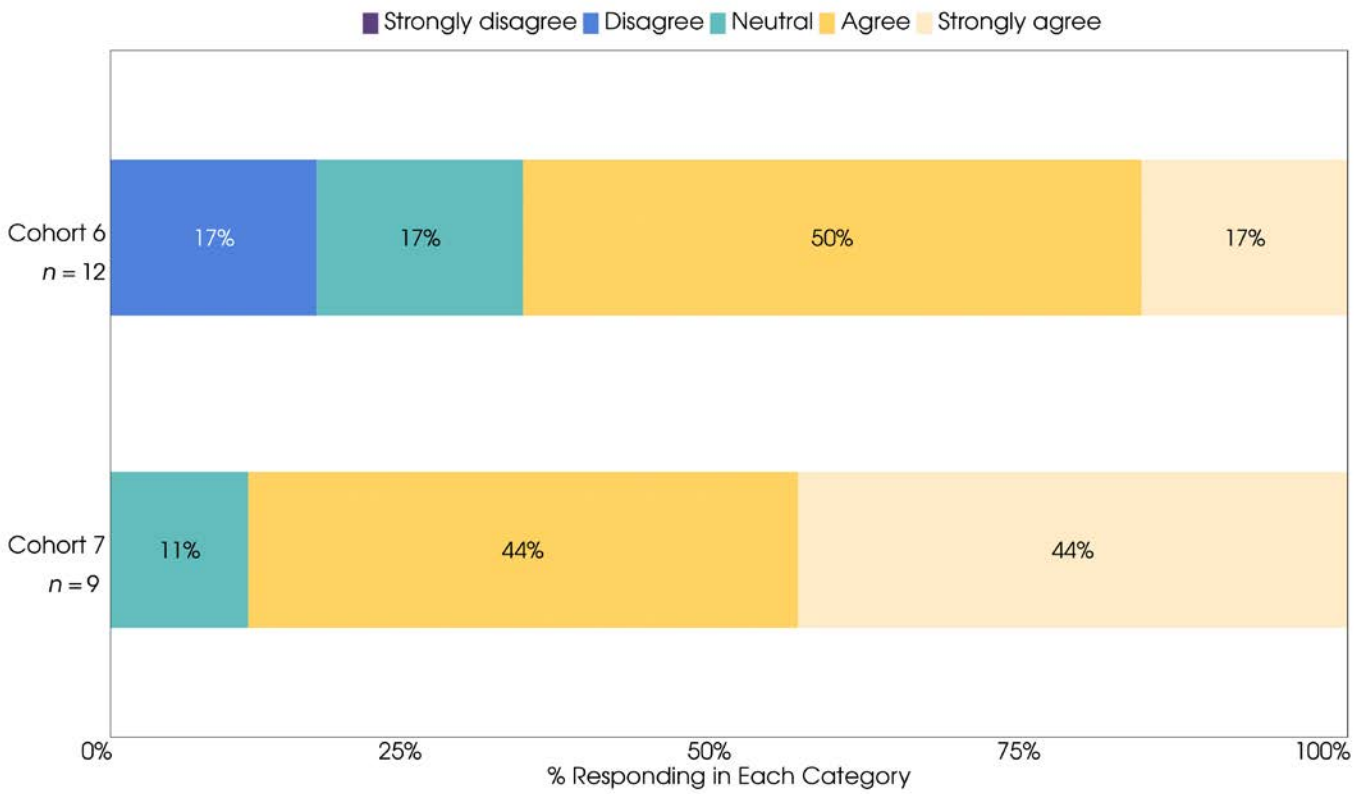


FIGURE 9. YEAR 1 CREATE RESIDENTS' RESPONSES TO "EQUITY-CENTERED CRITICAL FRIENDSHIP PROTOCOLS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO A GREATER SENSE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT AND BELONGING FOR ME."

Source: Quarterly surveys

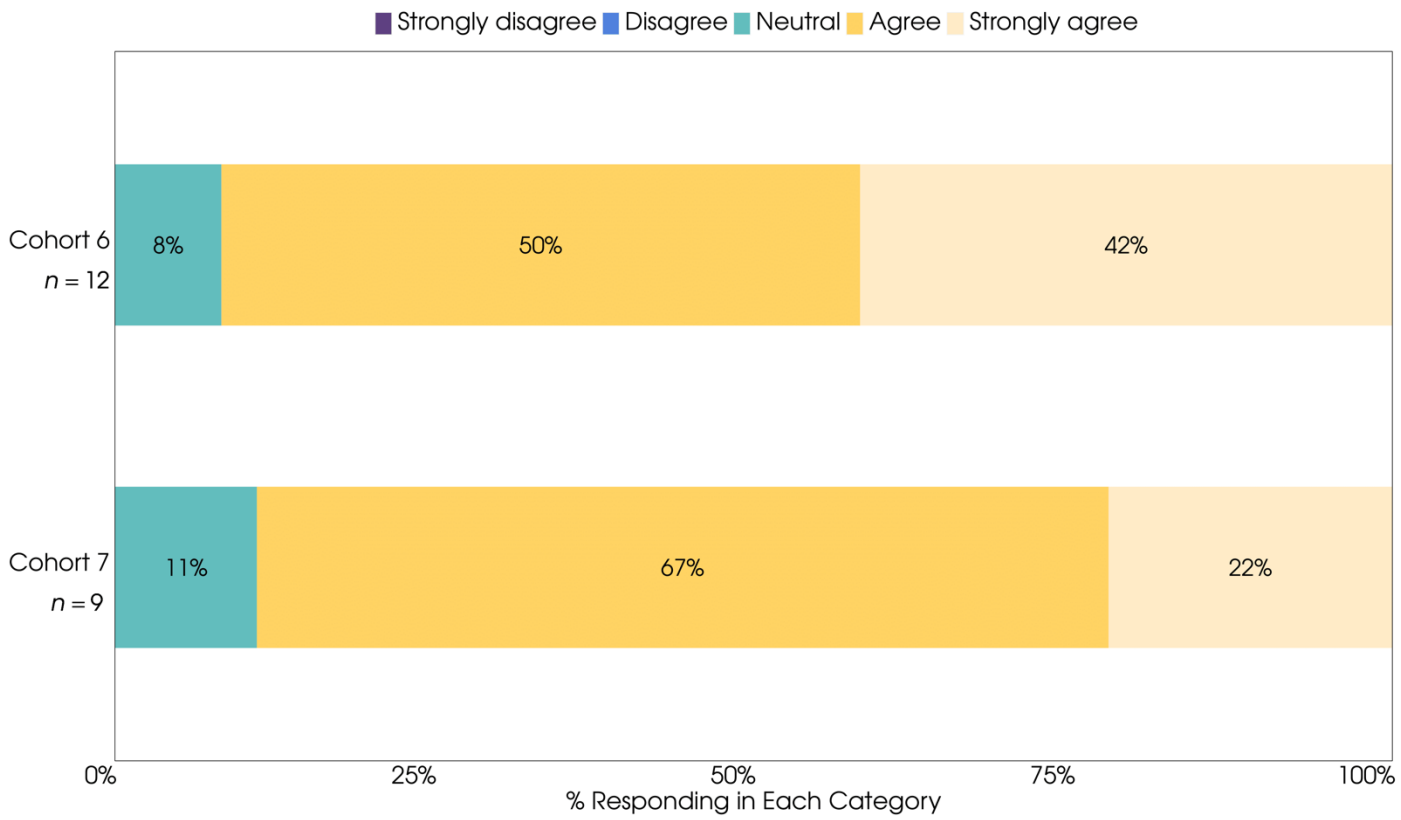


FIGURE 10. YEAR 1 CREATE RESIDENTS' RESPONSES TO "EQUITY-CENTERED CRITICAL FRIENDSHIP PROTOCOLS ARE CONTRIBUTING TO A MORE REFLECTIVE PRACTICE ON MY PART."

Source: Quarterly surveys

CREATE Compassion-Based Professional Learnings

Compassion-based practices are integrated into the TT meetings that residents attend. They are also central to the compassion-based PLs that CREATE offers to experienced educators, referred to during the study years as PPI. Like the ECCF, PPI was also open for residents to attend as an additional PL opportunity focused on increasing self-awareness, personal resilience, compassion for self and others, and skills in contemplative practices. To align with CREATE's movement towards providing PL that is more culturally-responsive and considerate of the lived experiences of the educators they work with, the compassion-based component of CREATE trainings has continuously evolved towards working from critical, equity-focused frameworks (Davis & Behm Cross, 2020).

During the second semester of Year 1, Cohort 6 and Cohort 7 residents who reported having had received PPI training through attendance at TT meetings and/or PPI institutes responded to the following statement: *To what extent have Presence, Power, Impact practices improved your capacity to be an effective teacher?* Sixty percent of Cohort 6 residents ($n = 6$) reported that PPI practices improved their capacity to be an effective teacher *quite a bit* or *very much*, while 83% ($n = 10$) of Cohort 7 teachers felt that PPI practices have improved their capacity to be an effective teacher *quite a bit* or *very much* (see

Figure 11). We did not ask Cohort 8 residents about PPI because CREATE programming moved away from training educators in PPI practices during the 2022–23 school year.

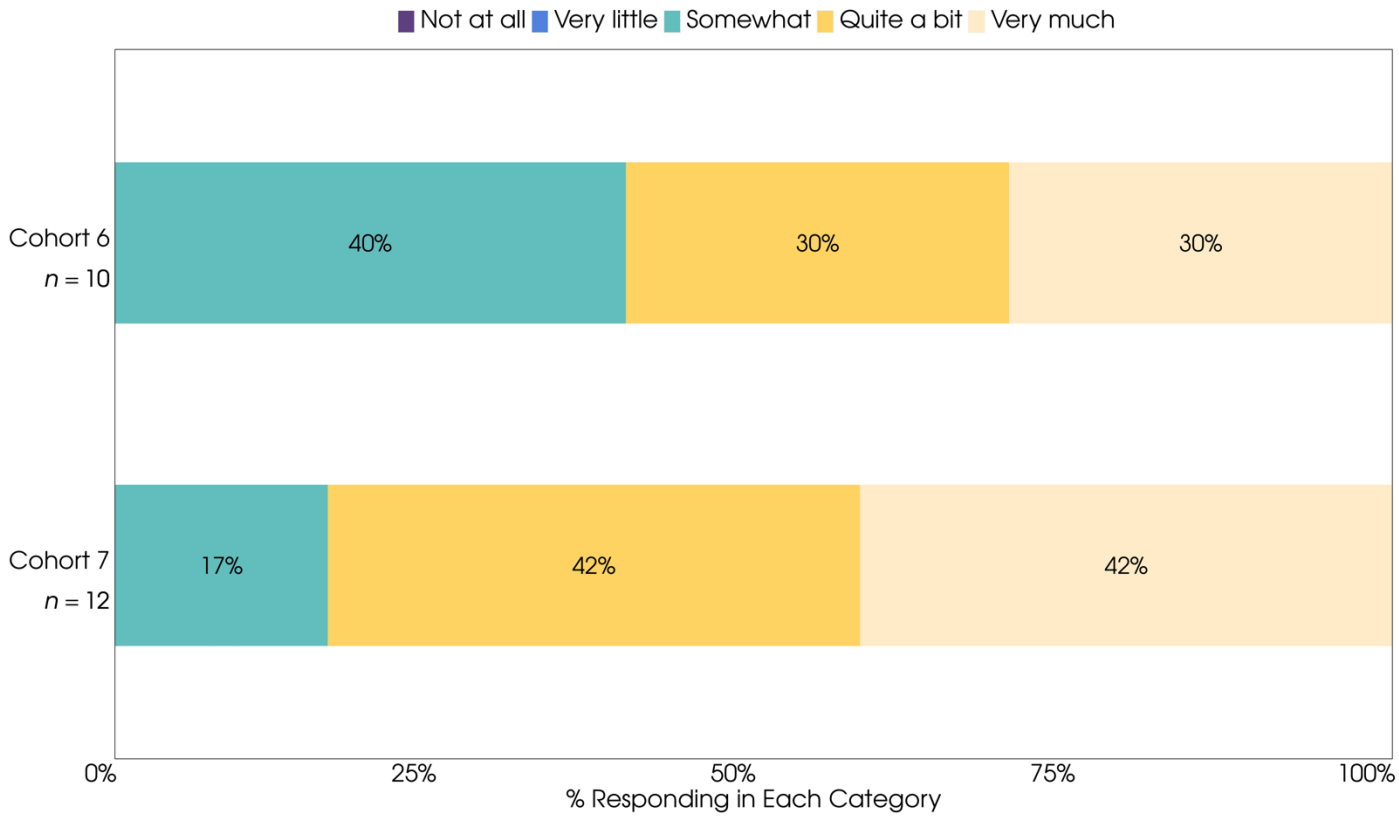


FIGURE 11. YEAR 1 CREATE RESIDENTS' RESPONSES TO "TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE PRESENCE, POWER, IMPACT PRACTICES IMPROVED YOUR CAPACITY TO BE AN EFFECTIVE TEACHER?"

Source: Quarterly surveys

We also asked residents who received any PPI training to respond to the following statement: *To what extent have Presence, Power, Impact practices improved your ability to manage the day-to-day challenges of working in the classroom?* Overall, Cohort 7 residents gave higher ratings than Cohort 6 residents for PPI improving their ability to manage these challenges (see Figure 12).

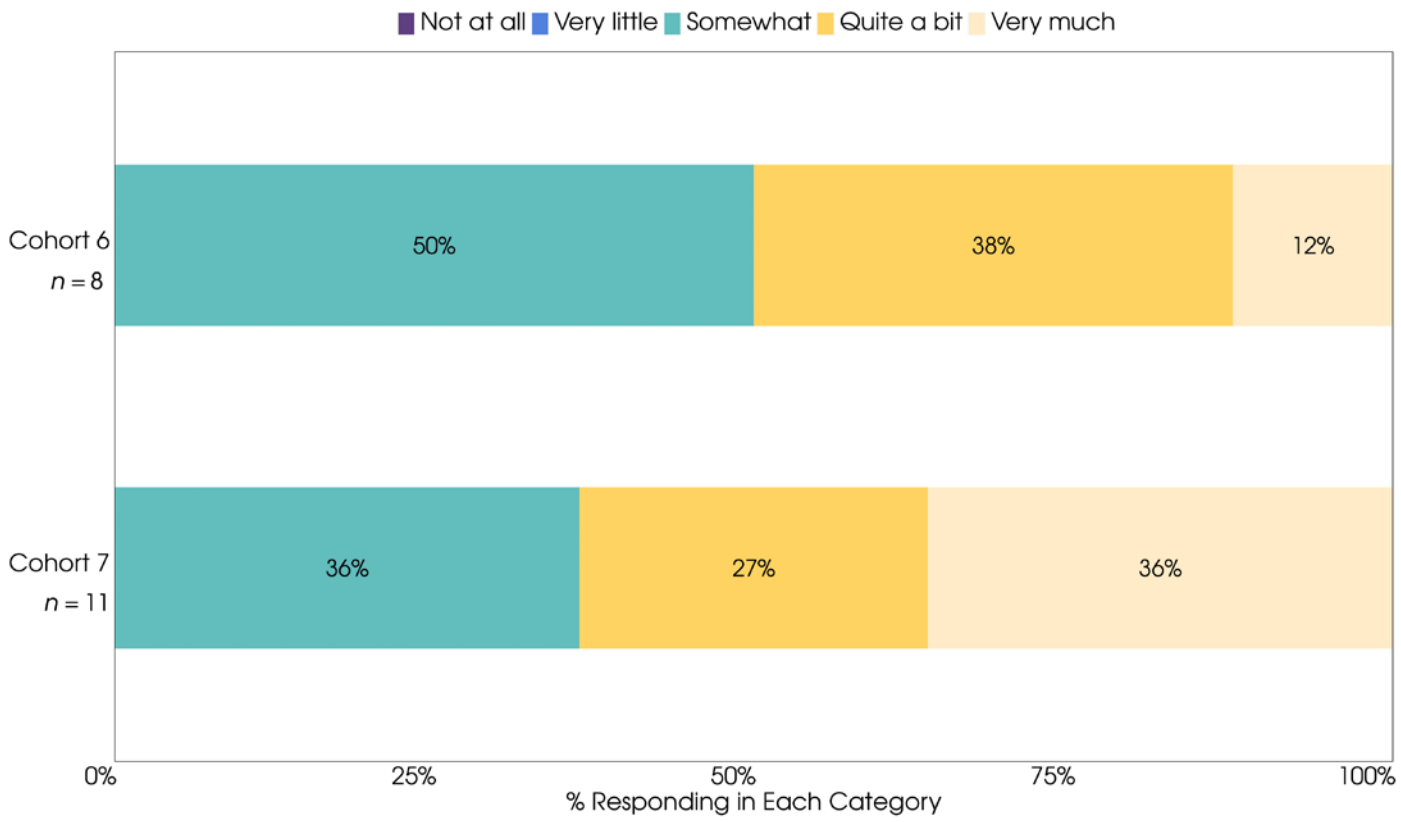


FIGURE 12. YEAR 1 CREATE RESIDENTS' RESPONSES TO "TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE PRESENCE, POWER, IMPACT PRACTICES IMPROVED YOUR ABILITY TO MANAGE THE DAY-TO-DAY CHALLENGES OF WORKING IN THE CLASSROOM?"

Source: Quarterly surveys

We also asked Cohort 6 and 7 residents who attended PPI to explain what strategies, if any, they continue to use from PPI. In response to this question, participants mentioned using the opening experiences, energizers, and closing experiences, as well as breathing, grounding, and mental exercises in the classroom. Participants also shared that in their classrooms, they implement a moment for students to openly share what is happening in their lives, which has proven to strengthen the student-teacher relationship. Additionally, participants noticed themselves using strategies to redirect their attention and ground themselves when feeling overwhelmed or stressed, as well as strengthening relational skills. Some residents acknowledged that through their training in PPI practices, they realized the extent to which their ability to center themselves during stressful situations allows them to support student needs, handle difficult situations, and make decisions.

CREATE's Financial Support

Throughout the three years of residency, CREATE residents are provided with financial support as they begin their teaching careers. In Year 1, residents are financially supported with an $8,000 stipend. During Year 2, in which they share a classroom with another CREATE resident, each resident earns a $6,000 stipend, along with a full teaching salary

supplemented by CREATE funds. In Year 3, CREATE residents who fully engage in programming earn a $7,000 stipend, in addition to their regular teaching salary. On the final survey in Year 1, we asked CREATE residents the following question: *If you had not received any financial assistance from CREATE funds this year, to what extent would financial demands have caused you hardship in your work toward becoming a professional educator?* Of all Cohort 6 through Cohort 8 Year 1 residents who participated in the study (n = 47), 53% of residents responded with *I would have experienced* ***significant*** *financial hardship this year*, 43% of residents selected *I would have experienced* ***moderate*** *financial hardship this year*, and only 4% selected *I would have experienced* ***little to no*** *financial hardship this year* (see Figure 13 for responses by cohort).

On the same survey, we asked, *To what extent have CREATE's financial supports helped to alleviate hardships on your path toward becoming a professional educator?* Of all Cohort 6 through Cohort 8 Year 1 residents who responded to this item (n = 50), 18% selected *The financial help was critical but not adequate* and 64% selected *The financial help was critical and adequate to get me through*. No participants selected *The financial help was not needed*. These findings align with recent research reporting that along with insufficient professional support, the financial costs of becoming and remaining a teacher are among the primary barriers to entering the teaching profession, particularly for Black teacher candidates (Shand et al., 2023). Teacher residency programs—like CREATE—restructure the financial responsibility related to the cost of becoming an educator, relieving teacher candidates of some of the financial burden and fostering financial sustainability in the teaching profession.

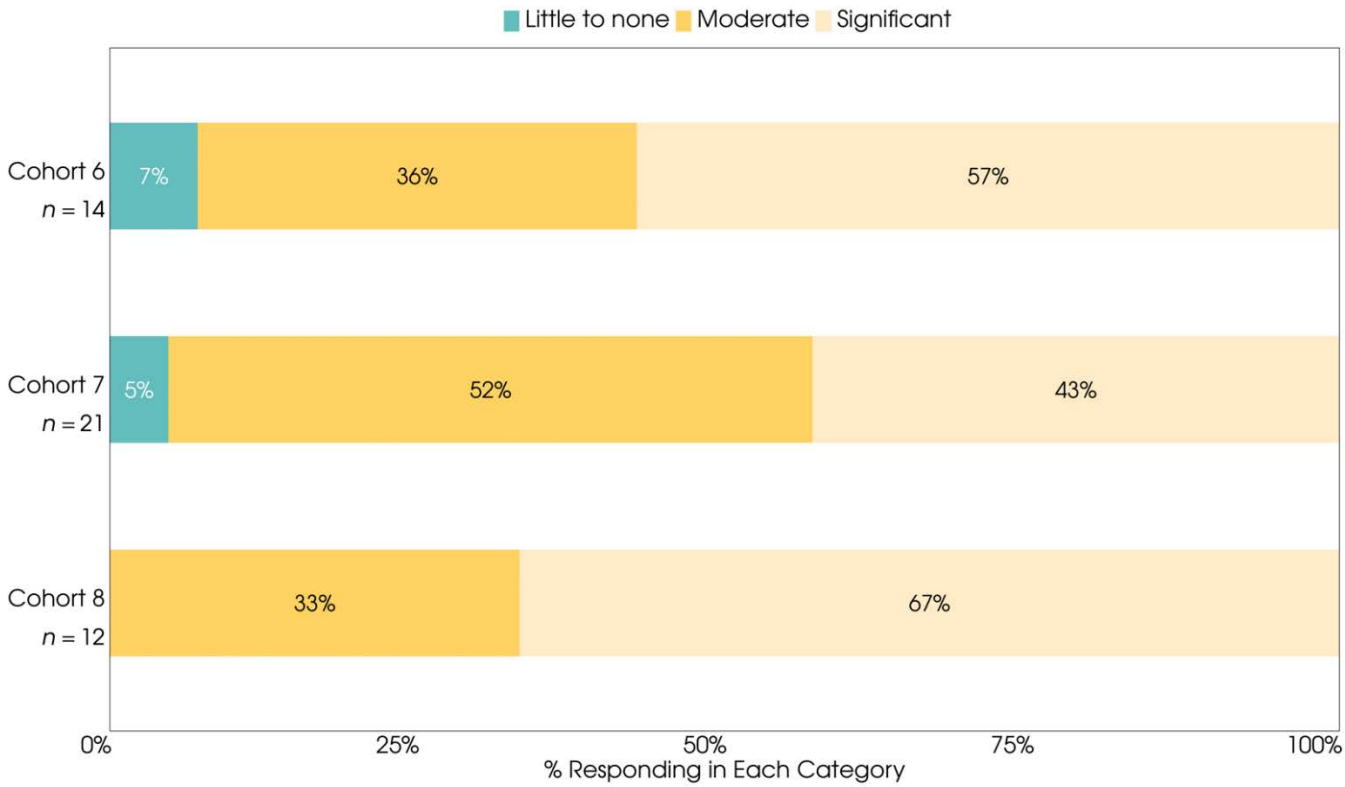


FIGURE 13. YEAR 1 RESIDENTS' RESPONSES TO "EXTENT TO WHICH FINANCIAL DEMANDS OF BECOMING AN EDUCATOR WOULD HAVE CAUSED HARDSHIP WITHOUT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM CREATE."

Source: Quarterly surveys

Summary of Experiences of Early Career Teachers

Overall, CREATE residents received unique and diverse forms of support that comparison group participants did not have access to. CREATE residents received the support of co-teachers as they entered the teaching profession, and they continued to receive support from mentors during their first two years of teaching. Meanwhile, 80% of comparison participants had an assigned mentor teacher at their school during their first year of teaching, and even fewer (37%) did during their second year of teaching. Another form of support CREATE residents had was more structured opportunities to meet and collaborate with fellow educators through the TT meetings, which were specifically designed to foster well-being and self-compassion, encourage connectedness with peers, and facilitate exploration of systemic privilege and oppression in education. CREATE residents also reported feeling more supported in their school sites across the three years of the study than comparison participants did. In addition, CREATE residents had unique access to (1) SRA to gain experience and improve their pedagogy and classroom practices, and (2) the equity- and compassion-based PL opportunities to improve their instructional skills, contribute to a greater sense of social support and belonging, and support their well-being. Finally, CREATE provided direct financial support to residents, which helped to alleviate the financial burden of becoming a teacher.

Chapter 4. Promising Findings Related to CREATE's Impact on Teacher Well-being

INTRODUCTION

Several studies have shown that educator well-being is a crucial element in teacher effectiveness, retention, and student well-being (Song, 2022; Hascher & Waber, 2021; Fox et al., 2023). In light of this, the CREATE teacher residency program has developed and refined a series of approaches to support the well-being of their early career teachers and experienced educators. This chapter presents our findings on the impact of CREATE on early career teachers related to multiple dimensions of teacher well-being.

The analytic results presented in this chapter converge on demonstrating CREATE's positive impact on teacher well-being. This finding is valuable in its own right but also demonstrates the potential to mediate impacts on longer-term outcomes in the program logic model; that is, it is plausible that increased teacher well-being will have long-term benefits for teachers and their students. The findings are also notable considering the myriad of social challenges during the study years, including school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the recovery period that followed.

In this chapter, we begin by briefly discussing (1) the importance of supporting teacher well-being, especially during the years covered by this grant period (2020–2023), and (2) CREATE's responsive and evolving approach to supporting educator well-being, including pairing mindfulness practices with "critical awareness of self and systems" (Davis & BehmCross, 2020, p. 584). Next, we list the key research questions and our approach to data collection and analysis to examine the impact of CREATE on teacher well-being. Finally, we share promising findings related to the well-being of early career teachers in their first year as a teacher-of-record.

BACKGROUND

Importance of Teacher Well-being

During the 2020–21 through 2022–23 school years, teacher well-being was at the forefront of national discourse as educators were experiencing significant job-related stress related to the COVID-19 pandemic (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021). According to a 2023 RAND research report, "in 2021 and 2022, teachers were twice as likely to report experiencing frequent job-related stress and difficulty coping with their job-related stress than the general population of working adults" (Aperribai et al., 2020; Doan et al., 2023, p. 1). Nearly 60% of teachers in a nationally representative survey conducted by the EdWeek Research Center reported experiencing job-related stress "frequently or always" as they were called upon to navigate heavy workloads, low salaries, staff shortages, under-resourced schools, and a lack of autonomy related to instructional and curriculum decisions (Will, 2022). The high level of occupational stress is, in part, why nearly one in five teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Gray & Taie, 2015).

In contrast, enhanced teacher well-being is associated with several positive outcomes, including "higher rates of teacher commitment and efficacy," "better understanding of classroom dynamics," "skillful use of emotional expressions to promote the enjoyment of learning," and "improved student-teacher relationships and a positive school climate" (Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific, 2020).

CREATE's Innovative and Evolving Approach to Support Well-being

CREATE has developed and refined several program components to support their early career teachers' well-being and prepare them to become critically conscious, compassionate, and skilled educators. As described in the program logic model (see Figure 1 in Chapter 1. Introduction), these components include:

- recruitment of a diverse and talented pool of social justice-oriented teacher candidates,
- a cohort model intended to develop and strengthen peer relationships with educators entering their careers together,
- multiple forms of mentorship to support teachers as they face the challenges of the profession, and
- various PL opportunities to develop community ties and cultural competencies and equip teachers with instructional skills to serve their students.

Perhaps the most direct supports impacting well-being occurs during TT and the SRA, in which residents gather to connect, build their instructional skills, engage in critical reflection, solve professional dilemmas, and participate in equity-centered and compassion-based mindfulness training.

Teacher Well-being and Mindfulness

Teacher preparation programs have implemented mindfulness curricula to support teacher well-being and boost teacher retention (Davis & BehmCross, 2020; Dejene et al., 2024). Mindfulness curricula are "framed as tools to equip educators working in high-stress environments with the mental and emotional capacities to remain in the profession" (Davis & BehmCross, 2020, p. 583). CREATE has been at the forefront of this approach, integrating mindfulness techniques into their PL for over a decade and increasingly and intentionally thinking about how to refine mindfulness practices in ways that meet teachers in their social context (Davis & BehmCross, 2020). In particular, mindfulness practices are intended to support teacher well-being through cultivating habits of the mind that are designed to increase "tolerance for uncertainty, attentional focus, cognitive flexibility, and emotion regulation" (Roeser et al., 2012, p. 170). Initially, CREATE utilized practices from Emory University's Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT®) during TT and guided residents through progressive mental exercises and meditation to learn to focus their attention and become more aware of their thoughts and feelings as they occur in each moment. CBCT® teaches educators how to respond healthily to stressful situations, connect with others facing similar challenges, and strengthen their ability and willingness to express empathy and compassion for others and themselves (GSU, 2020.).

Critical Frameworks and Mindfulness Approach

Throughout the SEED 2020 grant, CREATE's mindfulness practices evolved as the newly appointed CREATE co-directors "explor[ed] how mindfulness can be cultivated in tandem with a critical awareness of self and systems" (Davis & BehmCross, 2020, p. 584). The CREATE co-directors questioned how mindfulness practices that solely focused on individual well-being (divorced of social context) could "discourage teachers from engaging in collective efforts toward systemic change" (Davis & BehmCross, 2020, p. 594). While mindfulness practices are widely recognized as an "effective stress-reduction tool, including in underserved communities," these tools can often focus on the "universality of human suffering" and elide "the specific racial and cultural factors that may impact the health of individuals from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds in the United States" (Dejene et al., 2024, p. 2). According to the program co-directors, "The implications for mindfulness programs in urban teacher preparation are that we must build bridges between the world of the mind and the world of lived experiences in an unjust world" (Davis & BehmCross, 2020, p. 595). They posited the following.

> "We wonder, and worry, how mindfulness practices' focused on self, intentional stability, and mental clarity of the individual misrepresent mindfulness as a sufficient response to systemic oppression? We acknowledge teacher burnout as a critical effect of social justice work void of restorative practices, but we

> wonder, how could mindfulness be adapted to hold both? How might a new curriculum be created that highlights the intersections between mindfulness and engaged activism for teachers?" (Davis & BehmCross, 2020, p. 594).

Social Justice-Centered Programming and Well-being

During the grant years, the CREATE program (re)committed to social justice-centered programming to enhance teachers' criticality and overall wellness. Their redesigned PL opportunities centered on mindfulness with liberatory, justice-centered practices. They worked to build support networks and a community of connection and reflection to help teachers navigate the profound challenges of the education climate, to pause and think deeply about who they are personally and professionally in their education setting, and to explicitly connect their work in CREATE to supporting education in Atlanta. Community-building supports well-being for several reasons: "community is where the individual and society meet… The community provides the stage where the fields of interactions occur that allows the self to develop" (Larson et al., 2015, p. 414). Moreover, a focus on well-being at the community level can shine a light on "racialized analyses of policies and practices within organizations" that cannot be addressed by solely focusing on the individual level (Albright et al., 2023, p. 6). The CREATE team also worked to develop and enhance teachers' critical consciousness of self and systems to understand and navigate issues of social justice and racial equity in schools.[8]

In response to these programming changes, we shifted and revised some of our evaluation measures to better align with the updated focus of the programming. As the programming was evolving, we worked with the CREATE team to initially include survey questions about teachers' opportunities and support to think about social justice in their schools and about teachers' confidence in and understanding of concepts related to equity in schools. In later grants, as the programming became more solidified, we built upon these initial exploratory measures to integrate more comprehensive measures related to critical consciousness and social justice in education.

[8] See Behizadeh et al. (2023) for more in-depth exploration of critical consciousness development for pre-service teachers.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

✨ Research Questions about Teacher Well-Being ✨

What is the impact of CREATE on key intermediate outcomes related to teacher well-being, including:

3. fostering individual teacher well-being, characterized as:
   a. mindfulness skills and habits of the mind,
   b. self-compassion, and
   c. well-being, in the context of being an educator?
4. building a support network and community of connection and reflection toward wellness?
5. developing critical consciousness and understanding of social justice issues in education?

DATA COLLECTION SOURCES

This well-being analysis leveraged data through two teacher-level sources: four WBLs and four quarterly surveys. The WBL was a short questionnaire designed to capture the effects of TT. We added WBLs to the study to address a possible limitation of our previous survey methods. Although the impacts of CREATE are intended to be lasting—especially for distal outcomes including teacher retention, teacher quality, and student achievement—impacts on more proximal intermediate outcomes may have shorter "half-lives" that become visible closer to the PL meetings themselves. In other words, impacts of PL may occur in the period after the meeting, in which case, we may not capture them through our standard quarterly or end-of-year surveys. To investigate this, researchers administered WBLs at multiple time points and strategically scheduled the logs around select TT meetings. The quarterly surveys included unique questions about all aspects of CREATE programming (see Appendix D with data collection sources for more details).

We used several scales to address the research questions in this chapter. Table 8 lists the scales, their constructs, and how each relates to the research questions. More detailed descriptions and reliability coefficients (alphas) for all scales included in the WBLs and quarterly surveys are in Appendix D. Alphas range from .71 to .98. Appendix H also reports the correlation coefficients between responses across the scales and constructs.

TABLE 8. SCALES AND CONSTRUCTS USED TO ADDRESS RESEARCH QUESTIONS ABOUT THE IMPACT OF CREATE ON TEACHER WELL-BEING

Scale	Constructs	Data source
Research Question 3a: Mindfulness skills and habits of the mind		
Focus & Awareness	Mindfulness through focusing attention and being aware of the present situation	Well-being log
Difficulty With Attention	Difficulty concentrating to solve problems, and deficits in attention due to distracting thoughts	Well-being log
Supported & Hopeful	Feeling support in daily activities, and a sense of hope	Well-being log
MAIA: Self-Regulation	Perceptions of having coping strategies to achieve calm in stressful and taxing situations	Well-being log
mPERMA: Positive Emotions Subscale	Sense of joy, positivity, and contentment in daily activity	Well-being log
mPERMA: Meaning Subscale	Sense of purpose, value, and direction in life	Well-being log
mPERMA: Accomplishment Subscale	Progress in accomplishing goals and in handling responsibilities	Well-being log
Research Question 3b: Self-compassion		
Self-Compassion Scale	Levels of self-compassion, including perception of self when coping with feelings of suffering	Quarterly survey
Research Question 3c: Well-being in the context of being an educator		
MBI: Emotional Exhaustion	In the school context, sense of feeling drained, fatigued, burned-out and frustrated	Well-being log
MBI: Depersonalization	In the school context, treating others impersonally, feeling hardened emotionally, and feeling apathetic	Well-being log
MBI: Personal Accomplishment	In the school context, feeling a sense of accomplishment, exhilaration in working with students, positive influence over others, understanding of students' feelings, being effective in addressing problems students experience, achieving a relaxed atmosphere with students, and accomplishing worthwhile achievements in work.	Well-being log
Stress Management & Empathy Related to Teaching[a]	In the school context, learning to manage stress, confidence in advocating for needs, and building empathy towards others	Quarterly survey

TABLE 8. SCALES AND CONSTRUCTS USED TO ADDRESS RESEARCH QUESTIONS ABOUT THE IMPACT OF CREATE ON TEACHER WELL-BEING

Scale	Constructs	Data source
Research Question 4: Building a support network and community of connection and reflection toward wellness		
Teacher Social Capital Scale: Teacher Bonding[b]	Perception about working relationships among the teachers and the teaching community in your school	Quarterly survey
Teacher Social Capital Scale: Opportunities to Collaborate	Perception that teachers in your school as a whole have opportunities to collaborate and learn from one another	Quarterly survey
Sense of Equity in Role & Experience[c]	Sense of ability to connect with students of various backgrounds, capacity to strive for equity goals, comfort in discussing equity-related issues, being valued in the school, and being respected by colleagues	Well-being log
Research Question 5: Developing critical consciousness and understanding of social justice issues in education		
Opportunities & Support to Think About Social Justice & Racial Equity Issues in Schools[d]	How often your school provided opportunities and support to understand social justice, racial equity, individual level bias, and systemic oppression	Quarterly survey
Confidence in Understanding Concepts Related to Race & Equity in Schools	Confidence in understanding concepts related to race and equity in schools	Quarterly survey

[a] Also relates to Research Question 4: Building a support network and community of connection and reflection toward wellness

[b] Also relates to Research Question 3c: Well-being in the context of being an educator

[c] Also relates to Research Question 5: Developing critical consciousness and understanding of social justice issues in education

[d] We only asked this item to Cohort 6 in Year 2.

Note. MAIA = Multidimensional Assessment of Interoceptive Awareness; mPERMA = Momentary Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning Accomplishment; and MBI = Maslach Burnout Inventory for Educators.

COHORT AND TIMING OF OUTCOMES

While the evaluation covers multiple years of residency, we examined impacts of CREATE on teacher well-being during their first year as teacher-of-record. This allows us to examine well-being after one year of full exposure to CREATE and graduation from GSU CEHD.[9] Thus, this chapter only focuses on results for Cohort 6 and 7 in their second year of the

[9] Some scales only appeared on the final survey occasion. It is also noteworthy that we did not administer all survey scales with all cohorts. We discontinued some survey scales and adopted new ones over time as the program evolved and incorporated new program elements and posited corresponding mediating processes. In situations where we measured outcomes multiple times per year, we use year-end results as the outcome for analysis.

study. Examining effects at this time point is optimal because it is long enough to allow programmatic effects on well-being to accrue while maintaining a large enough sample size to detect the expected effect sizes with reasonable probability. Specifically, assessing impacts through the third year would have limited the sample to just Cohort 6, which would be too small to detect meaningful effects at statistically significant levels.

APPROACH TO ANALYSIS

The analysis of well-being included all eligible study participants with outcome and covariate data. During the first "matching" step, we chose comparison teachers whose responses were similar to those of CREATE participants on three baseline variables: (1) confidence in teaching, (2) motivation to teach, and (3) the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC).[10] In the second "estimation" step, we calculated the difference between CREATE and the matched comparison group, adjusting for any differences in baseline levels of the covariates noted above and controlling for cohort effects (6 or 7) that could be confounded with the treatment effect. The technical details of the matching results, tests of baseline equivalence, and estimates from the impact models are in Appendix H.

For both survey and well-being outcomes, we matched cases in terms of the three baseline measures: confidence in teaching, motivation to teach, and resilience. Specifically, the differences in baseline covariates are smaller than .25 standard deviations on all three measures (results of equivalence tests are in Appendix H). After matching, the WBL analysis included 17 CREATE and 17 comparison teachers, and the survey analysis included 18 teachers in each condition.

One notable exception was the sample we used to evaluate impacts on the scale measuring opportunities and support to think about social justice and racial equity issues in schools (pertaining to research question 5). We only administered this scale to Cohort 6 participants in their second year of the study (corresponding to all participants' first year as a teacher-of-record and treatment participants' second year in CREATE). In this case, the closeness of the match and the role of bias from differences between groups had to be weighed against the sample size and the role of increased random sampling error from a sample that was too small. In the case of this one scale, 10 participants were retained in each condition. The matching procedure did not achieve baseline equivalence on any of the three covariates (as noted in Table 9).

RESULTS

CREATE had positive impacts on several outcomes. Table 9 and Figure 14 report the impacts, which are expressed as a standardized effect size (ES); that is, in units of the pooled standard deviation of each outcome variable. Note that in several instances, a favorable impact corresponds to a negative estimate, such as lower levels of emotional exhaustion.

Some of the differences expressed as effect sizes are substantial. In terms of differences that reached statistical significance, during their first year as a teacher of record, CREATE teachers reported higher levels on the following scales:[11]

- Focus & Awareness (ES = 0.71, p = .058), which measures mindfulness through focusing attention and being aware of the present situation;

[10] We conducted matching using R software "Matchit" package, with 'nearest-neighbor matching', which used the predicted probability of treatment (propensity score) from a logistic regression as the index for matching.

[11] We report results as statistically significant if they have a p value of less than or equal to .10. Bold font indicates a statistically significant p value in Table 9.

- MAIA: Self-Regulation (ES = 0.62, p = .094), which measures perceptions of having coping strategies to achieve calm in stressful and taxing situations;
- mPERMA: Meaning Subscale (ES = 0.90, p = .017), which measures a sense of purpose, value, and direction in life;
- Sense of Equity in Role & Experience (ES = 0.77, p = .032), which captures the ability to connect with students of various backgrounds, capacity to strive for equity goals, comfort in discussing equity-related issues, being valued in the school, and being respected by colleagues;
- Opportunities & Support to Think About Social Justice & Racial Equity Issues in Schools (ES = 1.49, p = .008), which measures how often your school provided opportunities and support to understand social justice, racial equity, individual level bias, & systemic oppression; and
- Confidence in Understanding Concepts Related to Race & Equity in Schools (ES = 0.75, p = .025).

The other two mPERMA subscales—mPERMA: Positive Emotions Subscale (ES = 0.56, p = .111), which measures sense of joy, positivity and contentment in daily activity, and mPERMA: Accomplishment Subscale (ES = 0.60, p = .101), which measures progress in accomplishing goals and in handling responsibilities—came very close to meeting the α = .10 threshold. Moreover, all outcomes trended in the positive direction. This is notable especially given the number of scales analyzed.[12]

[12] We deemed that Emotional Exhaustion (Maslach Burnout Inventory), one survey outcome administered through WBLs in 2021–22 and 2022–23 (and before that through quarterly surveys), had the strongest possibility of What Works Clearinghouse (WCC) review under the content domain "Teacher Well-being" and the broad WWC category of Teacher Outcomes. Not only is Emotional Exhaustion explicitly listed as an outcome of interest under the Teacher Outcomes category, but Emotional Exhaustion is also considered as a component or subconstruct of Resilience (i.e., resilience is measured, in part, in terms of lower susceptibility to emotional exhaustion). Resilience was evaluated in CREATE and comparison conditions through the CD-RISC survey. This means Emotional Exhaustion has a valid measure for assessing baseline equivalence between the treatment and comparison groups. The analysis satisfies the requirement from the WWC, with a separate impact analysis for each occasion for a given cohort, across all three (independent) cohorts. Specifically, WWC notes the following requirements: Analyses with more than two time periods, including most comparative interrupted time series and growth curve analyses, must account for the preintervention and postintervention periods, including an interaction with the intervention indicator, but they can also account for additional time periods. For example, a finding from a comparative interrupted series study that uses fixed effects for each time period and for each unit of assignment would be eligible to receive the research rating Meets WWC Standards with Reservations *if the study also estimated impacts separately for each postintervention time point and satisfied the baseline equivalence standard using the baseline period closest to the start of the intervention.* (WWC, 2022, p. 94, italics added.)

An exhaustive analysis of the impact on Emotional Exhaustion and of baseline equivalence on the initial pretest (CD-RISC) was conducted on a matched sample for each cohort-by-year-by-occasion "cell." Additionally, correlations between emotional exhaustion scores between survey occasions within and across years are calculated separately for each cohort (but not across cohorts, given that the samples were mutually exclusive across cohorts and independent in their outcomes). The results are reported in Appendix I to support WWC review.

The remaining outcomes measured through WBLs were deemed not aligned with a WWC-reviewable domain or lacking the necessary data to assess baseline equivalence.

TABLE 9. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR TEACHER WELL-BEING OUTCOMES FOR COHORT 6 AND 7 IN THEIR FIRST YEAR OF TEACHING

Survey scale	Scale range and response options	Matched sample size	Average score for the comparison group	Regression-adjusted average score for the CREATE group[a]	Standardized effect size	*p* value	Baseline equivalence met on all three baseline variables[b]
Research Question 3a: Mindfulness skills and habits of the mind							
Focus & Awareness[c]	5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)	CREATE *n* = 17 Comparison *n* = 17	3.68	4.27	0.71	.058	Yes
Difficulty With Attention	5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)	CREATE *n* = 17 Comparison *n* = 17	3.26	2.96	-0.23	.523	Yes
Supported & Hopeful	5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)	CREATE *n* = 17 Comparison *n* = 17	3.36	3.43	0.10	.754	Yes
MAIA: Self-Regulation[c]	5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)	CREATE *n* = 17 Comparison *n* = 17	3.47	4.04	0.62	.094	Yes
mPERMA: Positive Emotions Subscale	5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)	CREATE *n* = 17 Comparison *n* = 17	3.55	4.04	0.56	.111	Yes
mPERMA: Meaning Subscale[c]	5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)	CREATE *n* = 17 Comparison *n* = 17	3.82	4.44	0.90	.017	Yes
mPERMA: Accomplishment Subscale	5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)	CREATE *n* = 17 Comparison *n* = 17	3.88	4.25	0.60	.101	Yes
Research Question 3b: Self-compassion							
Self-Compassion Scale	26 questions scale range: 5 = almost never 4 = occasionally 3 = about half of the time 2 = fairly often 1 = almost always	CREATE *n* = 18 Comparison *n* = 18	3.13	3.29	0.29	.366	Yes

TABLE 9. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR TEACHER WELL-BEING OUTCOMES FOR COHORT 6 AND 7 IN THEIR FIRST YEAR OF TEACHING

Survey scale	Scale range and response options	Matched sample size	Average score for the comparison group	Regression-adjusted average score for the CREATE group[a]	Standardized effect size	*p* value	Baseline equivalence met on all three baseline variables[b]
Research Question 3c: Well-being in the context of being an educator							
MBI: Emotional Exhaustion	7-point scale (1 = never, 2 = a few times a year or less, 3 = once a month or less, 4 = a few times a month, 5 = once a week, 6 = a few times a week, 7 = every day)	CREATE *n* = 17 Comparison *n* = 17	4.29	3.56	-0.50	.145	Yes
MBI: Depersonalization		CREATE *n* = 17 Comparison *n* = 17	2.53	2.32	-0.15	.666	Yes
MBI: Personal Accomplishment		CREATE *n* = 17 Comparison *n* = 17	5.55	5.85	0.34	.364	Yes
Stress Management & Empathy Related to Teaching	6 questions scale range: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither disagree nor agree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree	CREATE *n* = 18 Comparison *n* = 18	3.95	4.19	0.41	.214	Yes
Research Question 4: Building a support network and community of connection and reflection toward wellness							
Teacher Social Capital Scale: Teacher Bonding	26 questions scale range: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither disagree nor agree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree	CREATE *n* = 18 Comparison *n* = 18	3.49	3.72	0.25	.438	Yes
Teacher Social Capital Scale: Opportunities to Collaborate	8 questions scale range: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither disagree nor agree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree	CREATE *n* = 18 Comparison *n* = 18	3.31	3.65	0.47	.136	Yes
Sense of Equity in Role & Experience[c]	5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)	CREATE *n* = 17 Comparison *n* = 17	3.66	4.15	0.77	.032	Yes

TABLE 9. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR TEACHER WELL-BEING OUTCOMES FOR COHORT 6 AND 7 IN THEIR FIRST YEAR OF TEACHING

Survey scale	Scale range and response options	Matched sample size	Average score for the comparison group	Regression-adjusted average score for the CREATE group[a]	Standardized effect size	*p* value	Baseline equivalence met on all three baseline variables[b]
Research Question 5: Developing critical consciousness and understanding of social justice issues in education							
Opportunities & Support to Think About Social Justice & Racial Equity Issues in Schools[c,d]	1 question scale range: 1 = almost never, 2 = once in a while, 3 = sometimes, 4 = frequently, 5 = almost always	CREATE *n* = 10 Comparison *n* = 10	2.40	4.09	1.49	.008	No
Confidence in Understanding Concepts Related to Race & Equity in Schools[c]	1 question scale range: 1 = not at all confident, 2 = slightly confident, 3 = moderately confident, 4 = very confident, 5 = extremely confident	CREATE *n* = 18 Comparison *n* = 18	3.39	4.06	0.75	.025	Yes

[a] This is the average control performance plus the regression-adjusted estimate of impact in scale score units.

[b] Each of the three variables (resilience measured by CD-RISC, motivation to teach, confidence in teaching) achieves baseline equivalence if the standardized mean difference between conditions is less than .25.

[c] Indicates scales where a lower score is a favorable outcome (e.g. a lower score on Maslach Exhaustion is a favorable outcome). Therefore, a negative standardized effect size is a favorable outcome for CREATE.

[d] We only asked this item in C6Y2; we used the same C6 sample across all analysis, and did not achieve baseline equivalence (CD RISC = - .30; Mot = -.29; Con = .49).

Note. Bold font indicates a statistically significant *p* value (≤ .10). MAIA = Multidimensional Assessment of Interoceptive Awareness; mPERMA = Momentary Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning Accomplishment; and MBI = Maslach Burnout Inventory for Educators.

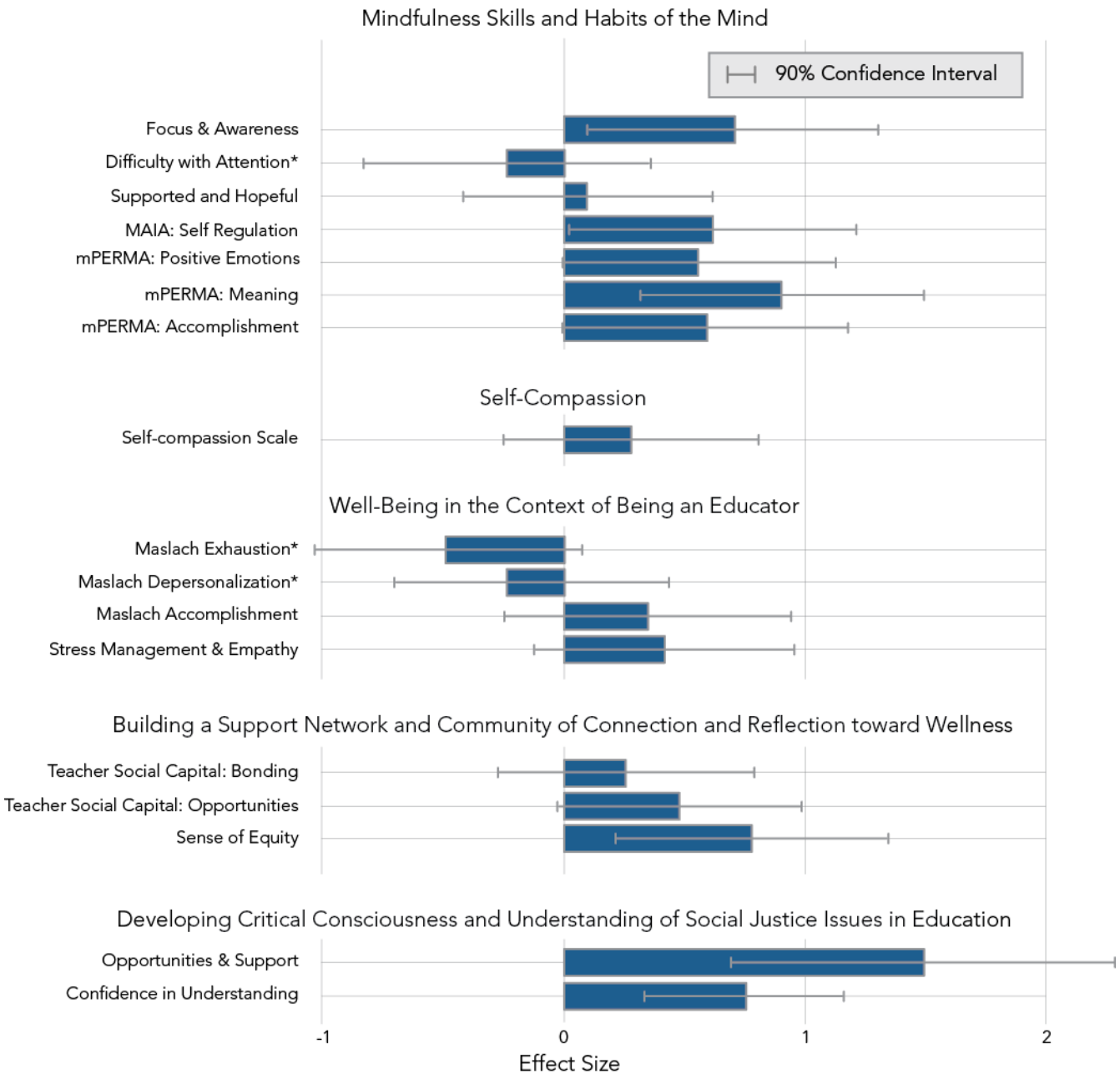


FIGURE 14. TEACHER WELL-BEING OUTCOMES FOR COHORT 6 AND 7 IN THEIR FIRST YEAR OF TEACHING

Source: Quarterly surveys and well-being logs

Note. * Indicates scales where a lower score is a favorable outcome (e.g., a lower score on Maslach Exhaustion is a favorable outcome). Therefore, a negative standardized effect size is a favorable outcome for CREATE.

SUMMARY

CREATE worked to develop curriculum for early career teachers that "highlights the intersections between mindfulness and engaged activism for teachers" (Davis & BehmCross, 2020, p. 594). The question is, how to teach educators self-care tools that support teacher well-being, while simultaneously encouraging them to engage with their social context, not disengage from issues of social and racial justice at a systemic level? Given the challenges and exhaustion that teachers face in their jobs on a daily basis, how can we encourage teachers to practice self-compassion and reduce teacher burnout while also increasing teachers' critical awareness of self and systems beyond the confines of their own classroom?

While this initial exploration does not hold all the answers, and further work is needed to develop a cohesive measurement plan that includes measures that address the intersections of well-being, critical consciousness, and social justice, the results of our study are nevertheless promising. Multiple constructs and multiple measures are all in a positive direction, with some being statistically significant, including mPERMA: Meaning Subscale (ES = 0.90, p = .017), Sense of Equity in Role & Experience (ES = 0.77, p = .032), Opportunities & Support to Think About Social Justice and Racial Equity Issues in Schools (ES = 1.49, p = .008), Confidence in Understanding Concepts Related to Race and Equity in Schools (ES = 0.75, p = .025). This is very notable, meaning CREATE is supporting teacher well-being.

In particular, other studies show that increased critical consciousness can have mixed results on burnout depending on available supports (Maker Castro et al., 2022) and social justice activists are at increased risk of burnout (Eaton & Warner, 2021; Gorski, 2018), particularly those focused on educational justice (Gorski & Chen, 2015). Therefore, CREATE's positive impact on measures related to developing critical consciousness and understanding of social justice issues in education while *decreasing* burnout is particularly notable.

Chapter 5. Impact of CREATE on Early Career Teacher Retention

OVERVIEW

One of the primary goals of the CREATE teacher residency program is to recruit and retain a diverse group of new teachers through preparation, support, and social connection. To evaluate CREATE's progress towards this goal, we conducted analysis to examine the impact of CREATE on residents' retention at three time points:

1. graduation from GSU CEHD,
2. employment as a first-year teacher-of-record, and
3. retention in their second year as a teacher-of-record.

We compared outcomes for CREATE residents to those of a comparison group; that is, non-CREATE student teachers enrolled in the business-as-usual (BAU) teacher credentialing program at GSU CEHD who planned to teach in a Georgia public school after graduation. Additionally, because CREATE aims to recruit diverse—primarily Black—educators, we examined the impact of CREATE on retention for the full participant sample, as well as the sub-sample of Black educators. The following research questions guided the retention analysis.

✨ Research Questions about Early Career Teacher Retention ✨

6. What is the impact of CREATE, compared to the BAU teacher credentialing program at GSU CEHD, on educators':
   a. graduation from GSU CEHD?
   b. employment as a teacher-of-record in the first academic year after graduation?
   c. retention as a teacher-of-record into the second academic year after graduation?
7. What are the impacts of CREATE among Black educators for each of the three outcomes above?

Given that we recruited a new cohort of participants in each of the three study years, we have access to graduation data for all three cohorts (Cohorts 6, 7, and 8), employment data as a teacher-of-record during the first year after graduation for Cohorts 6 and 7, and retention data as a teacher-of-record during the second year after graduation for Cohort 6.

The remainder of this chapter provides a detailed description of the analysis and findings.

DATA COLLECTION AND METHODS FOR DETERMINING GRADUATION AND TEACHING STATUS

We relied on various data sources to determine each study participant's status at the three time points: graduation, employment in year 1, and retention in year 2.

- **Graduation from GSU CEHD**. We triangulated data from our participant trackers, quarterly surveys, data from CREATE and GSU CEHD, and teacher certification records from the GaPSC (GaPSC, n.d.).

- **Teaching in Year 1 and Year 2**. We triangulated our findings from participant trackers, quarterly surveys, data provided by CREATE, APS, GaDOE, and teaching records from the Open Georgia: Transparency in Government travel and salary database (Open Georgia, 2008).

Appendix J describes our process of determining graduation and teaching status in Georgia public schools. We base retention status on "on-time" teaching. This requires participants to meet the following criteria at each time point:

1. graduate from GSU CEHD by the fall semester following their expected spring graduation,
2. work as a teacher-of-record or similar position (explained below) during the academic year after graduating, and
3. work as a teacher-of-record in the second year (post-graduation).

Notably, our retention coding process allows for participants to be paraprofessionals or online teachers during their first year of teaching, but they must be full-time teachers of record by the beginning of their second year to be considered retained. Thus, we are not analyzing whether a teacher graduates and enters teaching at any time within the three-year trajectory. We analyze whether a teacher transitions into on-time teaching (with some leeway), implying that investing in teacher training yields societal returns, including helping teachers transition into the workforce quickly to serve students effectively.

PARTICIPANT MATCHING ACROSS CONDITIONS

Table 10 shows the descriptive counts of all study participants who could be matched across conditions within cohorts. These are the sample sizes included in this chapter's descriptive and inferential analyses, in which we estimate the difference between conditions in the proportion of participants retained, and adjust for the effects of possible confounders. Confounders are baseline variables that may be imbalanced between conditions, such as motivation to enter teaching, which could support a plausible rival explanation for differences in retention rates. Without this adjustment, any difference in retention rates may reflect the effects of both the confounding variable(s) and CREATE.

TABLE 10. MATCHED SAMPLE SIZES WITH RETENTION STATUS KNOWN (CASES INCLUDED IN ANALYSIS)

	Full sample used in analysis			Black educator sample used in analysis		
	Graduated	Teaching Year 1	Teaching Year 2	Graduated	Teaching Year 1	Teaching Year 2
Cohort 6						
CREATE	17	17	17	11	11	11
Comparison	22	25	25	8	10	10
Cohort 7						
CREATE	24	24	n/a[a]	16	16	n/a[a]
Comparison	14	15	n/a[a]	3	3	n/a[a]

TABLE 10. MATCHED SAMPLE SIZES WITH RETENTION STATUS KNOWN (CASES INCLUDED IN ANALYSIS)

	Full sample used in analysis			Black educator sample used in analysis		
	Graduated	Teaching Year 1	Teaching Year 2	Graduated	Teaching Year 1	Teaching Year 2
Cohort 8						
CREATE	15	n/a[a]	n/a[a]	9	n/a[a]	n/a[a]
Comparison	15	n/a[a]	n/a[a]	7	n/a[a]	n/a[a]

[a] n/a means that data were not yet available for this cohort due to the staggered cohort design.

Note. The actual matched baseline sample is 56 CREATE participants and 56 comparison group participants, but we excluded five participants in the comparison group from analysis because their graduation/retention status was "unknown". The matched sample with "known" status, as shown in this table, is 56 CREATE participants and 51 comparison group participants.

RETENTION RATES FOR THE FULL SAMPLE OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Next, we present the retention status of participants at each of the three time points: (1) graduation from GSU CEHD, (2) teaching in year 1, and (3) teaching in year 2. Note that each time point includes a different analytic sample based on the cohorts included. Time point 1 (graduation) includes the matched sample across Cohorts 6, 7, and 8; time point 2 (teaching in year 1) includes the matched sample across Cohorts 6 and 7; and time point 3 (teaching in year 2) includes the matched sample for Cohort 6 only.

Retention Rates at Time Point 1: Graduation (Cohorts 6, 7, and 8)

Table 11 and Figure 15 display graduation rates for the matched sample of CREATE and comparison group participants across all three cohorts (Cohorts 6, 7, and 8), as well as the numbers and percentages of individuals whose graduation status could not be confirmed (termed "status unknown").

TABLE 11. COHORTS 6–8 GRADUATION OUTCOMES FOR CREATE AND COMPARISON (MATCHED SAMPLE): RETAINED, NOT RETAINED, AND STATUS UNKNOWN

	Retained	Not retained	Status unknown
CREATE	52 (92.9%)	4 (7.1%)	0 (0.0%)
Comparison	48 (85.7%)	3 (5.4%)	5 (8.9%)

Note. Some percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

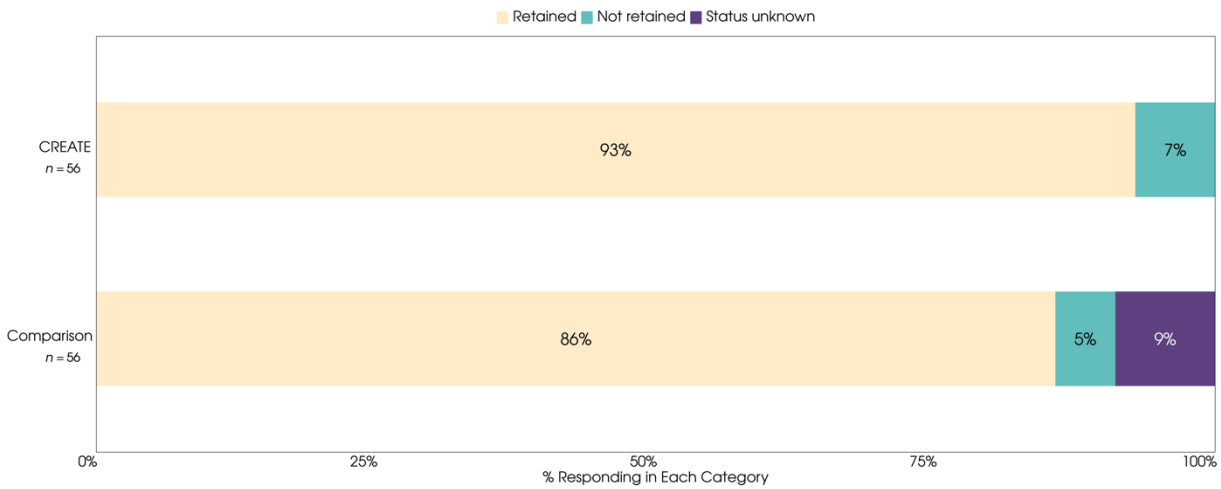


FIGURE 15. PERCENTAGES OF COHORT 6, 7, AND 8 WITH ON-TIME GRADUATION, BY CONDITION, AMONG MATCHED SAMPLES

Retention Rates at Time Point 2: Teaching in Year 1 (Cohorts 6 and 7)

Table 12 and Figure 16 display retention rates in year 1 of teaching for the matched sample of CREATE and comparison group participants in Cohorts 6 and 7, and the numbers and percentages of individuals who did not become teachers of record that year or whose status could not be confirmed (termed "status unknown"). We lose track of participants for various reasons, such as when they are hired in non-public schools within Georgia, teach in a different state, or are not teaching at all.[13]

TABLE 12. COHORTS 6 AND 7 RETENTION IN TEACHING IN YEAR 1 OUTCOMES (MATCHED SAMPLE): RETAINED, NOT RETAINED, AND STATUS UNKNOWN

	Retained	Not retained	Status unknown
Graduated			
CREATE	38 (92.7%)	3 (7.3%)	0 (0.0%)
Comparison	34 (82.9%)	2 (4.9%)	5 (12.2%)

[13] We implemented propensity score matching with the default "nearest neighbor" method using the matchit function of the MatchIt package in R. The matched samples were similar in terms of baseline reported levels of confidence in general teaching skills, motivation for entering teaching, and the CD-RISC measure of resilience (there was less than .25 standard deviations difference between conditions on the baseline characteristics). The results of the baseline equivalence tests are in Appendix K.

TABLE 12. COHORTS 6 AND 7 RETENTION IN TEACHING IN YEAR 1 OUTCOMES (MATCHED SAMPLE): RETAINED, NOT RETAINED, AND STATUS UNKNOWN

	Retained	Not retained	Status unknown
Teaching in Year 1			
CREATE	34 (82.9%)	7 (17.1%)	0 (0.0%)
Comparison	34 (82.9%)	6 (14.6%)	1 (2.4%)

Note. Some percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

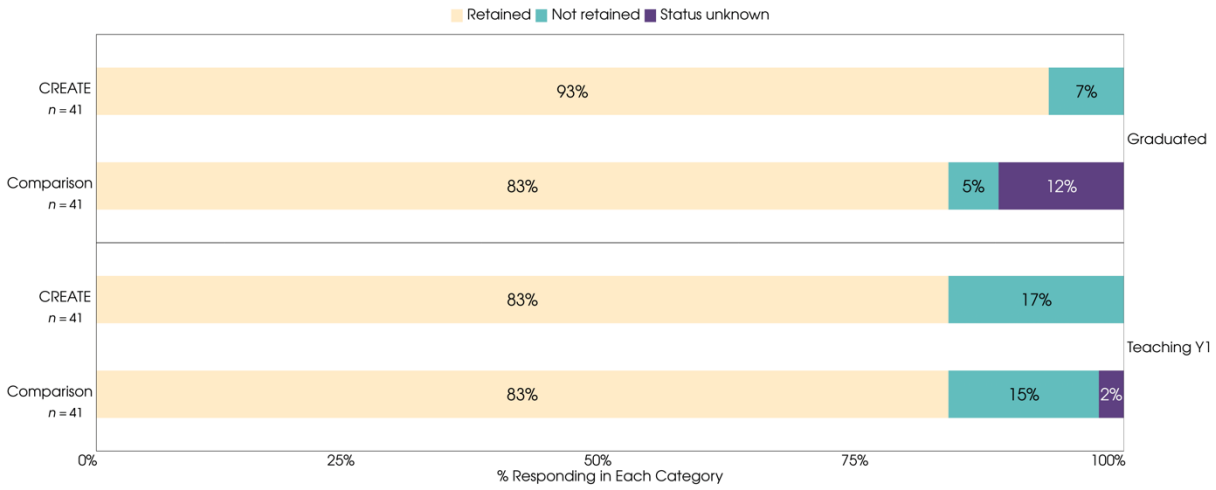


FIGURE 16. PERCENTAGES OF COHORTS 6 AND 7 WITH ON-TIME GRADUATION AND RETENTION IN TEACHING IN YEAR 1, BY CONDITION, AMONG MATCHED SAMPLES

Retention Rates at Time Point 3: Teaching in Year 2 (Cohort 6)

Table 13 and Figure 17 display retention rates in year 2 of teaching for the matched sample of CREATE and comparison group participants in Cohort 6, and the numbers and percentages of individuals who did not become teachers of record that year or whose status could not be confirmed (termed "status unknown").

TABLE 13. COHORT 6 RETENTION IN TEACHING IN YEAR 2 OUTCOMES (MATCHED SAMPLE): RETAINED, NOT RETAINED, AND STATUS UNKNOWN

	Retained	Not retained	Status unknown
Graduated			
CREATE	16 (94.1%)	1 (5.9%)	0 (0.0%)
Comparison	22 (88.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (12.0%)
Teaching in Year 1			
CREATE	15 (88.2%)	2 (11.8%)	0 (0.0%)
Comparison	22 (88.0%)	3 (12.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Teaching in Year 2			
CREATE	12 (70.6%)	5 (29.4%)	0 (0.0%)
Comparison	19 (76.0%)	6 (24.0%)	0 (0.0%)

Note. Some percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

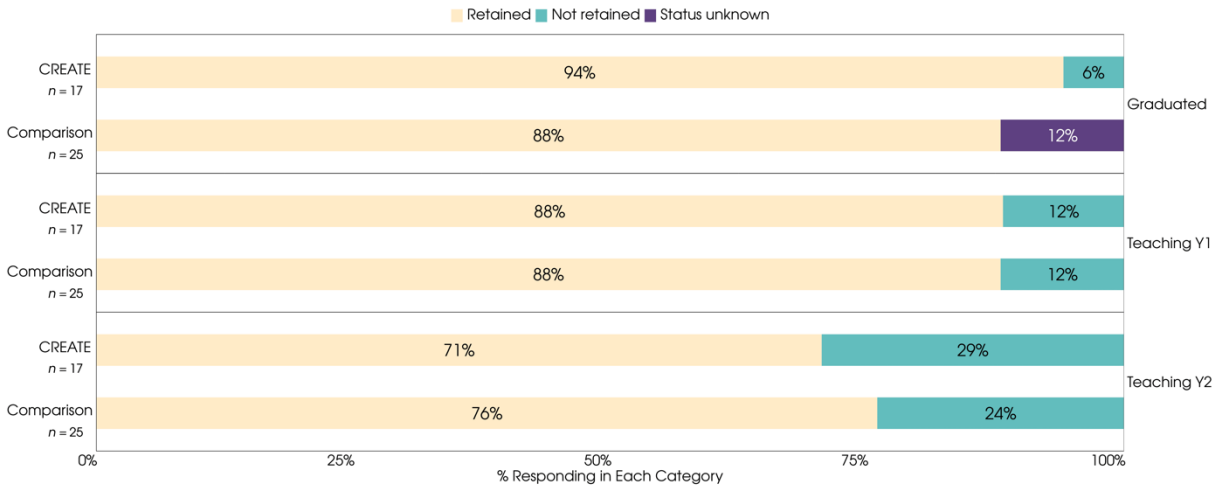


FIGURE 17. PERCENTAGE OF COHORT 6 WITH ON-TIME GRADUATION, RETENTION IN TEACHING IN YEAR 1, AND RETENTION IN TEACHING IN YEAR 2, BY CONDITION, AMONG MATCHED SAMPLES

Table 14 compiles the data above by summarizing the numbers and percentages of teachers who graduated from GSU CEHD and were retained as teachers in year 1 and year 2, comparing those in the CREATE program to the comparison group. Note, the proportion retained is:

$$Percentage\ Retained = \frac{Number\ Retained}{Number\ Retained + Number\ Not\ Retained} \times 100\%$$

TABLE 14. PERCENTAGE RETAINED BY GROUP (COHORTS 6–8, MATCHED, COMPLETE DATA)

	Graduated (Cohorts 6,7 & 8)	Teaching Year 1 (Cohorts 6 & 7)	Teaching Year 2 (Cohort 6)
CREATE	52/56 x 100% = 92.9%	34/41 x 100% = 82.9%	12/17 x 100% = 70.6%
Comparison	48/51 x 100% = 94.1%	34/40 x 100% = 85.0%	19/25 x 100% = 76.0%
Difference	-1.2%	-2.1%	-5.4%

Note. This table only includes Cohort 6, 7, and 8 individuals who were successfully matched and had complete outcomes indicating that they were retained or not retained. Individuals with "status unknown" are excluded from the calculation in each row.

IMPACT ON RETENTION FOR THE FULL SAMPLE OF EDUCATORS

This section presents the results of the inferential models and statistical tests to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in graduation and teaching rates in years 1 and 2.

Impact on Retention at Time Point 1: Graduation (Cohorts 6, 7, and 8)

We evaluated whether CREATE residents across Cohorts 6, 7, and 8 were more likely to graduate from GSU CEHD than non-CREATE student teachers in the same program. We accounted for differences between groups at the start of the study through a linear probability model, adjusting for cohort effects and possible covariate differences at baseline (i.e., for effects of pre-existing teacher characteristics that may also influence the result and decrease the accuracy of the estimated effect of CREATE). The estimate is of the actual difference in the probability of being retained, and in this section, we describe this in terms of percentages. For example, the probability of being retained may be 50% for one group and 75% for another group. (The technical details and numbers are in Appendix K.)

Overall, we found almost no difference in retention between the two groups. Teachers in CREATE were about 0.7 percentage points more likely to graduate (SE = .048; p = .88), but this difference is very small and could have happened by chance (we would expect a difference this size or larger 88% of the time due to random sampling error even if there was no real difference between groups in their true graduation rates).

We double-checked the result using another type of analysis (logistic regression, adjusting for the same covariates), which showed no meaningful difference. The odds of graduating were about 17% higher for CREATE teachers (odds ratio = 1.17; SE = .83; p = .85), but again, this difference was not statistically significant and is small enough that it could have happened by chance.

Impact on Retention at Time Point 2: Teaching in Year 1 (Cohorts 6 and 7)

We evaluated whether CREATE residents across Cohorts 6 and 7 were more likely to become a teacher-of-record in a Georgia public school the year after graduation than non-CREATE teachers who graduated from GSU CEHD. We

accounted for differences between groups at the start of the study through a linear probability model, adjusting for cohort effects and possible covariate differences at baseline. (The technical details and numbers are in Appendix K.)

Overall, we found almost no difference in retention between the two groups. Teachers in CREATE were about 0.8 percentage points less likely to stay into their first year of teaching (SE = .083; p = .92), but this difference is very small and could have happened by chance (we would expect a difference this size or larger 92% of the time due to random sampling error even if there was no real difference in outcomes between the groups).

We double-checked the result using another type of analysis (logistic regression, adjusting for the same covariates), which showed no meaningful difference. The odds of being retained in year 1 of teaching were about 8% lower for CREATE teachers (odds ratio = 0.92; SE = .64; p = .90), but again, this difference was not statistically significant and is small enough that it could easily have happened by chance.

Impact on Retention at Time Point 3: Teaching in Year 2 (Cohort 6)

Last, we evaluated whether CREATE residents in Cohort 6 were more likely to continue as a teacher-of-record in a Georgia public school in the second year after graduation than non-CREATE teachers who graduated from the same credentialing program. We accounted for differences between groups at the start of the study through a linear probability model, adjusting for cohort effects and possible covariate differences at baseline. (The technical details and numbers are in Appendix K.)

Again, we found almost no difference in retention between the two groups. Teachers in CREATE were about 5.1 percentage points less likely to stay into their second year of teaching (SE = .134; p = .71), but this difference is very small and could have happened by chance (we would expect a difference this size or larger 71% of the time due to random sampling error even if there was no real difference in outcomes between the groups).

We double-checked the result using another type of analysis (logistic regression, adjusting for the same covariates), which showed no meaningful difference. The odds of being retained in year 2 of teaching were about 30% lower for CREATE teachers (odds ratio = 0.70; SE = .75; p = .63), but again, this difference was not statistically significant and is small enough that it could have happened by chance. Additionally, we found that comparison teachers in Cohort 6 were more likely to have graduated from the GSU CEHD MAT program, potentially leading to a different likelihood of retention compared to graduates with a BSEd degree. We examine this potential confounding factor in the next section.

Examining Potential Confounding Effects of Masters of Art in Teaching Program Enrollment

The CREATE team raised a concern that a larger proportion of teachers in the comparison group were pursuing an MAT degree at GSU CEHD, which could have influenced retention. MAT candidates may have different motivations for entering teaching than their BSEd counterparts. For example, some may be older career-switchers with families to support, for whom there is additional incentive to graduate on time and expediently rejoin the workforce. Table 15 shows the distribution of enrollment in MAT or BSEd by condition (note, this table reports the number of participants prior to the matching process).

TABLE 15. DISTRIBUTION OF COHORT 6-8 ENROLLMENT BY DEGREE PROGRAM

	Cohort 6	Cohort 7	Cohort 8
Bachelor's degree			
CREATE	17 (94.4%)	23 (85.2%)	15 (93.8%)
Comparison	24 (70.6%)	16 (84.2%)	15 (93.8%)
Master's degree			
CREATE	1 (5.6%)	4 (14.8%)	1 (6.3%)
Comparison	10 (29.4%)	3 (15.8%)	1 (6.3%)

Note. This table reports the number of participants prior to the matching process. Some percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

For Cohorts 7 and 8, the distribution of participants enrolled in an MAT program is low and is exactly or nearly uniform across conditions. However, in Cohort 6, many more comparison group participants were enrolled in MAT (29.4%) than CREATE participants (5.6%). Thus, any effect of being enrolled in the MAT program on outcomes is almost entirely limited to the comparison group for Cohort 6, potentially influencing the CREATE-comparison contrast for the study's duration, especially for second-year retention, where data are available only from Cohort 6.

Summary of Findings for the Full Sample of Educators

The results of this section indicate that the differences in graduation rates and subsequent retention in teaching between CREATE and the comparison group were small and could easily be accounted for by chance. Viewing these results in the context of the earlier i3-funded study (2015-16–2018-19) is important. In the i3 study, CREATE participants had higher graduation (94.8% vs. 87.9%) and first- and second-year teaching retention rates (87.4% vs. 72.9%; 84.8% vs. 68.0%) compared to the participants in BAU. In contrast, in the current study, graduation rates were similar (92.9% CREATE vs. 94.1% comparison), as were first- and second-year retention rates (82.9% vs. 85.0%; 70.6% vs. 76.0%). Notably, in the i3 study, CREATE's positive impact was driven by Black residents, who had exceptionally high graduation and first- and second-year retention rates (98.6%, 96.3%, 95.5%, respectively). Black educators in the comparison group had lower graduation and first- and second-year retention rates (85.7%, 68.5%, and 62.8%, respectivley). CREATE's gains in the i3 study were due to this strong impact on Black educators. This raises an important question about how CREATE affected Black educators in the current study, which we explore and present next.

RETENTION RATES FOR THE SAMPLE OF BLACK EDUCATORS

To examine retention rates for the sample of Black educators, we repeat the steps above, but limit the initially matched sample to Black educators only.

Retention Rates at Time Point 1 for Black Educators: Graduation (Cohorts 6, 7, and 8)

Table 16 and Figure 18 display graduation rates for the matched sample of Black CREATE and comparison group participants across all three cohorts (Cohort 6, 7, and 8), as well as the numbers and percentages of individuals who did not graduate, teach, or whose graduation status could not be confirmed (termed "status unknown").

TABLE 16. COHORTS 6–8 GRADUATION OUTCOMES FOR BLACK EDUCATORS IN CREATE AND COMPARISON (MATCHED SAMPLE): RETAINED, NOT RETAINED, AND STATUS UNKNOWN

	Retained	Not retained	Status unknown
CREATE	35 (97.2%)	1 (2.8%)	0 (0.0%)
Comparison	18 (90.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (10.0%)

Note. Some percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

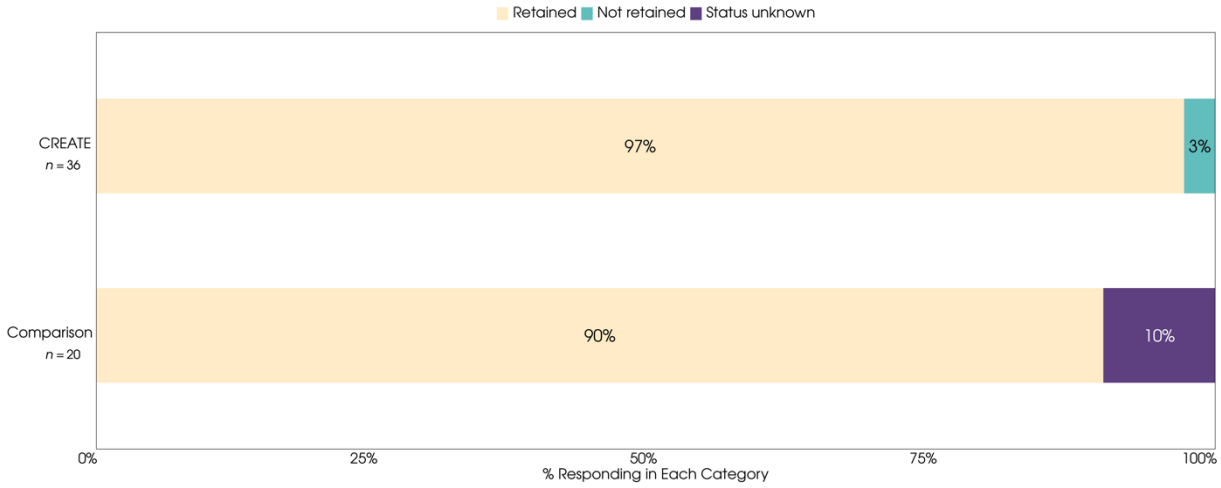


FIGURE 18. PERCENTAGES OF COHORT 6, 7, AND 8 TEACHERS GRADUATED BY CONDITION AMONG MATCHED SAMPLES FOR BLACK EDUCATORS

Retention Rates at Time Point 2 for Black Educators: Teaching in Year 1 (Cohorts 6 and 7)

Table 17 and Figure 19 display Black educator retention rates in year 1 of teaching for the matched sample of CREATE and comparison group participants in Cohorts 6 and 7, as well as the numbers and percentages of individuals who did not become teachers of record that year or whose status could not be confirmed (termed "status unknown").

TABLE 17. COHORTS 6 AND 7 RETENTION IN TEACHING IN YEAR 1 OUTCOMES FOR BLACK EDUCATORS (MATCHED SAMPLE): RETAINED, NOT RETAINED, AND STATUS UNKNOWN

	Retained	Not retained	Status unknown
Graduated			
CREATE	26 (96.3%)	1 (3.7%)	0 (0.0%)
Comparison	11 (84.6%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (15.4%)
Teaching in Year 1			
CREATE	25 (92.6%)	2 (7.4%)	0 (0.0%)
Comparison	12 (92.3%)	1 (7.7%)	0 (0.0%)

Note. Some percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

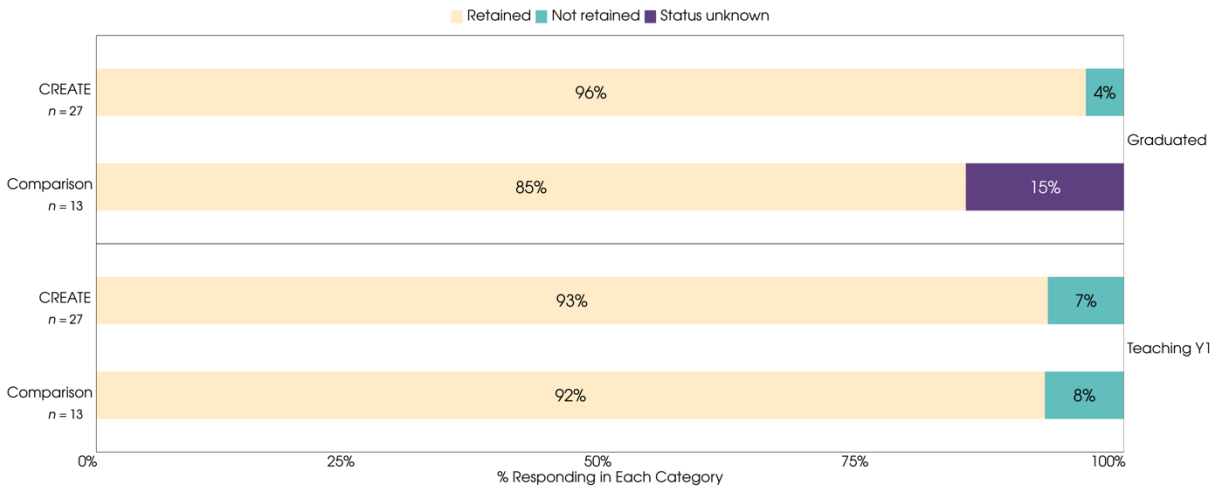


FIGURE 19. PERCENTAGES OF COHORT 6 AND 7 TEACHERS RETAINED IN YEAR 1 BY CONDITION AMONG MATCHED SAMPLES FOR BLACK EDUCATORS

Retention Rates at Time Point 3 for Black Educators: Teaching in Year 2 (Cohort 6)

Table 18 and Figure 20 display Black educator retention rates in year 2 of teaching for the matched sample of CREATE and comparison group participants in Cohort 6, as well as the numbers and percentages of individuals who did not become teachers of record that year or whose status could not be confirmed (termed "status unknown").

TABLE 18. COHORT 6 RETENTION IN TEACHING IN YEAR 2 OUTCOMES FOR BLACK EDUCATORS (MATCHED SAMPLE): RETAINED, NOT RETAINED, AND STATUS UNKNOWN

	Retained	Not retained	Status unknown
Graduated			
CREATE	11 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Comparison	8 (80.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (20.0%)
Teaching in Year 1			
CREATE	11 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Comparison	10 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Teaching in Year 2			
CREATE	10 (90.9%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0.0%)
Comparison	10 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)

Note. Some percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

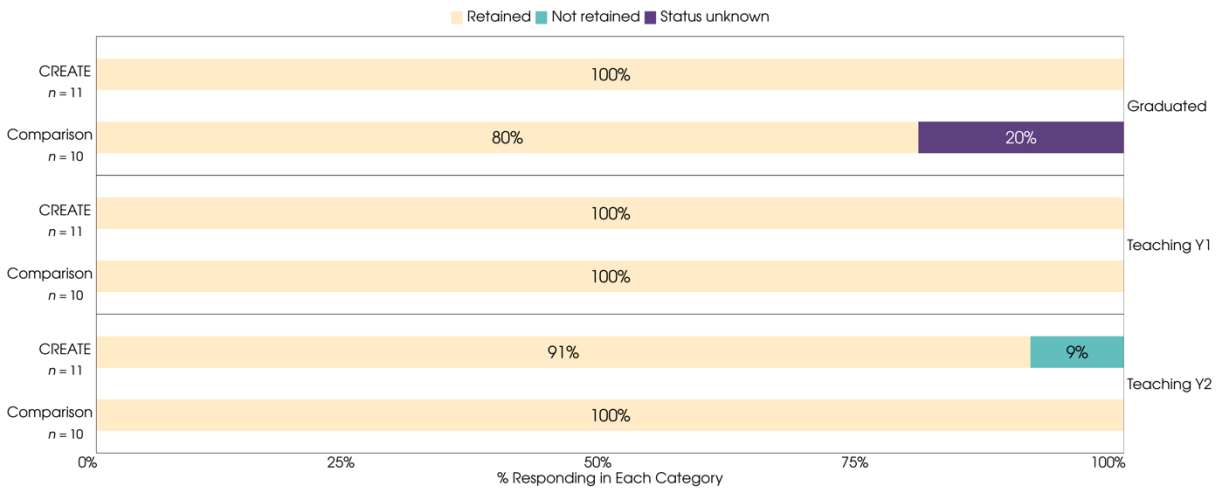


FIGURE 20. PERCENTAGES OF COHORT 6 TEACHERS RETAINED IN YEAR 2 BY CONDITION AMONG MATCHED SAMPLES FOR BLACK EDUCATORS

Summary of Findings for the Sample of Black Educators

Retention rates among Black educators were virtually identical across CREATE and comparison groups, with nearly 100% retained at each stage. For this reason, formal statistical tests were unnecessary. This group similarity likely explains the differences between the current findings and those in the earlier i3 report. In the current study, Black educators were not only retained at the same rate across conditions, but retention rates were higher for Black educators than for non-Black educators, irrespective of condition. That is, we reject the null hypothesis of equal retention rates for Black educators and non-Black educators, with retention of Black educators exceeding that of non-Black educators at graduation and as teachers of record in the first and second years after graduation, with the *p* value for the test of difference in retention rates being less than .05 at each of the three stages (see results in Appendix K). These results suggest that the standard teacher preparation program at GSU CEHD is now achieving much greater success in promoting and retaining Black educators than during the i3 study period, with both CREATE and BAU supporting near-perfect retention of Black educators through the second year.

SUMMARY OF RETENTION ANALYSIS FINDINGS

The retention analysis found no statistically significant impact of CREATE on graduation rates, retention into a first year of teaching, or retention into the second year of teaching.

Additionally, graduation and retention rates through the first and second year of teaching among Black educators within the matched samples were close to 100% across conditions. Thus, there was no room for improvement in either condition, and no opportunity to demonstrate an effect of CREATE against a counterfactual condition that produced less favorable result. The biggest takeaway is that CREATE, like the standard BAU condition, achieves near-perfect success in retention among Black educators.

Chapter 6. Scaling of CREATE in the Classroom, School, and District

PURPOSE AND THEORETICAL FRAMING

As mentioned in Chapter 1, CREATE has received multiple federal grants since 2015 to support its work. In an effort to help CREATE leadership consider ways to expand and sustain the program beyond SEED funding, we examined the facilitators and barriers to **scaling**—in classrooms, schools, and the district—as part of our external evaluation. To do this, we drew from Coburn's (2003) conception of scaling to design individual interviews with CREATE participants.

Coburn (2003) contends that "scale-up" of a school reform or initiative must extend beyond traditional measures of "the number of teachers, schools, or districts involved" (p. 3). This expanded conceptualization of scale moves away from the idea of replication toward conceptual, organizational, and philosophical changes that can be sustained over time. Coburn (2003) argues that an expanded definition of scalability should include the following.

- **Depth.** In order "to be 'at scale', reforms must affect deep and consequential change in classroom practice"; meaning, "change that goes beyond surface structures or procedures (such as changes in materials, classroom organization, or the addition of specific activities) to alter teachers' beliefs, norms of social interaction, and pedagogical principles as enacted in the curriculum" and changes in the teachers' underlying assumptions about pedagogical principles and expectations of students and how students learn (p. 4).
- **Sustainability.** Sustainability refers to the distribution, adoption, and long-term maintenance of an innovation. As noted by Coburn (2003), "Externally developed school reforms may be especially vulnerable to [sustainability challenges] because implementation typically involves a short-term influx of resources, professional development, and other forms of assistance to facilitate implementation that dissipates over time as external developers turn their attention to other sites" (p. 6). Exacerbating this are competing priorities in schools, changing demands on the schools, and teacher and administrator turnover. Thus, scale examines the extent to which the innovation is sustained in schools at various stages of implementation and subsequent sites.
- **Spread.** Spread includes increasing numbers of classrooms and schools implementing a program within a district, but also represents the extent to which there is expansion "of underlying beliefs, norms, and principles to additional classrooms and schools… [as well as] the potential to spread reform-related norms and pedagogical principles *within* a classroom, school, and district" (p. 7).
- **Shift in reform ownership.** The last characteristic of scale of a program is ownership over the reform; meaning, the program is "no longer an 'external' reform, controlled by a reformer, but rather becomes an 'internal' reform with authority for the reform held by districts, schools, and teachers who have the capacity to sustain, spread, and deepen reform principles themselves" (p. 7).

The interviews aimed to explore these scaling concepts through the mechanisms in which CREATE participants enact CREATE's mission and vision in their professional roles, as well as by identifying the key assets and barriers that influence both their individual practice and the broader implementation of CREATE within their school contexts.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided our interviews.

✨ Research Questions about Scaling CREATE ✨

8. How do CREATE participants embody CREATE's mission and vision in their professional roles?
9. What school-level supports and barriers do CREATE participants experience when attempting to embody CREATE's mission and vision?
10. In what ways does the district support or impede the implementation of CREATE's mission and vision?

The findings presented in this chapter inform the extent to which CREATE can be scaled across classrooms, schools, and the district, as outlined in the chapter summary.

PARTICIPANT SAMPLE

Since the goal of the interviews was to understand the potential school- and district-level mechanisms that facilitate program expansion and sustainability efforts, we recruited CREATE participants from each branch of our larger evaluation study to understand assets and barriers to scaling from multiple perspectives: (1) the resident study, (2) the CT study, and (3) the experienced educator study. Although not previously mentioned, experienced educators are veteran teachers and leaders who attend CREATE PL opportunities as part of the Community Engagement and Continuing Education branch of CREATE programming. The experienced educator study provides feedback to support process improvement for CREATE and to better understand how CREATE PL influences the professional practice of veteran educators across the district.

Specifically, we interviewed two first-year teachers from Cohort 6 and two second-year teachers from Cohort 7 of the resident study, four CTs, and four experienced educators. Table 19 provides details about each participant's demographics at the time of the interview; this includes how long the school they worked at was a CREATE school.

TABLE 19. INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Pseudonym	Participant type	Role	Years of teaching experience	Grade level	Tenure of school with CREATE[b]	Race	Gender
Participant A	Experienced Educator	School Administrator	20	3-5	8	White	Female
Participant B	Resident	Teacher	2	5	8	Black	Female
Participant C	Resident	Teacher	1	4	8	Asian	Female
Participant D	CT	Teacher	29	7	2	Black	Male
Participant E	Experienced Educator	Interventionist	14	Elementary[a]	8	Black	Female
Participant F	Resident	Teacher	2	6	5	Black	Female
Participant G	Resident	Teacher	1	7	1	Black	Female
Participant H	CT	Teacher	16	1	4	Black	Female
Participant I	CT	Teacher	8	2	7	Declined to State	Female
Participant J	Experienced Educator	Instructional Coach	21	Middle[a]	2	Black	Female
Participant K	Experienced Educator	Teacher	21	6-8	7	White	Male
Participant L	CT	Teacher	7	6-8	5	Declined to State	Female

[a] Some participants worked across grade levels and/or did not specify a grade band.

[b] Some schools joined CREATE before the external evaluation began in the 2015–16 school year, eight years prior to these interviews. However, our records for classifying CREATE schools only extend back eight years, which represents the longest tenure available in our data.

We excluded CREATE participants from Cohort 8, who were in their student teaching year, because pre-service student teachers may have a limited understanding of the broader context of their field site beyond the classrooms in which they student teach. To understand aspects of scaling, such as spread and shift in reform ownership, we felt that participants must have a strong understanding of their school setting.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Between May and June 2023, our team conducted 60-minute semi-structured interviews with 12 participants via Zoom. The interview protocol (see Appendix L for the full list of questions) began by prompting participants to reflect on their perceptions of CREATE's mission and vision, and how they embody them within their own professional practice.

Vision

"A critically-conscious, compassionate and skilled educator for every student."

Mission

"To build and nurture a thriving community of educators committed to practices of teaching that prioritize racial justice and interrupt inequities" (GSU 2020).

Often, questions about embodying CREATE's mission and vision included a discussion of how participants enact CREATE within their classroom (if a resident or CT) or in their mentorship roles (if a CT or experienced educator), unearthing evidence of depth and shift in reform ownership. Many participants underwent deep transformations in their own work, but also took it upon themselves to spread CREATE's teachings. Subsequent interview questions about school-level supports and barriers, as well as district support, helped us understand sustainability, spread, and shift in reform ownership.

DATA ANALYSIS

In qualitative inquiry, the goal of data analysis is to identify meaningful answers to research questions, with the findings often expressed as categories or themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). These are developed through a process of coding, which involves assigning short-hand labels to segments of data to facilitate retrieval and comparison (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 199). Once codes are established, they are grouped and synthesized into broader themes or categories that capture recurring patterns or significant concepts. This process is central to **thematic analysis**, a flexible and widely used method for analyzing qualitative data, which is also our method of analysis in this study. Guided by Braun and Clarke (2006), we followed six recursive phases of thematic analysis: (1) review and familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes by grouping similar codes, (4) cross-referencing derived themes with participant excerpts, (5) refining, defining, and naming themes through ongoing analysis, and (6) weaving a compelling story with participant excerpts in a final report. Whether inductive (data-driven) or deductive (theory-driven), thematic analysis provides a structured yet adaptable framework for interpreting complex datasets and constructing rich, grounded insights (Nowell et al., 2017). Together, these approaches yielded a systematic process for organizing and analyzing data to uncover meaning and to answer our research questions.

Our coding process was largely deductive, guided by our research questions and interview protocol, which we designed using Coburn's (2003) conception of scale. Using a deductive approach helped us decide which data to focus on and which themes to include in our final analysis. While we used a deductive approach, we did not limit the number of themes that arose in our initial list of codes. If codes were similar, we merged them into a single concept. For example, after round one of coding, we combined several codes describing how participants embody CREATE—"cohort support/co-teaching," "connect non-CREATE colleagues to resources," and "mentorship"—into the code "peer and expert mentorship," to capture the larger idea that CREATE participants prioritize peer support and formal mentorship in their schools. After three rounds of refining the original codes to combine similar ideas and define them, we grouped them into themes. For

example, we grouped several codes under school support, including "substitute teachers," "books," and "PD funds," under the theme "Funds and Resources."

We have included a comprehensive table of codes derived from our thematic analysis in Appendix M. Additionally, we have provided a working definition for each code, along with a participant quote to illustrate its application.

FINDINGS

This section organizes findings by research question. We address each research question through central themes derived from thematic analysis, which we further operationalize through participant quotes that illustrate each theme. We selected quotes that most clearly illustrate each theme to keep the findings as brief as possible, since even modest qualitative data collection yields large volumes of rich, descriptive data. Because of this, we do not quote each participant the same number of times; however, we include at least one quote from each participant in the findings.

How CREATE Participants Embody CREATE's Mission and Vision in Their Professional Roles

In relation to Coburn's (2003) conception of scale, research question 8 aimed to unpack the **depth** of implementation by understanding how educators have transformed their beliefs, norms of social interaction, and pedagogical principles because of their engagement with CREATE. Several themes emerged when analyzing participant responses about how they embody CREATE's mission and vision in their professional roles. Specifically, participants discussed the transformation of their (a) mindset, (b) worldview, (c) relationship orientation, and (d) curriculum and pedagogy. We describe each of these themes in detail, below.

Mindset: Committed Advocates and Lifelong Learners

According to the educators we interviewed, CREATE teachers view themselves as committed advocates, trailblazers, and servant-leaders who strive to champion equity, inclusion, and wellness for all students and colleagues. They describe working to ensure that every individual—regardless of background—feels supported, seen, and celebrated. In the face of limited resources, they report actively seeking out support to meet their school community's needs. When structural barriers threaten the well-being of students or teachers, these educators say they pursue collaborative solutions to address and dismantle those obstacles.

For example, when one parent challenged a student's access to LGBTQ+ literature through the school library, a resident we interviewed responded, "Until there's something in writing, she's allowed to express herself and check those books out. She's in fifth grade." Rather than avoiding difficult conversations with caregivers, this resident leaned in with courage and care, describing their mindset as "Are y'all ready? Because I'm ready. Because we're about to have a chat." (Participant F, 2023)

Through reflections like these, participants positioned themselves as trusted and courageous leaders in their communities. They strive to put students first and, through intensive training and preparation with CREATE, cultivate unwavering dedication to student achievement and well-being. Additionally, because CREATE equips them with the tools to prevent burnout, maintain resilience, and thrive, interviewees also described being committed to teaching for the long haul. As one resident explained, CREATE's mission is about "career field longevity" and "creating resilient teachers… who persevere" (Participant F, 2023). CREATE cultivates communities of support that promote long-term retention in the field.

In addition to their advocacy and resilience, interviewees told us they adopt a mindset of lifelong learning. One experienced educator shared that CREATE helps teachers understand "that change is always happening" (Participant E,

2023) and encourages them to continue growing. The educators we interviewed believe that learning never stops, regardless of experience, and they remain open to acquiring new skills, adopting evolving practices, and embracing fresh perspectives. In a constantly shifting educational landscape, these educators strive to adapt, improve, and lead with purpose.

Worldview: Systems-Aware, Justice-Oriented, and Wellness-Centered

The educators we interviewed described grounding their work in antiracist and systems-aware frameworks. They discussed critically examining oppressive structures and recognizing the deep connections between history, society, and schooling. Through what they characterized as an equity lens, these teachers described striving to promote justice in education by acknowledging personal biases, honoring the brilliance of Black culture, and embracing culturally relevant, responsive, and sustaining pedagogies. As one CT explained, CREATE's focus on equity expanded their perspective and offered a sense of safety: "One of the lectures I went to was about Black dialect… how it's a language in itself. I was just like, oh, this is great. This is a safe space for me." (Participant L, 2023)

Participants also described gaining a deeper understanding of the geopolitical and systemic forces that shape education. Several highlighted how CREATE increased their awareness of the ways local and national histories, politics, and social dynamics impact students' lives and learning environments. One CT reflected: "It's just making you consciously aware of what's going on in the world, what's going on with your students… all those different aspects that go into teaching besides just teaching kids." (Participant I, 2023)

Educators framed this broadened perspective as equipping them to identify and challenge structural inequities—such as the school-to-prison pipeline—and to disrupt those systems through both their teaching and advocacy. Importantly, they emphasized approaching this work without adopting a savior mentality, instead aiming to serve and uplift students authentically and respectfully.

Interviewees also consistently emphasized a parallel focus on wellness and resilience, for both themselves and their students, as central to their professional mindset. They described being taught to recognize the emotional demands of teaching and to establish healthy boundaries that allow them to sustain their work within oppressive systems. Educators identified practices like mindfulness, intentional reflection, and emotional check-ins as tools to help them maintain balance and model emotional awareness for students. One resident elaborated:

> Teacher's emotions and life experiences can directly impact the classroom atmosphere and students' feelings. So, I learned how to pause. For example, I know my limitations… and knowing that if I'm struggling in my personal life, I should speak up and tell people that "Hey, I need a break," or "Hey, I need some help." And also, I feel like because I'm paying attention to my own emotions, I will pay attention to my students' emotions too. In my classroom, I also share with them the same things that I learned from CREATE. Sometimes, kids came to me exhausted. I told them, "How about let's go out for a walk?" I actually take my students out for a walk during class whenever they need it. (Participant C, 2023)

Participants suggested that these approaches help buffer both teachers and students against the psychological toll of inequitable schooling, fostering inclusive and nurturing environments where everyone can thrive.

Relationship Orientation: Rooted in Connection, Community, and Compassion

Many participants described themselves as deeply relationship-oriented, approaching their work through authentic human connection, collaboration, and mutual care. They spoke about intentionally building community within their

schools by forming meaningful connections with fellow residents, colleagues, students, and families. One CT reflected on how learning to be present and intentional during community-building practices shifted their perspective on its importance:

> So when I first started at this school, we would start off [meetings] with connections, and I was like, what is this? I would be on my phone. I was irritated. I was like, I can be doing a million other things right now than this. And it wasn't until we had that CREATE training… to live in the silence, no matter if it was just 10 minutes, just be present in the moment, whatever you're feeling in yourself, it's very therapeutic. So, I then start to transition that into the classroom… when I saw my students were just—full transparency—off the hook, I was like, "What's wrong? All y'all had sugar this morning?" We will start our day with connections and just find a quiet spot, and just set the 10-minute timer, and just let the feelings come out. Sometimes connections would be silly. Sometimes we find out a family member passed away. It very much so allowed an opportunity to build more of a community within the classroom. (Participant L, 2023)

Participants described valuing vulnerability, openness, and feedback, which they intentionally modeled for students to encourage meaningful and respectful peer relationships. They recalled that these moments often sparked powerful learning opportunities. One experienced educator recounted a meaningful exchange between a white student and a Black student about Black hair:

> "Why is your hair different all the time?" … She was like, "My hair just looks like this every day all the time." Then that prompted a whole conversation between the three of us, which was actually really nice. Because I think [the Black student] felt a little taken aback by the statement or didn't really understand where it was coming from. Then as it turned out, [the white student] really was saying… "I really like that you can do your hair different." It was such a nice learning moment for everybody. (Participant E, 2023)

Participants framed relationships with students and among students as central to their effectiveness. They spoke about leading with love, praise, and compassion, grounded in the belief that all children can learn and thrive. As one resident described: "…[my classroom is] going to sound like bolstering and blustering conversations... And I'm giving my commitment and students are giving theirs... And it's going to always, always, always look as if I love the students." (Participant F, 2023)

Educators also shared that they aim to meet students with grace and empathy, particularly when external challenges influence behavior or performance, while still maintaining high expectations. They described these individual connections as deepening student engagement and fostering classrooms rooted in trust, joy, and mutual accountability.

Collaboration, according to participants, is equally essential to CREATE's mentorship model. Interviewees emphasized the value of mentors—experienced educators who have undergone identity work and training by CREATE to support pre-service and early career teachers. Participants described these relationships as dynamic, grounded in "critical friendship," and centered on mutual growth. One resident reflected on the strength of this mentorship:

> I didn't know that a mentor could help you that much. I do have a mentor from my school, but I try to not to bother her as much as I can. But the mentor that I got from CREATE, I feel like we really developed a strong relationship, and I can lean on them sometimes when I struggle… They have a very strong teaching background. They're very hands-on. They know a lot of things, and I don't have that much fear… they encouraged me to keep going. (Participant C, 2023)

Participants suggested that these relational practices between colleagues and students create environments where educators feel sustained, students feel affirmed, and learning communities can flourish.

Curriculum And Pedagogy: Intentional, Inclusive, and Empowering

The educators we interviewed described themselves as highly trained and skilled, approaching teaching with intentionality, inclusivity, and a holistic lens. In addition to their traditional credentialing program, they receive extensive preparation through CREATE, which includes deep dives into promising practices such as backward design, purposeful lesson planning, and differentiation. Their training goes beyond effective instruction in core academic subjects to include mindfulness, SEL, and culturally and historically responsive pedagogy (CHRP) (Muhammad, 2020; Muhammad, 2023). One resident emphasized how central identity work is to this preparation:

> [CREATE teachers] are really dedicated to planning. They really push backward design and identity… It looks like teachers being very secure within themselves and not really pushing their beliefs, but creating an atmosphere where kids are able to… see themselves within their education… Students have a lot of voice in the classroom, and the teacher's really just facilitating the atmosphere. (Participant B, 2023)

According to participants, their classrooms center student voice and agency, with educators acting as facilitators who, in their words, "set the intentions, and then the kids just run with it" (Participant B, 2023). They said this foundation equips them to foster academic growth while also leading equity-centered conversations with confidence and care. One CT described effective educators as "humanitarians first" (Participant D, 2023)—people able to hold space for diverse perspectives and empower students to think critically. Reflecting on this, they shared the kinds of questions they often ask themselves: "Am I doing the talking? Am I trying to plant seeds in students' heads about what they should be?... Is it my job to indoctrinate them or is it my job to make them think?" (Participant D, 2023)

Teachers also framed their approach as rooted in deep identity work. They described continually examining their own biases to better serve all students equitably and wholeheartedly. Participants said they promote inquiry, encourage independent thinking, and guide students toward drawing informed conclusions using credible sources. They characterized their classrooms as inclusive, co-created spaces where power is shared, all voices are valued, and every student feels safe, affirmed, and respected. Even in politically charged environments, teachers reported remaining committed to CHRP and truth-telling—affirming students' lived experiences while challenging systemic inequities. As one resident put it: "How do we make the standards of teaching work for us but still be able to teach the truth and liberate students?" (Participant F, 2023)

Several participants also emphasized the importance of building strong, trusting relationships with families as part of this holistic approach to teaching. They shared examples of actively partnering with parents and caregivers, honoring their insights and cultural knowledge in the classroom. One resident described their weekly Family Day:

> Family Day is once a week… We eat together—sometimes outside, depending on the weather. Parents push in to bring food, read books, or just spend an hour in the classroom. It really made a difference… A lot of our scholars' parents are in transition, so the social worker can meet with them, or we can check in about grades. Sometimes I FaceTime parents so they can see the work happening in the classroom. All the kids are waiting in line, loving the oohs and ahhs from their parents. (Participant B, 2023)

Educators described these innovative and welcoming practices within the classroom as helping to deepen home-school connections and enhancing their ability to understand and meet the full needs of each student.

Aligned with this commitment to holistic care, participants explained that they rely on restorative and relational approaches to classroom management rather than punitive discipline. They described focusing on consistent routines, strong relationships, and close attention to students' emotional realities. As one resident explained: "Sometimes it's better to take a step back. [The student] might be triggered by something else going on at home. So just giving them grace and saying, 'Go take a break, then we'll talk calmly.'" Such thoughtful approaches not only de-escalate conflict but also build mutual trust. "That really helped build relationships… students would come to me for help resolving conflicts with others" (Participant G, 2023). By addressing the root causes of behavior with empathy and care, and working collaboratively with students and families, participants suggested that they are better able to tailor both academic and social-emotional strategies to help every learner thrive.

Depth of Practice: Insights from Research Question 8

In alignment with Coburn's (2003) conception of scale, this research question explored the depth of CREATE's impact by examining how educators transformed their beliefs, social interactions, and pedagogical practices. Findings revealed four interrelated themes—mindset, worldview, relationship orientation, and curriculum and pedagogy—that illustrate how teachers internalized and enacted CREATE's mission. Participants described a shift in mindset toward advocacy, resilience, and lifelong learning; they embraced a justice-oriented worldview rooted in systemic awareness and emotional wellness; their approach to relationships was marked by intentional community-building, cultural humility, and compassionate mentorship; and instructionally, CREATE educators demonstrated a commitment to culturally sustaining pedagogy, restorative practices, and meaningful family engagement. These transformations reflect deep implementation, as educators not only described adopting new strategies but also embodying new ways of thinking, relating, and teaching in pursuit of equity and holistic student success.

School-based Support and Barriers to Embodying CREATE's Mission and Vision

Building on Coburn's (2003) conception of scale, research question 9 explores the spread, sustainability, and shift in ownership of CREATE, by examining the contextual conditions that either support or hinder educators' ability to embody CREATE's mission and vision. Participants identified a broad range of school-based supports that enabled them to integrate CREATE-aligned practices into their work. These included (a) leadership support, (b) collaboration with CREATE alumni and co-teachers, (c) hiring and evaluation standards aligned with CREATE values, (d) access to funds and material resources, (e) coaching and implementation support, (f) PL communities and affinity spaces, (g) connection and collaboration with students' families, and (h) a supportive school culture and community alignment with CREATE's ideals.

At the same time, participants also reported several barriers that limited their ability to implement CREATE-aligned practices with fidelity. These challenges included (a) competing priorities, (b) limited time for implementation, (c) ineffective communication structures, (d) lack of leadership buy-in, (e) absence of accountability mechanisms, (f) colleagues resistant to change, (g) school culture misalignment, and (h) general disconnects between CREATE's values and the broader institutional context.

The following sections examine these supports and barriers in greater detail, highlighting the complex dynamics that shape the implementation of equity-centered teacher development.

Support 1: Leadership Support

A commonly identified enabler of CREATE implementation across interviews was school leadership, including principals, assistant principals, deans, and similar roles. These leaders played a pivotal role in supporting the success of CREATE by recognizing its assets (e.g., equity-focused PL, community building, wellness support), aligning school culture and priorities with CREATE's mission, and advocating for educators who embody CREATE values in their classrooms and professional relationships.

One experienced educator and school leader underscored the importance of CREATE's wellness supports, acknowledging that the program offers individualized care and professional growth opportunities that the school alone cannot provide:

> …CREATE support allows new teachers to work here, get acclimated to the environment, do the work with CREATE, do all of their wellness work and their meditation, and they're working through all different aspects of being a quality teacher while adjusting to the challenge of [teaching]. We always say we only really hire first-year teachers if they're in CREATE because we recognize we can't give the support… CREATE is critical to that for us for sure. (Participant A, 2023)

Participant A's reflection suggests that without sustained support from CREATE—such as, if grant funding ended—some schools may face significant challenges in maintaining the holistic PL and wellness programming that CREATE currently provides. This raises essential considerations regarding the sustainability and ownership of reform.

Other participants emphasized the critical role of leadership in driving alignment with CREATE's values. A CT (Participant L, 2023) recalled, "If the topic of CREATE came up, the school stopped, dropped, and rolled for it… The [school leader] was like, 'We're a CREATE school. This is what we do.'" Another resident described their principal as uncompromising in their commitment to equity, positioning the school's direction firmly within CREATE's framework:

> Our principal is not really negotiable… I think what she's pushing is more of a CREATE mindset. It's like we need to be equity-focused, and our classroom needs to be culturally relevant because, like I said, the kids that we serve really need that… and they deserve those types of teachers. (Participant B, 2023)

Similarly, another resident highlighted the importance of leadership advocacy when navigating politically sensitive topics in the classroom. In contrast to schools where such conversations are restricted, this resident expressed appreciation for their leaders' open support:

> Lots of schools… you're not allowed to talk about certain things… like slavery or the history that happened in the past and tell the kids the true story… But [at my current school], we were actually allowed to talk about that. My leadership would tell us, "Yes, we are your backup. You do it." (Participant C, 2023)

School leadership emerged as a key driver of alignment with CREATE's mission and vision. By offering support, protection, and proactive advocacy, school leaders foster conditions that allow educators to fully embody CREATE ideals in their teaching and in their school communities.

Support 2: CREATE Alumni and Co-Teachers

In addition to school leadership, fellow CREATE participants—including residents, CTs, and experienced educators—and CREATE alumni were critical supports in helping educators embody CREATE's mission and vision in their professional roles. These individuals played multiple roles: recruiting new teachers into the program, modeling CREATE-aligned

practices, and facilitating conversations about equity and pedagogy during staff meetings. Their efforts often helped to sustain momentum and deepen the program's reach within school communities.

This support was especially vital in schools facing leadership turnover. In one such case, a current CREATE CT stepped in to fill the leadership gap by introducing *Coaching for Equity* by Elena Aguilar to their school's educator team. This text, a foundational resource in CREATE's training on transformational coaching, served as a springboard for PL. The proactive leadership of this CT (Participant D) demonstrates a clear shift in reform ownership; this is evidence that, even in the absence of formal leadership, educators have internalized and carried forward CREATE's core principles.

In other contexts, the CREATE co-teaching model emerged as an essential lifeline for sustaining progressive practices, particularly restorative approaches that resist traditional punitive measures, such as office referrals or suspension. Co-teaching partnerships gave teachers the confidence and capacity to try new strategies, knowing they had a trusted colleague to share the workload and reflect with in real time. For some, the co-teaching relationship was so central to their success that its loss prompted a job change. One resident described the impact of co-teaching on their ability to implement SEL supports in the classroom:

> …we are partners, and we're able to handle students' emotions more than one teacher could. We've implemented a calm-down corner, which is a tent, and we're also using a lot of sensory tools in the tent so that students can get their emotions out. We went through the [PD] for teaching social-emotional education[14]… and we're actually teaching that curriculum every single Wednesday morning. During that time, we do meditation together. (Participant C, 2023)

These examples illustrate how support from CREATE peers and alumni not only reinforces program values but also facilitates deeper implementation of equity-focused, student-centered practices, contributing to sustainability and shared ownership of reform within schools.

Support 3: Hiring and Evaluation Standards

Policy-based supports, particularly hiring and evaluation standards, emerged as important factors that made the implementation of CREATE's mission and vision smoother within some schools. While not necessarily developed as a result of CREATE, these mechanisms were pre-existing structures that reinforced the values emphasized in CREATE PL—even for teachers who had not participated directly.

For example, Participant E, an experienced educator, explained that their school's hiring process is intentionally designed to prioritize candidates whose values align with equity-focused teaching. The talent search committees screen for educators who demonstrate a commitment to equitable education for all students, helping to ensure that new hires support, rather than challenge, the school culture being cultivated. That school culture aligned with CREATE's mission and vision, in their opinion.

Participants also identified evaluation systems as a key tool for alignment. One resident noted how observation protocols and performance checklists used during walkthroughs mirrored what they had learned in CREATE training, facilitating their implementation of CREATE's mission and vision and encouraging other educators to do the same:

[14] Reviewing Participant C's transcript, it was unclear if CREATE or the school/district provided the SEL PL and curriculum.

> …even our checklist and our tasks when we have walkthroughs, they front-load the things they're looking for. To me, it's always aligned with what I was taught in CREATE... Some teachers get annoyed like, "Why do we have to do all of this?" They don't really see the impact until the end of the school year. (Participant B, 2023)

Much like leadership support, these policies and practices can amplify CREATE's influence across a broader teaching force. By virtue of their alignment with CREATE's values, hiring and evaluation practices helped to reinforce equitable, student-centered approaches, even when formal CREATE PL opportunities are limited. This alignment also supports spread and sustainability, as CREATE's core values are echoed in systemic structures that shape educator behavior and development over time.

Support 4: Funds & Resources

Access to dedicated funds and material resources was a crucial factor in enabling the successful implementation of CREATE-aligned practices. Participants highlighted several forms of logistical and financial support that facilitated their participation in CREATE PL and extended its impact in their schools. These included coverage by substitute teachers to enable attendance at PL meetings, payment of CREATE PL fees by schools or districts, and built-in release time for PL. According to participants, schools that invested in CREATE-recommended books and instructional resources were better positioned to sustain and deepen the learning beyond the initial training period.

One participant described being situated in a resource-rich school that actively reinforced CREATE's values through a wide range of material supports built into its budget, likely because this school was one of the founding sites for CREATE. These resources included reimbursement for classroom supplies, wellness funds for staff, culturally responsive celebrations supported by the school, and even access to food from a community garden. Some of these initiatives reflect the efforts of a highly engaged Parent Teacher Association (PTA), which extended PTA support not only to teachers, but also to families and students in culturally affirming ways.

The PTA's involvement in promoting and funding CREATE-aligned initiatives was significant, as it suggested a broader diffusion of CREATE's mission beyond individual classrooms and into the wider school community:

> … when I talk about the Lunar New Year celebration… the parents' association funded $1,000 for us. So that's what we use that money to get the lion dance, and we're able to order some Chinese food… also, the school cafeteria, our school makes food from scratch by the chef team. And they will change their menu based on holidays or festival, things like that. (Participant C, 2023)

This signals the potential for sustainability, as these parent- and school-provided resources institutionalize and normalize the conditions needed for long-term implementation. At the same time, it is noteworthy that this particular school has partnered with CREATE since 2012, a detail that underscores how deep reform and a shift toward shared ownership for sustainability may take considerable time to achieve.

Support 5: Coaching and Implementation Support

Access to mentor teachers and instructional coaches was another key support that helped participants implement CREATE-aligned practices, even when those coaches were not directly affiliated with CREATE. Participants emphasized that effective coaching, particularly when it aligned with CREATE values, could enhance their ability to implement equitable, student-centered strategies in the classroom. For example, one resident described how their instructional coach provided complementary tools and guidance that supported the implementation of CREATE practices:

> My [non-CREATE] instructional coach gave me more strategies [beyond CREATE] on how to differentiate and include standards of excellence for Georgia's educational system… It's as if the instructional coach provided strategies that were in tandem with CREATE's strategies. Though [my instructional coach and CREATE] didn't really speak that much together, it was still a piece to the puzzle to make everything match in a lesson. (Participant F, 2023)

This reflection highlights how alignment between site-based coaching and CREATE's equity framework—whether intentional or incidental—can reinforce teacher learning and expand the reach of CREATE principles. Even in the absence of direct coordination between CREATE and school-based coaches, participants benefited from consistent messaging and strategy overlap, which supported implementation at the classroom level.

This theme speaks to both spread and sustainability. The alignment between CREATE and non-CREATE coaching infrastructures enables the diffusion of reform ideas beyond the formal program structure. At the same time, it supports sustainability by embedding ongoing guidance and development within the school system, allowing CREATE-aligned practices to persist over time through broader PL networks.

Support 6: Professional Learning and Affinity Groups

Participants expressed strong motivation and an increased capacity to implement CREATE-aligned practices when their schools provided equity-focused PL that complemented CREATE programming. In some cases, schools' PL opportunities happened to align with CREATE's mission and vision, while at other times, they were directly inspired by CREATE content. For example, as mentioned earlier, one CREATE CT (Participant D) introduced *Coaching for Equity* to their staff and built shared learning experiences around transformational coaching—an initiative that demonstrates both a school-wide commitment to equity and a shift toward reform ownership by educators themselves.

Educators described pre-existing professional learning communities (PLCs) as important mechanisms for deepening and spreading CREATE-aligned practices. One resident highlighted the role of an established PLC that allowed social studies teachers to collaboratively plan instruction on sensitive or potentially divisive topics, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict. Within this existing structure, CREATE-trained educators were able to bring forward practices and perspectives that shaped collective decision-making:

> We had a PLC with other social studies teachers… so, for example, when we were talking about the issue with Israel and Palestine… We didn't have any Jewish students in my classes. However, some of the other social studies teachers had Jewish students in their classes... and had to be very diplomatic about their answers. Whereas, we held a little debate with our students and they came up with their own conclusions, and it was very interesting, to say the least. (Participant G, 2023)

This example illustrates both depth of practice through thoughtful and nuanced planning and a shift in ownership, as CREATE-trained educators influenced the norms of pedagogical decision-making within pre-existing PLCs. At the same time, these efforts contributed to the spread of CREATE's values across the school, reaching colleagues who may not have received formal CREATE training.

In contrast, some initiatives were newly formed with CREATE involvement. Affinity groups, for example, emerged as powerful tools for building community and sustaining CREATE commitments. One experienced educator who underwent training by CREATE described the impact of forming an African-American affinity group—a space that was initiated by them and embraced by the broader school culture:

> One thing that we did as an African-American staff is we formed an affinity group… Just having an affinity group is one way that we were able to come together and discuss things with each other, just be around each other… I feel like I keep saying it but… having the space to do that, it's not something that we had to keep a secret or be quiet about. (Participant E, 2023)

Participant E highlighted that the school's openness to affinity-based reflection and growth made it possible for this group to thrive and for CREATE-aligned values of identity, equity, and healing-centered work to take root more broadly. These spaces allowed educators to engage deeply with the work and laid a foundation for sustainable implementation.

Taken together, these examples illustrate depth, spread, and a shift in reform ownership. CREATE educators are not only applying their training in their own classrooms but also influencing pedagogical practice and shaping the broader professional culture of their schools, whether through leveraging existing structures or initiating new, equity-focused opportunities.

Support 7: Connection and Support from Students' Families

Several participants reflected on the essential role that students' families played in supporting the implementation of CREATE's mission and vision. Family involvement appeared in both material and relational forms. In some schools, families—often through the PTA—provided funding and resources to support culturally affirming experiences, such as international holiday celebrations and cultural learning events. As one resident shared, their school's PTA helped organize and fund schoolwide efforts to honor diverse cultural traditions, reinforcing CREATE's emphasis on culturally and historically responsive pedagogy (Participant C, 2023).

In other cases, families engaged more directly in classroom learning by participating in culturally responsive instruction. One CT described how parents actively contributed to the curriculum by sharing personal and family stories, facilitating cultural discussions, and offering firsthand insight into students' identities and backgrounds:

> We are being supported—mainly by admin and parents. Parents are in the room… [For example,] we had Hanukkah and a parent came to talk about it, and [Parents share about] any other differences students have—names, the history behind them, and where they come from. Grandparents come in and talk about that… There are no barriers to me talking about and implementing CREATE's mission. And I think it's safe to say—it's not just my classroom, it's our school. (Participant H, 2023)

This testimony is particularly powerful evidence of spread, as the participant makes it clear that culturally responsive engagement is not isolated to one classroom, but is a characteristic of the broader school culture. The consistent presence of families in instructional spaces and schoolwide events demonstrates an environment in which teachers can internalize CREATE's mission, while families and the broader community can embrace and reinforce the mission.

Support 8: Supportive School Culture and Community Alignment

A recurring and overarching theme across interviews was the presence of a supportive school culture aligned with CREATE's core values. Participants described feeling safe, seen, and motivated in school environments that prioritized wellness, community-building, and equity-driven practices. In such contexts, staff members expressed openness to the antiracist, liberatory ideals central to CREATE, and were receptive to the perspectives and practices that CREATE participants brought back to their schools.

This alignment was particularly meaningful when leadership reinforced it by encouraging engagement with CREATE and promotion of schoolwide initiatives. More notably, some schools offered structured planning time dedicated to discussing and implementing CREATE-aligned content—an important indicator of reform ownership. One CT described how this planning time created space for authentic, teacher-led dialogue about equity and school climate:

> They encourage us. They give us time—sometimes during planning time—for us to further the discussion… Sometimes we have discussions as a school… breakout rooms where we could just talk among ourselves… about any inequities or just however we felt about those things going on in the school. So yeah, they're very supportive. (Participant H, 2023)

These reflective spaces, free from administrative oversight, enabled educators to process challenging topics, build solidarity, and plan actionable steps aligned with CREATE's vision. In some cases, these structures were explicitly designed to support CREATE; in others, they emerged from existing school values that happened to align closely with CREATE's priorities.

Barrier 1: Competing Priorities and Curriculum Restraints

Several participants identified competing priorities as a significant barrier to implementing CREATE in their professional practice. In many cases, educators expressed a desire to engage more deeply with CREATE's mission and vision but felt constrained by the volume of other responsibilities they were expected to manage. For example, one teacher stepped away from serving as a CT, not due to a lack of commitment to the program, but because the dual demands of managing their classroom and mentoring a resident became unsustainable.

For example, high teacher turnover within schools emerged as a compounding challenge. Multiple participants noted that when staff attrition was high, school leaders were preoccupied with hiring and stabilization efforts, leaving little time or capacity to prioritize CREATE-related initiatives, even if they were philosophically aligned with its values.

Additionally, some teachers felt stifled by rigid, mandated curricula that limited the flexibility and creativity required to implement CREATE practices effectively. One resident shared the difficulty of incorporating risk-taking and culturally responsive teaching within the confines of a tightly scripted literacy curriculum:

> CREATE has these huge ideas of risk-taking in the classroom. I often tell them how difficult it is… I can't really take too many risks because, literally, I have to stick to the script—especially this year with [ELA]... If you do anything outside of that curriculum, it messes up the structure… I have more flexibility in social studies… I can implement the different things or the risk-taking that they project on us. (Participant B, 2023)

This quote highlights a critical tension: while CREATE encourages innovation, agency, and equity-centered pedagogy, the realities of mandated curriculum can limit educators' ability to implement these practices consistently, particularly across different subject areas.

Overall, these barriers illustrate the challenges of achieving consistent depth of implementation across school contexts. When educators are overwhelmed, constrained by top-down mandates, or working in unstable environments, sustaining or scaling reform efforts becomes increasingly difficult. In such cases, sustainability and shift in reform ownership are threatened, as the burden of change remains heavily dependent on individual teachers rather than being embedded within broader systems of support.

Barrier 2: Time to Implement

Closely related to competing priorities, participants identified time as a significant barrier to deeply implementing CREATE-aligned practices and expanding them to other educators within their school communities. Teachers noted that while they were philosophically aligned with CREATE's mission, authentically restructuring classroom instruction and curriculum to reflect racial and social justice principles often required additional time and effort that was not always available. One CT explained how the lack of time—not opposition to CREATE values—can limit implementation:

> If you take a look at the curriculum, it's almost like, okay, you have to talk about X, Y, and Z. And an extra effort has to be given to incorporate social justice or racial justice. It's not just laid out and mapped out for us. Those of us who've been doing the work, we make the effort to incorporate it and include it in our work. And sometimes others don't. And I don't think it's because they don't agree. I really don't… It's just the extra effort… Finding the books, going deeper than surface level—that just takes extra effort… the time constraints. (Participant H, 2023)

This reflection highlights the additional labor often required to integrate equity-based content into pre-existing curricular structures in a meaningful way. While some teachers are able and willing to invest that time, many face constraints that prevent them from doing so, especially when equity content is not embedded into curricular materials or institutional expectations.

As a result, this barrier has significant implications for both depth and spread of reform. When equity-aligned content must be self-sourced, restructured, and integrated on an individual basis, only the most resourced and committed teachers are likely to take it on. This limits the scalability of CREATE practices across a school and prevents widespread cultural or pedagogical transformation.

Barrier 3: Lack of Effective Communication Strategies

In several cases, participants observed that CREATE's influence remained siloed within individual classrooms due to a lack of structured communication strategies across school communities. Without formal mechanisms for collaboration and shared reflection, educators often missed opportunities to deepen learning and expand the reach of CREATE-aligned practices.

For example, an experienced educator (Participant K) shared that although they had attended multiple CREATE PL meetings, there were no structured opportunities to connect with residents or CTs within their school. This limited their ability to apply and expand CREATE learning through collaboration with colleagues, which in turn constrained the program's broader influence across the campus.

In other instances, participants expressed concern that poor communication practices—not just between colleagues, but between teachers and students—undermined CREATE's equity goals. One educator described troubling classroom interactions where the teacher was not acknowledging or addressing a student's emotional experiences:

> I've had experiences with students who were made to feel uncomfortable… and I know there's always two sides. But I also think when a child is telling you, "I didn't feel comfortable," that's a big deal, regardless of what their part might've been in it… I think a big thing that we learn about is about effective communication, and it's hard. I don't know that I am always seeing and hearing effective communication or effective interactions between teachers and students. (Participant E, 2023)

This example underscores how communication breakdowns can hinder both depth of practice and the spread of CREATE values. When teachers lack the tools or support to communicate effectively with students—especially when navigating issues of identity, emotion, or justice—the implementation of equity-centered practices becomes fragmented and potentially harmful.

Barrier 4: Lack of Leadership Buy-In

A notable barrier to the implementation and spread of CREATE's mission and vision was a lack of leadership buy-in. In some instances, this was the result of high turnover or shifting school priorities that diverted leadership attention elsewhere. However, in other cases, school leaders actively stifled CREATE-related conversations or gave the impression that they were disinterested in the program's values and potential. As one experienced educator (Participant K, 2023) explained, "I've heard other teachers talk and just weren't being supported. The administration wouldn't be as open to things, to discussions and things like that."

One illustrative case involved a school leader who had long championed CREATE, but encountered major roadblocks in maintaining the partnership amidst the shift in CREATE leadership. Despite a history of collaboration, this experienced educator and school leader described significant delays and breakdowns in communication when trying to bring CREATE residents into their school:

> Even in the process of getting the residents to our school… in the past, we would get an email maybe in December, like… "You want to hold a tour for some CREATE residents?" And they'd come to the school. I would be like, "Okay… Who would be a great fit for [our school]?" We'd have this ongoing dialogue and we would pick residents that ended up here who really were interested in [our school] or would be a good match. Versus this year… email after email after email not responded to. Then by the time we did get on the same page… we were on the last six [residents]… just getting the residents here was a struggle this year. (Participant A, 2023)

Deeper tensions compounded these logistical challenges. After several meetings in which this school leader felt that they were "being questioned" rather than engaged as a partner, they began to question the sustainability of their school's involvement with CREATE:

> When your success grows… you get more press and accolades… things can become cookie cutter… All these meetings, delegations, processes, templates, and agendas… you lose some of the personality or just the vibe of the work, which I do feel like CREATE is much less personalized... It's just like that personal warm fuzzy is gone. CREATE was very, very fuzzy.… dinners, coffee, books, just connecting. That's all gone… I guess I would describe… I can't think of an appropriate word for the opposite of warm and fuzzy. (Participant A, 2023)

This excerpt highlights a notable tension in scaling efforts. While systems and structures are necessary for managing growth, they can also erode the relational foundation that originally made a program impactful and beloved. The perception of increased bureaucracy and reduced personalization can alienate early adopters, threatening sustainability, diminishing the depth of practice, and potentially impeding a shift in reform ownership from external facilitators to internal school leaders. When school leaders lack buy-in or feel disconnected from the evolving identity of a program like CREATE, its reach and impact can be substantially diminished. Successful scale—particularly in human-centered

educational reforms—depends not only on formal systems but also on maintaining the trust, warmth, and relational energy that fuel long-term commitment.

Barrier 5: Lack of Accountability Structures

Another barrier to the full implementation of CREATE's mission and vision was the absence of structured accountability mechanisms. While CREATE offers extensive training, resources, and PL, some participants expressed concern that without consistent follow-through or clear expectations, its ideals may not fully take root in schools. As one experienced educator noted, the lack of accountability made it easy for staff to disengage or treat equity work as routine rather than transformative:

> What I find myself always thinking about and asking is I don't know that there's enough accountability for carrying out CREATE's mission… I don't feel like there are enough ways to show that people are actually implementing the mission and the vision. I think that creates a barrier… We're given tools. We're given lots of things… but I think because we're not being held accountable all the time, then the barrier is created. (Participant E, 2023)

This observation highlights a key tension in scaling human-centered, equity-focused reforms: how to encourage genuine engagement without promoting compliance or surveillance. Participant E acknowledged the challenge of balancing accountability with educator autonomy: "No one wants to be watched. No one wants to be check-listed. We're already observed…". Still, the absence of any structured mechanism to ensure that CREATE's tools and practices are consistently applied can limit the depth and sustainability of its impact. Without accountability, even well-intentioned educators may revert to old habits, and the potential for a shift in reform ownership—where schools internalize and uphold CREATE's values independently—may be undermined.

Barrier 6: Colleagues Resistant to Change

Some participants described resistance to change among colleagues as a significant barrier to spreading CREATE's mission and vision throughout their schools. While some teachers embraced new practices grounded in equity and student-centered learning, others—particularly those with more experience—were hesitant or unwilling to shift long-standing habits or beliefs.

This resistance took several forms. For some, it stemmed from a lack of PL around specific strategies, such as restorative practices. As one CT explained, even well-intentioned colleagues struggled to implement approaches like restorative circles due to insufficient training and support (Participant I, 2023).

Other participants framed the issue as a generational or experiential divide between newer educators—often grounded in equity training—and veteran teachers who were less responsive to evolving practices and research. One resident observed a stark difference between pockets of reflective teachers and others who were deeply rooted in outdated pedagogical norms:

> You had a pocket full of people who were very reflective and intuitive about society and how to healthily respond to that. And then you had a huge amount of people who are very tenured… and I hate to put it towards experience, but we know after a while things shift in our climate as a community… but because [of] the changes or the shifts of dynamics… it was a stark difference. (Participant F, 2023)

Another resident offered a more pointed critique, describing how some experienced teachers were resistant to innovation:

> They really don't like change… Whatever works for them, works for them… I know one teacher, I think [they're] in [their] 29th year of teaching… [They're] like, "You're trying to implement something else. Everything's constantly changing." And I'm like, "Well, if everything stays the same, then it'll stay the same." (Participant B, 2023)

This form of resistance presents a barrier to the spread of CREATE practices, particularly when school culture allows siloed implementation or lacks incentives and structures to engage all staff in change efforts. It also hinders depth, as some teachers continue to rely on outdated or misaligned methods that conflict with CREATE's equity-centered framework. Finally, this resistance undermines the shift in reform ownership, as sustaining CREATE's impact requires that schools—not just individual teachers—embrace its core principles. Overcoming this challenge may require differentiated PL, leadership modeling, and culture-building strategies that bridge generational divides and foster buy-in across levels of experience.

Barrier 7: School Culture

For some participants, the dominant culture and climate of their school served as a barrier to fully implementing CREATE's mission and vision. In particular, several participants described how existing school norms and practices sometimes overpowered or displaced the transformative approaches encouraged by CREATE. One experienced educator and school leader observed that while CREATE initially played a formative role in shaping residents' pedagogical identities, that influence can fade over time as school culture takes precedence. They reflected:

> When you're doing CREATE, you do the stuff, but then you're getting to the [school] way… I do think there's not a lot of space for it. I mean I know [the residents] all super well—I never hear them really talk about their CREATE work… maybe halfway through year two, if a resident is doing really, really well, the CREATE stuff becomes more of a formality. (Participant A, 2023)

This reflection highlights a crucial insight: without ongoing leadership support and intentional reinforcement of CREATE's values, school-based practices—especially those perceived as more practical or established—can overshadow the deeper identity and pedagogical transformation that CREATE promotes. In such cases, any depth or shift in ownership may revert to the school's traditional approaches.

Clashes between CREATE's practices and school norms were also evident in areas like student discipline. While CREATE emphasizes conscious discipline, restorative practices, and logical consequences to replace punitive approaches, participants noted that not all colleagues or school systems shared these values. These misalignments not only created tension but also limited the spread of CREATE-aligned strategies across classrooms and teams.

Barrier 8: Misalignment with CREATE's Mission and Vision

An underlying thread across many barriers to implementation was a broader misalignment between school contexts and CREATE's mission and vision. These tensions manifested in various ways, from conflicting beliefs around student discipline and instructional autonomy to misunderstandings about CREATE's role in shaping professional identity and practice. Such misalignments challenge the depth of implementation, hinder spread, and constrain a broader shift in reform ownership—all essential components of Coburn's (2003) conception of scale.

In some cases, educators described philosophical or structural rifts between their schools and CREATE. For example, one resident felt that while their school welcomed CREATE residents, there remained a fundamental disconnect in values and vision:

> I would say that [we're] not quite there yet as a CREATE school… I think as they continue to have CREATE mentors and CREATE students in their school, they can bring about those changes. But…compared to the school that I did my student teaching with, it was definitely different in that there were a lot of CREATE teachers at the school... I liked the fact that I could talk to former CREATE students in my student teaching school, but here was a little different. … Sometimes it felt like the school and CREATE's mission didn't align. (Participant G, 2023)

This reflection illustrates how uneven spread—in this case, the presence of only a few CREATE-affiliated educators in a building—can limit a school's ability to embrace or fully integrate the reform. Without a critical mass of aligned educators or consistent mentorship structures, CREATE's influence may remain siloed and struggle to achieve broader institutional change.

In other cases, some educators, especially those no longer working directly with residents, did not perceive CREATE as relevant to their current roles, even when those roles were logically aligned with CREATE's values. One former CT, who had also attended the 2022 Summer Mentor Institute, reflected on their role as an instructional coach:

> It does not [overlap with CREATE]. So let me just be totally transparent… I don't attend any trainings with CREATE… I'm not a part of that. My role is completely separate. So, I guess it would be the same as if I was like an administrator and you were asking me these questions, it'd be like, okay, how do I support [CREATE]? I can only speak from my role on how I support all teachers in the building, not necessarily CREATE. (Participant J, 2023)

This statement highlights a disconnect between the transformational coaching frameworks emphasized in the Summer Mentor Institute and other CT training, and the perceived applicability of these frameworks in non-resident coaching roles. According to Coburn, depth entails internalizing and applying new principles and norms across various contexts, rather than merely replicating specific practices. The fact that a trained CREATE mentor did not see CREATE as relevant to their instructional coach position suggests that deeper conceptual integration may not have occurred.

Interestingly, this same participant acknowledged that CREATE cultivates transferable skills—"skills that someone saw in you that could be easily transferable"—but still compartmentalized CREATE's value to a particular teaching role. This raises important questions about sustainability: if educators do not carry CREATE's frameworks with them as they shift roles or gain leadership responsibilities, then the long-term impact of the program may be diminished.

Ways in Which the District Supports or Impedes the Implementation of CREATE's Mission and Vision

Interviews revealed little information regarding district-level involvement in scaling or supporting the CREATE program (research question 10). Most participants reported being unaware of any formal district support, though one CT speculated that such support must exist "by proxy," given that CREATE operates within district schools (Participant H, 2023). This participant also observed alignment between CREATE's language and district priorities, particularly in areas such as equity and inclusion. In contrast, another CT expressed frustration with the lack of visible endorsement or marketing, describing CREATE as "a secret" and noting that opportunities to participate were not widely communicated (Participant L, 2023). They suggested that the district could do more to promote CREATE, such as appointing a "lead teacher" or assisting with recruitment efforts. Overall, the district's role remains ambiguous, with evidence of scaling concentrated at the classroom and school levels rather than across the broader APS system.

SUMMARY

Using Coburn's (2003) four dimensions of scale (depth, sustainability, spread, and shift in reform ownership), this synthesis highlights both assets and barriers to scaling the CREATE initiative. The findings suggest that while the program has generated significant transformational change at the individual and classroom levels, broader scale-up will require intentional strategies for embedding CREATE's vision and mission into school and district culture and systems.

Depth: Transforming Beliefs, Norms, and Pedagogy

What's Working

Educators across roles described experiencing profound shifts in their mindset and worldview, including (1) strengthening their commitment to advocating for students and colleagues, (2) challenging entrenched norms, and (3) adopting antiracist, student-centered, and wellness-informed practices. Many now view teaching as both an intellectual and emotional endeavor rooted in advocacy, love, and social justice. CREATE-trained educators highlighted concrete changes in their professional practice to encompass more holistic approaches, such as how they respond to student behavior, cultivate wellness, structure classroom routines, co-create CHRP curriculum, foster student voice and agency, and engage families in learning and the school community.

Challenges

Depth of practice was harder to sustain when rigid curriculum content and pacing guides left little room for adaptation, or when teachers lacked time for reform and access to age-appropriate resources to adjust their curriculum materials. Teachers also struggled to implement strategies when colleagues resisted or lacked foundational training, or when their co-teaching arrangement came to an end.

Potential CREATE Actions

- Provide a curriculum adaptation toolkit for scripted programs to reflect CHRP.
- Build a CREATE-aligned resource library (texts, lessons, protocols), organized by subject and grade band.

Sustainability: Maintaining Change Over Time

What's Working

Some schools embedded CREATE values into policies, PL structures (e.g., affinity groups, PLCs), co-teaching routines, and school culture. Many educators credited school leaders who secured funds for wellness, found substitutes for teachers to attend CREATE PL, or integrated CREATE-aligned expectations into their hiring and evaluation processes. Family involvement, often through PTA support or classroom engagement, helped reinforce long-term commitment to CREATE's vision and mission.

Challenges

Sustainability efforts were uneven. Leadership turnover, high staff attrition, and unclear district involvement threatened the ongoing momentum. Some schools relied on a single educator or a small group of educators to carry the work forward, resulting in siloed implementation.

Potential CREATE Actions

- Launch an onboarding institute for school leaders to align new administrators, educators, and staff with CREATE's mission.
- Guide schools to design a sustainability plan, including alternative funding sources and role succession.
- Facilitate school showcase events to spotlight CREATE implementation and build institutional memory.

Spread: Reaching More Classrooms, Schools, and Policies

What's Working

CREATE principles spread when embedded in hiring rubrics, evaluation protocols, and family engagement events. Teachers applied CREATE values across subjects and led critical conversations on race, identity, and justice. Importantly, students themselves emerged as key drivers of change, extending CREATE's mission beyond the classroom. One teacher shared how former students led efforts to rename a high school that was previously named after a Confederate general—a powerful example of how student agency can reflect and extend CREATE's core goals. This CT said, "I love the idea that students that I used to teach took on that, carried the torch, and pushed for change" (Participant D, 2023).

Challenges

Despite evidence of some strong school-level activity, cross-school collaborations and district-level spread remained limited. Most teachers were unsure whether the district recognized or supported CREATE. Several educators, even those engaged in the work, described CREATE as "a secret" (Participant L, 2023) within their school communities. Participant L said, "My first year there, I was like, CREATE teacher? Is that a student?"

Potential CREATE Actions

- Designate a Lead CREATE Teacher at each school with monthly responsibilities and equip them with tools and resources.
- Host cross-school learning exchanges (e.g., lesson shares, inquiry groups).
- Launch a student storytelling series to highlight how CREATE-trained educators are empowering youth to lead.
- Advocate for district recognition of CREATE (e.g., inclusion in PL catalogs, policy memos, and educator spotlights).

Shift in Reform Ownership: Internalizing and Leading the Work

What's Working

At the school level, some educators initiated CREATE-aligned structures like PLCs and staff affinity groups—evidence of emerging ownership. Co-teachers and mentors sometimes stepped into leadership roles, particularly in contexts where leadership involvement was limited. Student activism also signaled that CREATE's influence extended into community transformation.

Challenges

In many schools, CREATE work still hinged on a few highly committed individuals. Misalignments between school culture and CREATE philosophy slowed uptake (or impeded it, in at least one case), and a lack of formal accountability mechanisms sometimes made the work optional rather than institutionalized. District-level reform ownership was notably absent, at least as far as our interview participants were aware.

Potential CREATE Actions

- Build a mentor succession toolkit, and offer a yearly refresher series for CREATE alumni in leadership or coaching roles.
- Collaborate with district partners to establish a CREATE Advisory Council for long-term planning and cross-school alignment.
- Create a self-assessment protocol for schools to evaluate alignment with CREATE values and identify areas for internal ownership.

FINAL REFLECTION

The findings shared in this chapter highlight the meaningful and lasting impact that CREATE has had on educators, classrooms, and school communities. Teachers described deep shifts in mindset and practice, centering on wellness, equity, and student voice in ways that reflect CREATE's mission and values. Many schools have embraced these ideals through community-building practices, restorative approaches, and thoughtful leadership, while students themselves are taking up the work in powerful and inspiring ways.

At the same time, the data from the interviews highlights opportunities for CREATE to enhance its reach and sustainability. Scaling the initiative across a complex school system will require continued investment in structures that support alignment, collaboration, and shared ownership, especially across schools and within district systems. Participants expressed a clear desire for more visibility, communication, and coordinated support to keep the work moving forward.

Overall, the evidence suggests that CREATE has established a strong foundation. With thoughtful attention to the conditions that support long-term growth—such as leadership development, peer collaboration, and deeper engagement with families and the district—CREATE is well-positioned to continue making a meaningful difference for educators and the communities they serve.

Chapter 7. Discussion

The CREATE teacher residency program is a multi-year, equity-centered teacher preparation program that aims to prepare and retain a diverse teaching workforce by providing support, mentorship, and PL for pre-service and early career teachers. CREATE offers each cohort of residents three years of ongoing support that continues through their second year of teaching. Supports include multiple forms of mentorship from trained mentors, progressive core classroom roles, financial assistance in the form of yearly stipends, shared learning experiences that build instructional skills and encourage connectedness, and opportunities to engage in equity-centered & compassion-based learning that explores the role of racial identity and systemic oppression in education. At its core, CREATE strives to foster teacher well-being, build critical consciousness, provide support networks, and improve classroom climate. These goals are aimed at transforming education by creating a culturally responsive classroom environment that brings together teachers, students, families, and the school community. This vision has been central to CREATE's mission over the last decade, as the program works to transform the classroom into a space of empowerment and inspiration for all.

As a teacher residency program, CREATE's approach builds on research demonstrating that longer student teaching experiences with comprehensive training help graduates feel more prepared and are linked to instructional efficacy (Bardelli et al., 2023; Patrick et al., 2023). Other studies reported that "compared to graduating from an average Teacher Preparation Program (TPP), graduating from the most effective TPPs in the state is comparable to about 4 and a half months of teaching experience (Bardelli et al., 2023, p. 208)." Research also underscores the importance of building teacher pipelines that reflect the racial diversity of the student population that the teachers will serve. For example, having even one Black teacher during elementary school significantly increases the likelihood that students, and especially students of color, graduate from high school and consider attending college (Carver-Thomas, 2018). These studies help to underscore the importance of the work CREATE has undertaken.

As the external evaluator for the CREATE program, we have worked to evaluate the implementation and impact of CREATE. The work covered in this report received funding through CREATE's second SEED grant (awarded in 2020), and it builds on prior work done under an Investing in Innovation (i3) grant (awarded in 2015), which focused on the first two cohorts of pre-service and early career teachers, and a subsequent SEED grant (awarded in 2017) that focused on Cohorts 3, 4, and 5. This current report discusses the evaluation of the impact of the CREATE program on key outcomes for Cohort 6 (across three years), Cohort 7 (across two years), and Cohort 8 (for one year). These cohorts began their residencies during the 2020–21, 2021–22, and 2022–23 school years, respectively. This chapter summarizes findings related to the program's implementation and impacts; it also offers insights to inform program refinement and contribute to the broader conversations and policies around responsive, sustainable, equity-centered teacher preparation programs.

CREATE IMPLEMENTATION

High-quality teacher residency programs share several key characteristics, as outlined by Guha et al. (2016), including:

- a strong partnership between the university and school district(s),
- a cohort-based recruitment model to meet district hiring needs,
- financial support for residents,
- a full year of clinical practice teaching alongside a specially-trained CT,
- relevant coursework and/or PL integrated with clinical practice, and
- ongoing mentorship and support.

Accordingly, CREATE's program implementation encompasses several key components that are critical to its operation and mission. This evaluation assessed the FOI of those components, which are based on the logic model (see Figure 1 in Chapter 1. Introduction). In partnership with CREATE leadership, we identified six key components of the program's structure and delivery. Within each component are indicators to assess FOI. Of these components, two met FOI thresholds in two or more years, two met thresholds in one year, and two did not meet thresholds in any year.

Specifically, CREATE (1) successfully provided residents with progressive core classroom roles during their three-year residency, (2) recruited and trained CTs prior to the start of the school year, and (3) ensured IMs and SBMs attended training during the mentoring year. Achieving these benchmarks required significant effort. Notably, CREATE was successful in meeting the threshold for training CTs before the start of the school year in which they were mentoring a CREATE resident, ensuring that 96% (48/50) of CTs attended at least two days of training prior to the beginning of the school year. CREATE's success with this fidelity indicator is significant, as it helped to ensure that CTs were well-prepared to support residents during their student teaching year. Additionally, CREATE also met fidelity for hosting equity-centered PL opportunities for educators in APS and ensuring that educators attended at least 50% of PL meeting days, with attendance rates of 97% (127/131) in Year 1, 95% (82/86) in Year 2, and 91% (30/33) in Year 3. These successes with multiple forms of PL underscore CREATE's commitment to creating a community rooted in culturally relevant practices and fostering open discussions about race and oppression in schools.

However, there were areas in which CREATE did not meet the fidelity thresholds. These areas included resident attendance at TT for equity- and compassion-based trainings, SBM and IM attendance at mentor training before the beginning of the school year, the number of mentor-resident meetings with their SBM or IM during the school year, the number of completed observation cycles residents engaged in with their IM, resident attendance at SRA, and the number of CTs attending mentor training during the school year. Of the indicators for which CREATE did not meet fidelity, all are attendance-related, and all had very high pre-set fidelity thresholds. For example, although 88% (44/50) of CTs attended 3+ days of training during the school year, attendance was just short of the 90% fidelity threshold for this indicator.

We should also note that some CREATE program elements are quite unique, and the thresholds were ambitious. For example, Shand et al. (2023) found that just one of eight (12.5%) Black Educator Initiative programs within the National Center for Teacher Residencies network offered a pre-residency summer element. Yet, CREATE attempted to implement a pre-residency summer element across multiple summers, adding significant time and effort for residents and program leaders. Additionally, one FOI indicator required at least 95% of active residents in each cohort to attend the minimum number of TT meetings. The minimum number of meetings required was eight in Year 1, six in Year 2, and five in Year 3. Although the threshold was not met, attendance was still very high, with TT attendance ranging from 92% (65/71) in Year 1, 96% (27/28) in Year 2, and 75% (9/12) in Year 3. While these FOI thresholds reflect the high standards that CREATE holds for its program, unprecedented changes such as those brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult to meet these thresholds.

This analysis of CREATE implementation shows that CREATE met many of the objectives directly within its control, particularly in delivering the necessary resources, support, and training needed for successful program implementation. Although CREATE made sustained and substantial efforts to encourage attendance and participation through incentives (like stipends), it proved difficult to ensure consistent and high-level attendance at TT meetings, mentor training, and SRA. CREATE will need to strategize on how to encourage participation while still allowing for the flexibility that is required to accommodate teachers' schedules and maintain a humanizing program that recognizes participants' personal lives and well-being. This highlights the importance of adapting existing support systems to foster and encourage regular

attendance and participation, particularly in TT meetings and other PL opportunities that CREATE provides. Additionally, the results of this evaluation may indicate a need to re-examine fidelity thresholds to determine whether (a) they are overly ambitious and program impact can be detected with lower fidelity thresholds or (b) the gap between FOI thresholds and real-world conditions explains the lack of positive and statistically significant outcomes for some research questions (e.g., around teacher retention).

To further understand CREATE's implementation and the differences between CREATE and comparison participant experiences, we included questions on the quarterly surveys that asked participants about their experiences relating to co-teaching, mentorship, collaboration with other educators, school site support, PL opportunities, and financial support. The responses to these questions provided insight into the different experiences of CREATE residents and comparison participants. For example, CREATE residents were more likely than their comparison participant peers to participate in co-teaching, which is an arrangement that pairs teachers together to share classroom instructional time and is intended to provide additional support during the first year of teaching. In Year 2 (first year as teacher-of-record), 86% (n = 18) of CREATE residents co-taught for at least part of the year, compared to less than half of comparison group participants (45%, n = 9). Mentorship experiences also differed notably between the groups. For instance, Year 1 CREATE residents received support in the form of a CREATE-trained CT and USC, while comparison participants worked with a CT and a university coach who were not CREATE-trained. CREATE-trained CTs (87%, n = 48) were more likely to report feeling *very confident* or *extremely confident* in their understanding of how to be an effective mentor than comparison CTs were (77%, n = 10). CREATE CTs also reported meeting with their residents more often, as 85% (n = 35) reported meeting *daily* or *more than one day per week*, compared to just 50% (n = 3) of comparison CTs. CREATE residents also reported meeting with their mentors more frequently, with 100% (n = 28 in Year 2 and n = 12 in Year 3) of CREATE residents reporting having met with their SBM and IM at least 25 times in Year 2 and at least 12 times in Year 3. In contrast, comparison participants reported an average of 12 meetings with their mentor in Year 2 and fewer than one per year in Year 3.

CREATE participants also had access to PL opportunities that were not available to those in the comparison group. For example, SRA is a paid summer academy where residents learn about creating inclusive classroom environments; engage in discussions about equity, justice, privilege, and oppression; and practice applying their learnings to the classroom. The majority of CREATE residents in Cohort 6 (67%, n = 8) and Cohort 7 (88%, n = 7) rated the Year 1 SRA as *more than moderately valuable* or *very valuable*, and 76% (n = 6) of CREATE residents reported the same about the Year 2 SRA. Another core component of CREATE was the monthly TT meetings that many residents found helpful, especially in the area of instructional skills. A majority of residents in Year 1 (98%, n = 49), Year 2 (90%, n = 19), and Year 3 (100%, n = 8) reported that TT lessons in instructional skills were *more than moderately helpful* or *very helpful*. CREATE residents also attended equity-centered PL opportunities that were designed to equip teachers with the ability to identify and address issues of privilege and oppression in their schools and classrooms. Across Cohorts 6 and 7, a majority of CREATE residents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the ECCF protocols taught at these meetings (1) improved their instructional skills, (2) fostered a stronger sense of belonging and social support, and (3) contributed to a more reflective teaching practice. These trends were echoed in residents' feedback about CREATE's compassion-based PL opportunities, including the PPI PL opportunity that focused on increasing self-awareness, personal resilience, compassion, and skills in contemplative practices. Notably, 60% (n = 6) of Cohort 6 and 83% (n = 10) of Cohort 7 participants reported that PPI practices improved their capacity to be an effective teacher *quite a bit* or *very much*. Finally, CREATE provided residents with financial support in the form of stipends ranging from $6,000-$8,000, depending on the year of participation. This financial support aimed to help ease the financial burden of entering the teaching profession, and 96% (n = 45) of CREATE residents reported that

they would have experienced moderate or significant financial hardship if they had not received this financial assistance from CREATE.

Taken together, these descriptive findings underscore the distinct and layered supports that CREATE residents received compared to their comparison group peers. Co-teaching, more frequent mentorship from CREATE-trained mentors, equity- and compassion-centered PL, and meaningful financial support are all elements of the CREATE model that helped shape a residency experience that was unique to CREATE residents.

IMPACTS ON TEACHER WELL-BEING

CREATE places a strong emphasis on supporting teacher well-being, a notable outcome given limited research into the link between teacher residency programs and residents' overall well-being. Specifically, CREATE has developed several program components that are aimed at supporting the well-being of pre-service and early career teachers and preparing them to become critically-conscious, compassionate, and skilled educators. This is an important goal, as 2022 surveys conducted by the National Education Association indicated that teachers considered burnout a serious problem, and 55% seriously considered leaving the profession (NEA, 2022). Clearly, teacher burnout remains a pressing issue in schools. CREATE has worked to try and reduce some of this burnout and increase well-being. Although the link between residency programs and well-being is still being studied, some research has indeed pointed to the potential for teacher residencies to protect against burnout while increasing feelings of personal accomplishment (Ghazi, 2024). From an evaluation standpoint, we wanted to understand the impact of CREATE on residents' well-being in three intersecting areas:

1. individual well-being related to mindfulness skills and habits of the mind, self-compassion, and well-being in the context of being an educator,
2. community elements of well-being related to building support networks and communities of connection and reflection toward wellness, and
3. developing critical consciousness and understanding of social justice issues in education.

We measured these constructs through survey and log data collected during Cohort 6 and 7 participants' first year of teaching as a full-time teacher-of-record.

The findings from the analysis of measures related to well-being revealed encouraging results. Notably, we found a positive impact ($p \leq .10$) of CREATE on the following dimensions of teacher well-being:

- Focus & Awareness (ES = 0.71, $p = .058$),
- MAIA: Self-Regulation (ES = 0.62, $p = .094$),
- mPERMA: Meaning (ES = 0.90, $p = .017$),
- Sense of Equity in Role & Experience (ES = 0.77, $p = .032$),
- Opportunities & Support to Think About Social Justice & Racial Equity Issues in Schools (ES = 1.49, $p = .008$), and
- Confidence in Understanding Concepts Related to Race & Equity in Schools (ES = 0.75, $p = .025$).

Some effect sizes were quite substantial, especially for measures of understanding issues related to race and equity in schools, a core tenet of CREATE's mission and implementation goals. These trends indicate promise, suggesting

CREATE's potential to influence key aspects of teacher development that both promote well-being *and* increase confidence in understanding topics relating to equity and social justice in schools.

These findings are especially notable given the context in which they were obtained. The study years coincided with significant social events including the national reckoning on racial injustice and police brutality against Black Americans following the murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and others, as well as disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, a survey conducted by the National Education Association revealed that 91% of educators reported that pandemic-related stress was a serious problem (NEA, 2022). Despite these challenges, the consistency of CREATE's positive impact on multiple measures of teacher well-being, even in the face of external, traumatic obstacles, is noteworthy, especially when many new educators were facing the challenges of the classroom for the first time and experiencing "praxis shock," or "the feeling of surprise or disillusionment…when the reality of their work environment significantly differs from their initial expectations, particularly when transitioning from theory to practice" (Happonen, 2025).

Finally, CREATE's model of incorporating teacher well-being with equity-oriented practices stands in contrast to recent trends where many educators feel pressured to avoid discussing topics relating to race and equity. For example, in 2023, two-thirds of K–12 public school teachers in the U.S. reported limiting their instruction on political and social justice issues, and even in areas without active policies, 55% still limited their instruction due to the perceived influence of broader political pressures (Woo et al., 2024). CREATE participants reported increased confidence and support in navigating these topics; this points to the program's successes in these areas and suggests a path forward for sustaining and supporting teachers committed to equity. This makes CREATE's positive impact on decreasing burnout while *also* positively impacting measures relating to critical consciousness and understanding of social justice issues in education especially notable.

IMPACTS ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

As part of the evaluation, we had planned to use student data to assess whether CREATE had a positive impact on student achievement in Grades 4–8 Math and ELA. However, as of the publication of this report, we have not been able to obtain the necessary data and, consequently, are unable to report on these outcomes.

IMPACTS ON EARLY CAREER TEACHER RETENTION

One of CREATE's core goals is to retain skilled and diverse educators, a goal that has become increasingly important as research has highlighted teacher retention as a growing problem. New teachers specifically have been leaving the profession at high rates over the past few decades (Ingersoll et al., 2021). For example, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics ranks elementary school teachers among the top 10 Bachelor's degree occupations with the most openings, with an average of 93,000 annual vacancies projected through 2033 (Torpey, 2024). Additionally, findings from the 2024 State of the American Teacher Survey show that in 2023, 22% of teachers surveyed indicated that they were likely to leave their jobs by the end of the year, 17% indicated that they were likely to leave their profession by the end of the year, and Black teachers were significantly more likely to indicate plans to leave their jobs at the end of the school year (Doan et al., 2023). One longitudinal study examining 10 years of administrative data in Texas found that, on average, schools lose 35% of their teachers over two years, 59% over five years, and 72% over eight years (Holme et al., 2018). However, research has demonstrated the positive impact of teacher residency programs on teacher retention. According to the 2022–2023 annual report by NCTR (2023), 86% of residency graduates in their network remained in teaching through their third year, with

retention rates even higher among Black or African American graduates at 94%. Promisingly, approximately 80–90% of teacher residency program graduates stay in the same district after three years (Guha et al., 2016).

In line with this research, CREATE has worked to develop a residency model that supports the retention of its teachers, with proven success. A previous retention analysis on Cohorts 1 and 2—funded by i3 and conducted by Empirical Education (Jaciw et al., 2021)—found that CREATE teachers experienced higher retention rates in teaching over the three-year time period, compared to the comparison group (p = .038), and the favorable impact on teacher retention resulted from higher retention of Black educators in the CREATE program, relative to the comparison group (p = .021). In other words, the effect of CREATE on retention for the full sample of educators was largely the result of the positive impact of CREATE on Black educators.

To assess the program's impact on retention for Cohorts 6–8, this evaluation explored the following outcomes: (1) graduation from GSU CEHD, (2) working as a teacher-of-record the first year after graduation, and (3) working as a teacher-of-record the second year after graduation. Although the analysis did not yield statistically significant results for any of these outcomes, several contextual factors related to both the sample and the program may help explain this.

First, for this study, the analysis of second-year teaching retention included only Cohort 6, as Cohorts 7 and 8 had not yet reached their second year of teaching during the grant period. Therefore, the sample size for this analysis was small, which constrained the ability to assess statistically significant long-term retention outcomes. Additionally, a larger proportion of comparison participants in Cohort 6 were enrolled in the MAT program, which may have contributed to their high rates of on-time graduation, and in turn, reduced the treatment-control contrast.

Due to the staggered cohort design of CREATE, the only retention outcome with data available across all three cohorts is graduation from GSU CEHD. Although we found no statistically significant differences, it is important to note that both CREATE participants and students from GSU CEHD's traditional TPP graduated at very high rates during the study years. Additionally, it is also important to note that graduation and retention of Black educators were especially high for both CREATE and comparison participants, with both groups reaching nearly 100% on-time graduation. In this current study, not only were Black educators retained at similar rates across conditions, but retention rates were also higher for Black educators than for non-Black educators, in both conditions. The similarity in Black educator retention across both groups may very well explain the differences between the findings of this current retention analysis and the findings reported in the earlier i3 analysis. These results also highlight a broader challenge in assessing multi-year impacts of an intervention when the BAU condition transforms over time. Specifically, the graduation rates of the BAU sample have improved since the initial evaluation during the i3 grant, thereby lessening the difference between CREATE's and the BAU's successes in on-time graduation. Additional research is needed to explore factors contributing to these positive changes for both CREATE and BAU. For example, we could explore whether the BAU sample in our study had higher graduation rates during this grant period than during i3 because the CEHD increased its rates overall, and if so, what potential factors influenced the increase. We are also particularly interested in understanding whether CREATE joining the CEHD in 2020 may have had any influence on BAU programming, which could point to evidence of scaling.

Additionally, it is important to consider the context of the 2021–22 and 2022–23 academic years, which were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, postsecondary education needed to become more flexible, offering full-time distance learning (NCES, 2022) and, in some cases, tuition reimbursements (Colorado, 2023). These factors may have made access to college courses, and graduation, more accessible for students.

COST EFFECTIVENESS

As part of the work conducted under this SEED grant, our evaluation team planned to carry out a cost-effectiveness study to characterize and cost the resources required for successful implementation of the CREATE residency model. The goal of the analysis was to provide CREATE leadership with a comprehensive understanding of the costs associated with program implementation and scale-up, which could be useful for informing potential partners about the costs of expansion efforts. However, as we proceeded with the analysis, several challenges arose that hindered the study, ranging from issues with data collection to broader organizational complexities. We hope that the lessons learned from this work can help inform future economic evaluation studies in education. The full details of this cost-effectiveness study are in Appendix N; we summarize several key takeaways below.

One main challenge was the difficulty in accessing resource expenditure data, which spanned multiple funding streams and was lost due to leadership turnover and a continuously evolving program over its 10-year history. CREATE evolved from a small, single-school initiative to a fully integrated residency program at GSU CEHD, working in partnership with schools across APS. Changes in scaling, implementation staff, and PL offerings made it difficult to track expenditures across iterations of the program as it changed and expanded. In addition, CREATE leadership transitions led to the loss of institutional knowledge, including information on the pandemic-related shifts and past cost data. Another challenge was defining a comparator, as CREATE and the GSU CEHD traditional credentialing program are closely linked and have converged as CREATE has increased its tenure with the CEHD. Exacerbating this, we had limited information about the experiences and academic requirements of comparison group participants, as we had difficulties recruiting comparison students from BAU to the study. Lastly, CREATE is heavily place-based, meaning much of its work is rooted in Atlanta and draws on its unique historical and sociopolitical landscape to shape programming. Attempting to generalize costs related to place-based programming can be difficult.

Because economic evaluations are still limited in the field of education, these considerations could be useful to those planning to conduct an economic evaluation of an educational program in the future.

SCALING OF CREATE IN CLASSROOMS AND SCHOOLS

Given that CREATE has received multiple federal grants over the past decade to support its work, we sought to examine the extent to which the program has scaled within classrooms and schools as part of our external evaluation. To do so, we conducted individual interviews with CREATE participants to explore how they embody CREATE's mission and vision in their professional roles, as well as to identify the key assets and barriers that influence both their individual practice and the broader implementation of CREATE within their school contexts.

Participants provided responses that demonstrated clear evidence of individual-level scaling in their professional roles and classrooms, with indications of school-level scaling in some contexts. Facilitating the implementation of CREATE's mission and vision at the individual and classroom levels, participants reflected on the transformation of their mindset, worldview, relationships, and curriculum and pedagogy. Participants who engaged with CREATE took on the mindset of a trailblazer, advocate, and lifelong learner. Their worldview shifted toward critically examining the connections between history, society, and schooling, which led them to prioritize justice, equity, wellness, and resilience in their professional work. They prioritized relationships because they understood that nobody in schools—teachers, staff, or students—can be productive or successful without a community rooted in connection, openness, love, and compassion. They also transformed their curriculum and pedagogy, looking beyond effective instruction or core academic subjects to include mindfulness, SEL, and CHRP in their teaching. They prioritized student voice, choice, and agency, employing restorative

and relational approaches to classroom management. Additionally, they engaged students' families and the school community to understand and support the whole child. These data illustrate significant depth of scaling (Coburn, 2003) with many participants and alumni of CREATE.

At the school level, we identified assets and barriers to scaling. Interviewees highlighted the key role of school leaders in supporting the implementation of CREATE's mission and vision, noting the importance of planning time, financial support (e.g., covering the cost of CREATE PL and offering wellness funds), substitute coverage, and aligning policies and practices (e.g., staff evaluation and hiring practices) with CREATE ideals. Additionally, CREATE participants and alumni played a crucial role in scaling by promoting CREATE content and values in their schools, helping to recruit new teachers to the program and forming PL communities and affinity groups. Co-teachers were also crucial, providing educators with extra planning help and confidence to implement novel and transformative strategies in the classroom, such as a "calm-down corner" with a tent and sensory tools. In some cases, parents and the PTA helped facilitate CHRP in classrooms and provided funding for school-wide cultural celebrations and staff appreciation initiatives, offering compelling evidence of spread, sustainability, and a shift in reform ownership (Coburn, 2003).

However, there were some notable barriers to scaling in some schools, including a lack of leadership buy-in and accountability structures, competing priorities such as addressing staff shortages, curriculum and pacing restraints, insufficient planning time, and colleagues and families who were resistant to new equity initiatives because of a lack of time, training, and comfort. These results highlight broader challenges of scaling within districts founded in literature. As Hirschboeck et al. (2023) point out, scaling a high-quality teacher residency program can prove challenging, with some barriers including a lack of capacity to build and maintain partnerships or a lack of plans to sustain the program beyond the grant's end.

Despite the noted barriers, CREATE made significant progress in transforming the depth of practice among its educators, with some demonstrating a clear shift in ownership of reform, as well as efforts to spread implementation and build sustainable partnerships within schools and the broader school community, such as with students' families. To further scale efforts per Coburn's (2003) conception of scaling, we offer suggestions, including hosting cross-school learning exchanges and distributing a curriculum adaptation toolkit to enhance scripted curricula with CHRP. We hope our findings prove useful for the future of CREATE.

LOOKING FORWARD

The results of this evaluation offer valuable insights for decision-makers, education leaders, evaluators, and those interested in understanding the impact of teacher residency programs. Increasing attention has been given to the usefulness of teacher residency programs. Specifically, research has shown that quality teacher residency programs help teachers feel more prepared (Guha et al., 2016), have a positive impact on student achievement (Sloan, 2018), and contribute to a reduction in teacher turnover (Guha et al., 2016). As schools and districts weigh competing priorities and reckon with cuts in federal funding, this work provides additional evidence of the importance of teacher residency programs in the recruitment and development of a skilled and diverse teacher workforce. The implications of this evaluation of CREATE are two-fold, in that they add to the growing body of research unpacking the mechanisms of impactful teacher residency programs, and also suggest areas for further exploration.

Looking forward, one important area of focus is how to continue scaling CREATE through deeply collaborative partnerships with schools and districts. As discussed in the scaling chapter, many CREATE residents have undergone a deep transformation and are building CREATE practices into their classrooms and teaching. One next step is to foster

ownership of these practices within schools and districts, as research has shown that successful and sustainable programs develop collaborative partnerships with schools and districts (NCTR, 2021). As CREATE continues this work, it will be crucial to focus on building these relationships and working towards scaling at the school and district levels.

Another important consideration involves the current political climate. This evaluation of CREATE overlapped with heightened political tensions, which escalated as we drafted the final pages of this report and coincided with the 2025 presidential inauguration. On the first day of his second term, Trump signed 78 executive orders, reversing numerous Biden-era policies, many of which had supported diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives (Treisman, 2025). Although the signing of these orders occurred well after the conclusion of data collection for this grant, it is important to note that these reversals extended a legacy from the previous Trump administration that catalyzed a wave of laws and policies restricting DEI initiatives nationwide, beginning in 2016. As of July 2025, 136 bills have been introduced in 29 states and the U.S. Congress to limit DEI in higher education alone (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2025). In Georgia, where CREATE operates, House Bill 1084 (HB1084) was particularly impactful for K–12 education, as it limited how teachers could discuss so-called divisive topics. The state government defined these divisive topics in an ambiguous manner, and teachers lost their livelihoods at the hands of this bill (Gaunt, 2023). Many continue to worry that HB1084 and the rapidly growing number of executive orders banning DEI will cause teachers to avoid discussing specific topics altogether, fearing the repercussions (Dalton, 2022). One of this study's interview participants recalled that websites were missing DEI statements due to legislation like HB1084, demonstrating the impact of the political climate during data collection for this grant.

The dismantling of DEI initiatives—exemplified by the end of affirmative action in higher education (Totenberg, 2023)—compelled postsecondary institutions and their programs to proceed cautiously. In response to an increasingly contentious political climate, many public education agencies, universities, and nonprofits have adapted by limiting the information they share about their programs to protect the vulnerable groups they employ and serve. The vague and ambiguous nature of laws such as HB1084 made it difficult for organizations to know precisely what actions are permitted, resulting in groups restricting their operations to avoid unintentional violations. This has not been a willing retreat but a necessary act of survival to preserve the DEI movement's core principles and ensure its continued impact under increasingly adverse political conditions. As a program aiming to empower diverse teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to address systemic issues of social inequality in schools, CREATE needed to reassess how it operated and publicly shared information. Under the Trump administration, government websites, contracts, and emails did not allow common DEI words and phrases, like equal opportunity, accessible, and social justice (Swerdin, 2025). Although CREATE remained committed to their work, there was the reality that doing such work could lead to consequences. On February 10, 2025, events confirmed those worries: the federal government terminated all SEED grants, including CREATE's third SEED grant award (awarded in 2022).

Moving forward, CREATE and its evaluators will need to consider the impact of the political climate on program implementation, find ways to encourage teachers who may feel hesitant to cover certain topics in their classrooms, and explore how to conduct effective evaluations under these conditions. This experience should also serve as a valuable lesson for others involved in similar work: the political landscape can shift quickly in expected and unexpected ways, and it's important to be prepared for these changes.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this report highlights the vital work that teacher residency programs—such as CREATE—are doing, and underscores the need to continue studying these efforts. This report has demonstrated CREATE's promising results and positive trends in well-being, contributing to the growing body of research that

highlights the potential benefits of teacher residency programs (Fitz & Yun, 2024). Research consistently demonstrates that teacher residency programs have a positive impact on outcomes, including teacher retention and student learning (Saunders et al., 2024). Therefore, it is essential for districts and states to provide sustained funding and support for the evaluation and research of these programs, ensuring that they can expand and continue to work towards improvements for teachers and students.

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