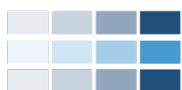


The Special Education Teacher Pipeline in Pennsylvania: Year 4 Report

Allison Gilmour
Equia Aniagyei-Cobbold
Marcy Stein

August 2026

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Longitudinal Data in Education Research



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Contents

Contents	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Abstract	iii
Executive Summary	4
The Special Education Teacher Pipeline in Pennsylvania: Year 4 Report	17
Developing Future Special Educators Grant.....	17
World of Learning (WOL) ASL Courses	25
Paraeducator Preparation Pathway Grants.....	27
Master’s Level Speech Language Pathologist Stipend for School-Based Placements	40
Accelerated Program for PK–12 Special Education Teacher Certification Grant	51
APR Mentoring Project.....	67
Networking and Learning Communities.....	84
Middle School Learning Institute	88
References	91

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The Special Education Teacher Pipeline in Pennsylvania: Year 4 Report

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CALDER Working Paper No. 342-0826

August 2026

Abstract

This report summarizes findings from the fourth year of a long-term research partnership on the special education teacher pipeline in Pennsylvania and projects associated with the Bureau of Special Education’s Attract-Prepare-Retain (APR) efforts. We analyzed administrative and survey data associated with eight APR projects and grants that occurred during the 2025–26 school year: Accelerated Program for PK–12 Special Education Teacher Certification Grant, Developing Future Special Educators Grant, APR Mentoring, Networking and Learning Communities, Middle School Learning Institute, World of Learning (WOL) American Sign Language (ASL) courses, Paraeducator Preparation Pathways Grant, and Master’s Level Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) Stipend for School-Based Placements. The findings build on data from the 2024–25 school year implementation and provide early evidence of project success.

Executive Summary

This report summarizes findings from the fourth year of a long-term research partnership on the special education teacher pipeline in Pennsylvania and projects associated with the Bureau of Special Education's Attract-Prepare-Retain (APR) efforts. Collectively, the APR projects and grants aim to attract individuals to the field, prepare them for success, and support their retention in special education careers. A well-trained and committed special education workforce ensures students qualifying for special education receive the intervention and support they need to successfully meet their goals. APR projects notably address multiple components of the potential career pipeline, from high school students to in-service special education personnel. Specifically, this report focuses on eight projects and grants:

- Developing Future Special Educators Grant
- World of Learning (WOL) American Sign Language (ASL) Courses
- Paraeducator Preparation Pathway Grants
- Master's Level Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) Stipend for School-Based Placements
- Accelerated Program for PK–12 Special Education Teacher Certification Grant
- APR Mentoring
- Networking and Learning Communities
- Middle School Learning Institute

Additional APR projects and grants not included in this report are School Psychology Paid Internships for Out-of-State Graduate Students and waiver registration for the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment. In this executive summary, we highlight eight key findings from the fourth year of the project.

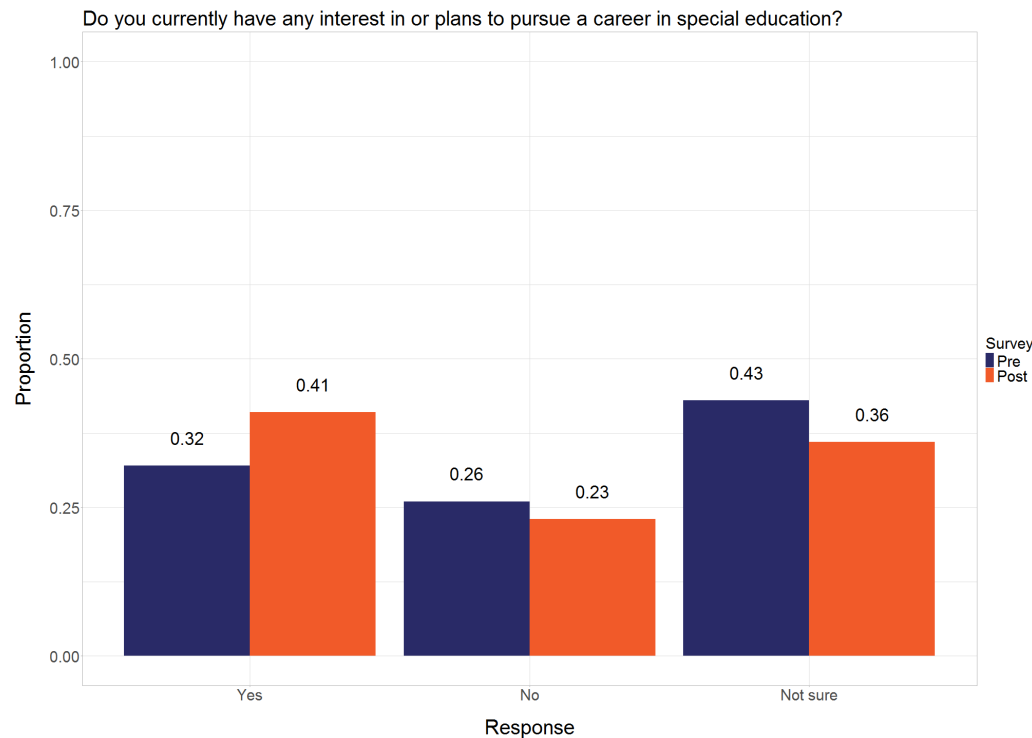
Developing Future special Educators Grant

This grant provided funds to school districts, IUs, IHEs, community colleges, charter schools, and approved private schools to develop or expand projects and programs that provided opportunities for secondary and postsecondary students to learn about special education career pathways and work with students with disabilities.

Key Finding: *Developing Future Special Educators Grant programs increased interest in pursuing a special education career, particularly for students who were unsure of their interest when entering the program.*

We surveyed secondary and postsecondary students working with students with disabilities as part of the Developing Future Special Educators Grant, a grant for programs to promote interest in and knowledge about careers in special education. We received responses from 1,209 students before their participation in the program and 754 students after participation. Forty-one percent of survey respondents reported an interest in pursuing a career in special education after participating in one of the Experiential Learning Opportunities (ELOs), compared to 32% of respondents surveyed before participating (Exhibit 1A). The increase in reported interest in pursuing a career in special education was larger during the 2025–26 school year than in findings from the previous two school years.

Exhibit 1A. Interest or Plans in Special Education Careers Before and After Experiential Learning Opportunity Participation



World of Learning (WOL) American Sign Language (ASL) Program

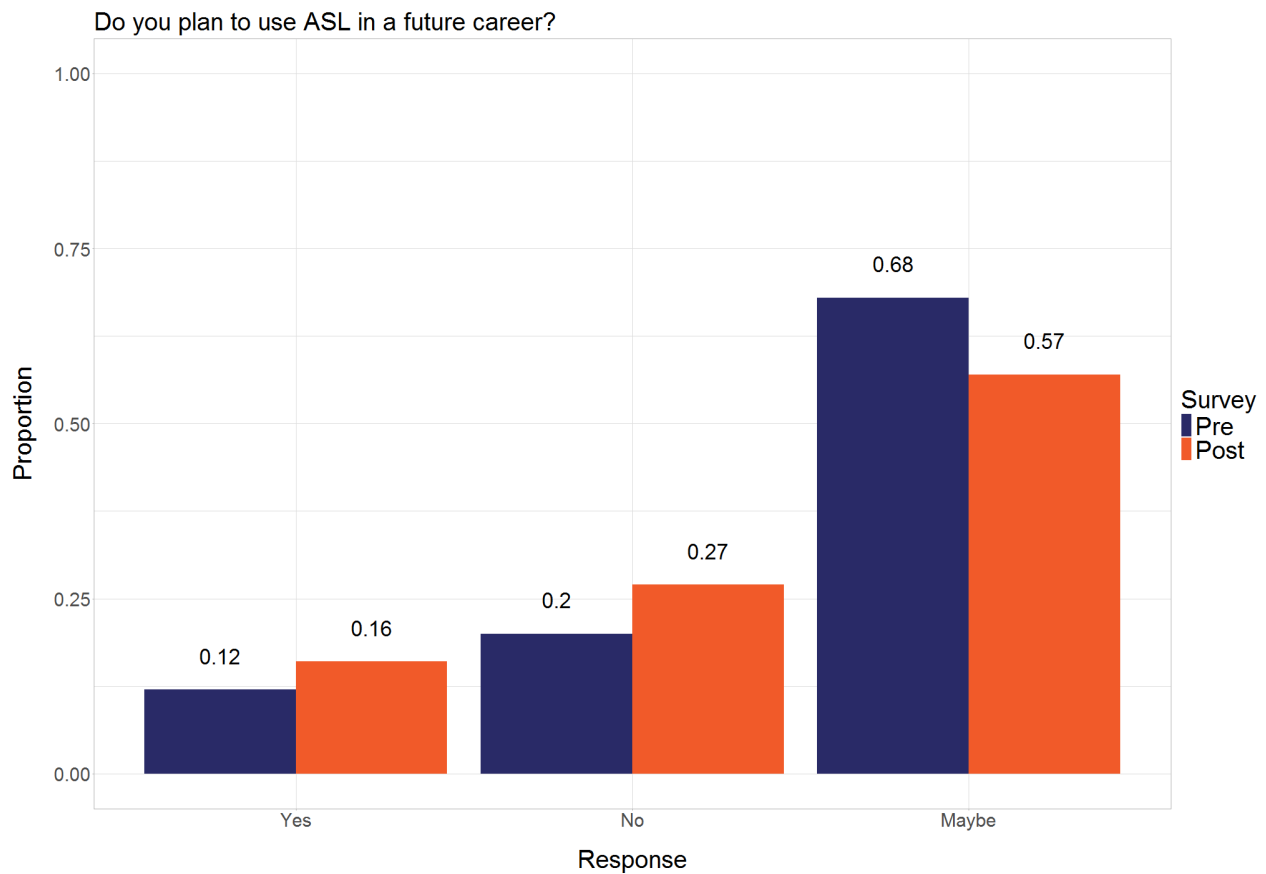
Pennsylvania offers ASL courses to high school students through WOL with the goal to attract students to the field of special education.

Key Finding: *Aligning with results from 2024–25, a higher proportion of students participating in the WOL ASL program in the 2025–26 school year expressed an interest in using ASL in a future career after participation in the program.*

We surveyed high school students before and after their participation in WOL ASL classes, receiving responses from 41% of the 254 participating students on the presurvey and

20% of participating students on the postsurvey. As shown in Exhibit 2A, before participation, 12% of respondents reported they planned to use ASL in a future career. After participation, 16% of respondents reported they planned to use ASL in a future career.

Exhibit 2A. Participants' Reported Plans to Use ASL in a Future Career



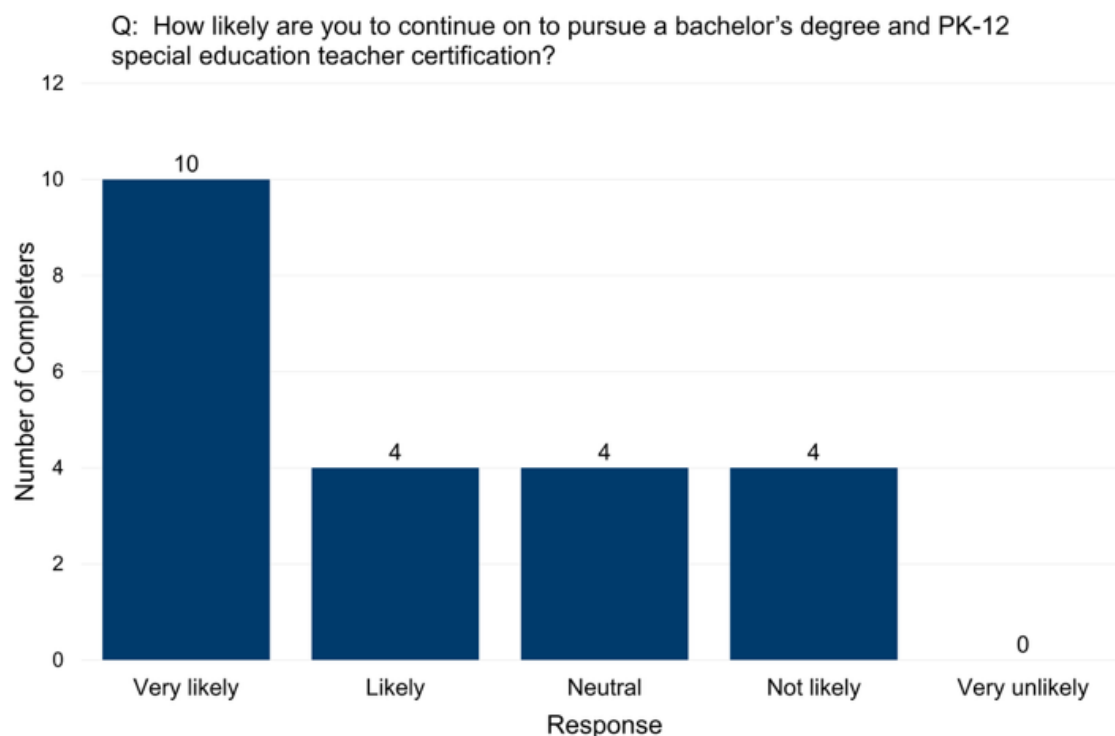
Paraeducator Preparation Pathway Grants

The Paraeducator Preparation Pathway Grants support paraeducators to obtain an associate of arts degree while learning and working in their Local Educational Agency (LEA).

Key Finding: *The Paraeducator Preparation Pathway Grants resulted in 62 paraeducators completing their associate degrees, with two thirds of survey respondents reporting they planned to pursue a bachelor's degree and PK–12 special education certification in the near future.*

We surveyed the first cohort of 62 Paraeducator Preparation Pathway Grant completers, with a response rate of 35%. All respondents reported they would not have pursued an associate degree without the program, suggesting the programs successfully recruited participants who would not have moved toward a degree and certification in the absence of the grant. Despite not all respondents participating in mentoring or networking, 86% reported satisfaction with the program and 91% reported that the program significantly benefited their growth as a professional. Although survey respondents—and grant coordinators, on their reports to the state—noted the challenges of balancing work and courses, over half of completers who responded to the survey reported they were very likely or likely to continue their education toward a degree and PK–12 special education certification, as illustrated in Exhibit 3A, immediately or in the next 2 years.

Exhibit 3A. Reported Likelihood of Continuing to Pursue a Bachelor’s Degree and PK–12 Special Education Teacher Certification



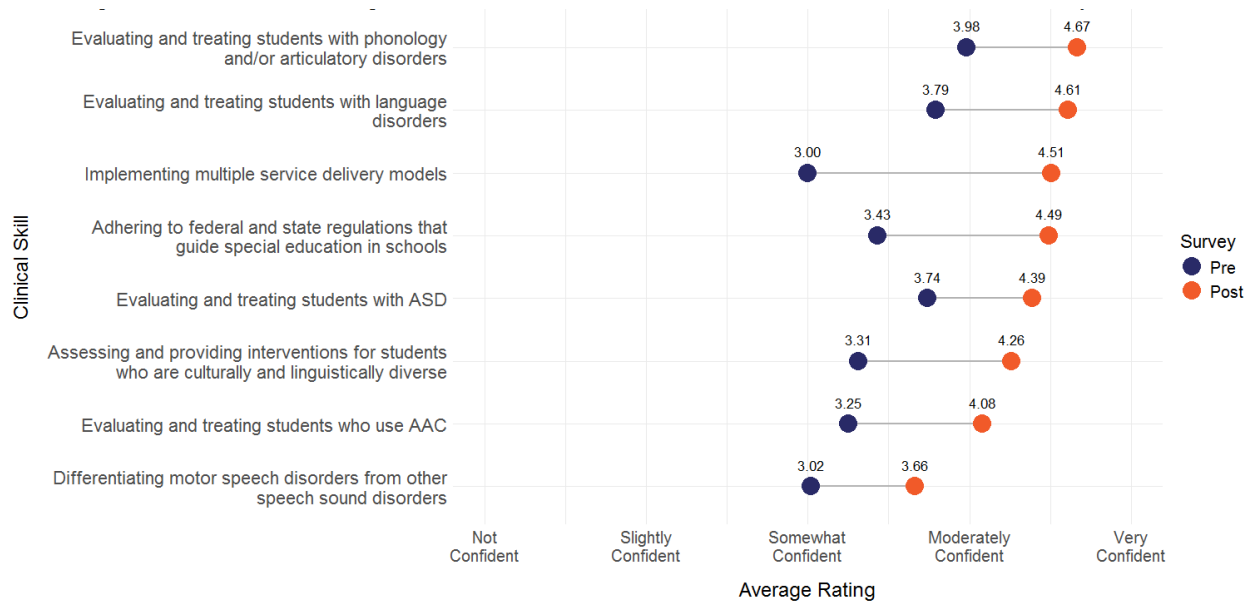
Master’s Level Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) Stipend for School-Based Placements

The goals of the Master’s Level Speech Language Pathologist Stipend for School-Based Placements are to establish or expand school-based placements (i.e., externships) that provide high-quality services and increase the number of SLP students who pursue an Instructional I or education specialist certificate and work in LEAs in Pennsylvania.

Key Finding: *Externs who received the Master’s Level Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) Stipend for School-Based Placements reported more confidence in their clinical skills after completing their externship compared to before their externship.*

We surveyed the second cohort of externs receiving the Master’s Level SLP Stipend for School-Based Placements and received responses from 63 out of 66 externs. As illustrated in Exhibit 4A, extern respondents rated their confidence on all clinical skills higher after completing their externship. The largest change in ratings of confidence corresponded to implementing multiple service delivery models. Externs also expressed a desire to work in public school settings in the future, suggesting the stipend supports the pipeline of SLPs in public schools in Pennsylvania.

Exhibit 4A. Average Confidence Level Rating of Clinical Skills for Externs, Pre and Postsurvey



Note. ASD = Autism Spectrum Disorder; AAC = Augmentative and Alternative Communication.

Accelerated Program for PK12 Special Education Teacher Certification Grant

This grant incentivized institutes for higher education to create an accelerated, 18-month special education certification program designed to build the special education workforce more quickly and at greater scale.

Key Finding: *The Accelerated Program for PK–12 Special Education Teacher Certification Grant strengthened the workforce by increasing both the number of special education teachers and special education–certified individuals.*

We matched 88% of the 142 program completers from the first cohort of the state's Accelerated Program to administrative data to examine where they worked while in the program and their certification outcomes. The number of program completers filling special education teacher positions increased as they progressed in the program (Exhibit 5A), and 69% obtained special education certification by the summer following the end of the program (Exhibit 6A).

Exhibit 5A. Number of Accelerated Program Completers Teaching Special Education in the 2023–24 and 2024–25 School Years

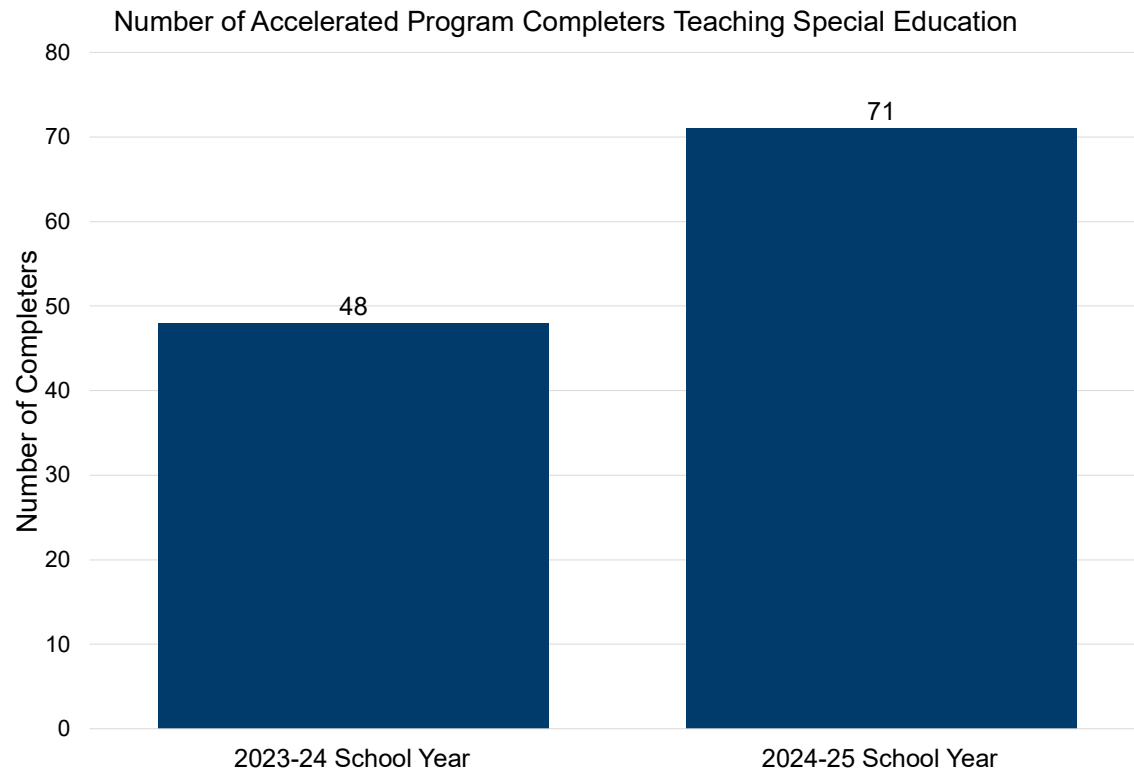
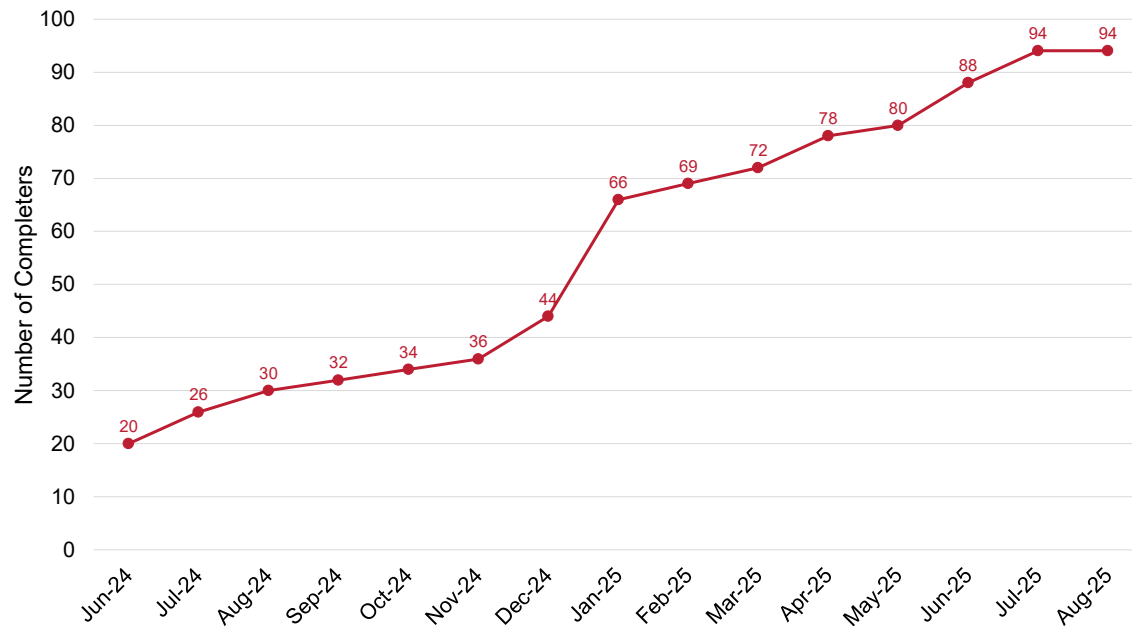


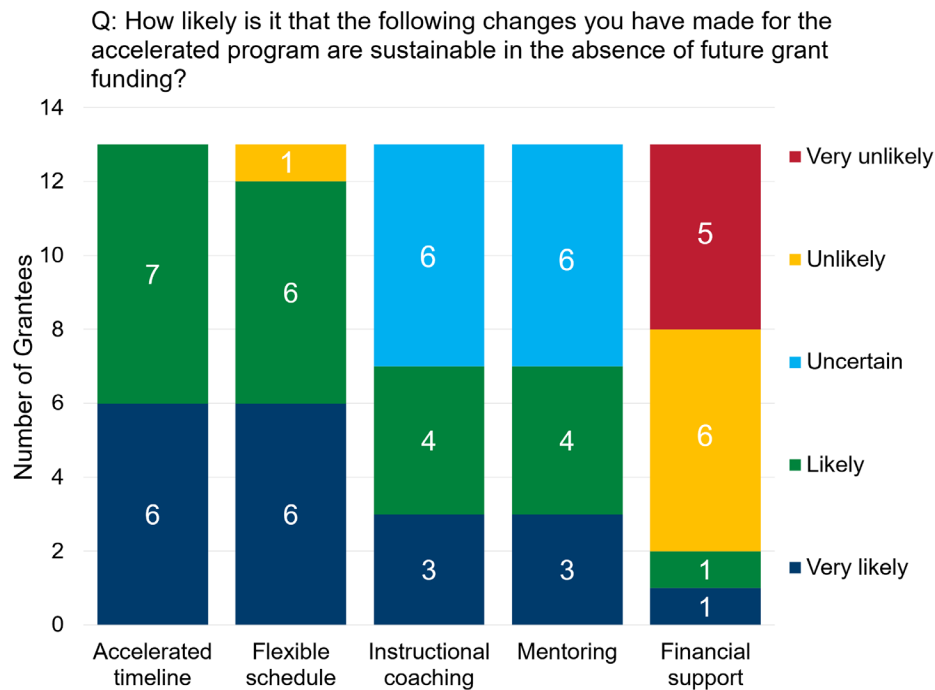
Exhibit 6A. Cumulative Number of Program Completers with Full Special Education Certification by Month



Key Finding: *Institutions of higher education (IHEs) made changes to their special education certification that decreased barriers to entry, and they intend to retain many of these changes after the Accelerated Program for PK–12 Special Education Teacher Certification Grant ends.*

We surveyed grant coordinators at IHEs in the second cohort to receive Accelerated Program for PK–12 Special Education Teacher Certification Grants, and we received responses from 13 of the 14 IHEs. Eighty-five percent of grant coordinators reported that the Accelerated Program differed from their previous post-baccalaureate program. All grant coordinators reported they were likely or very likely to retain the accelerated timeline after the grant ends, and 92% reported they were likely or very likely to retain the flexible schedule, as illustrated in Exhibit 7A.

Exhibit 7A. Reported Sustainability of Accelerated Program Changes



APR Mentoring

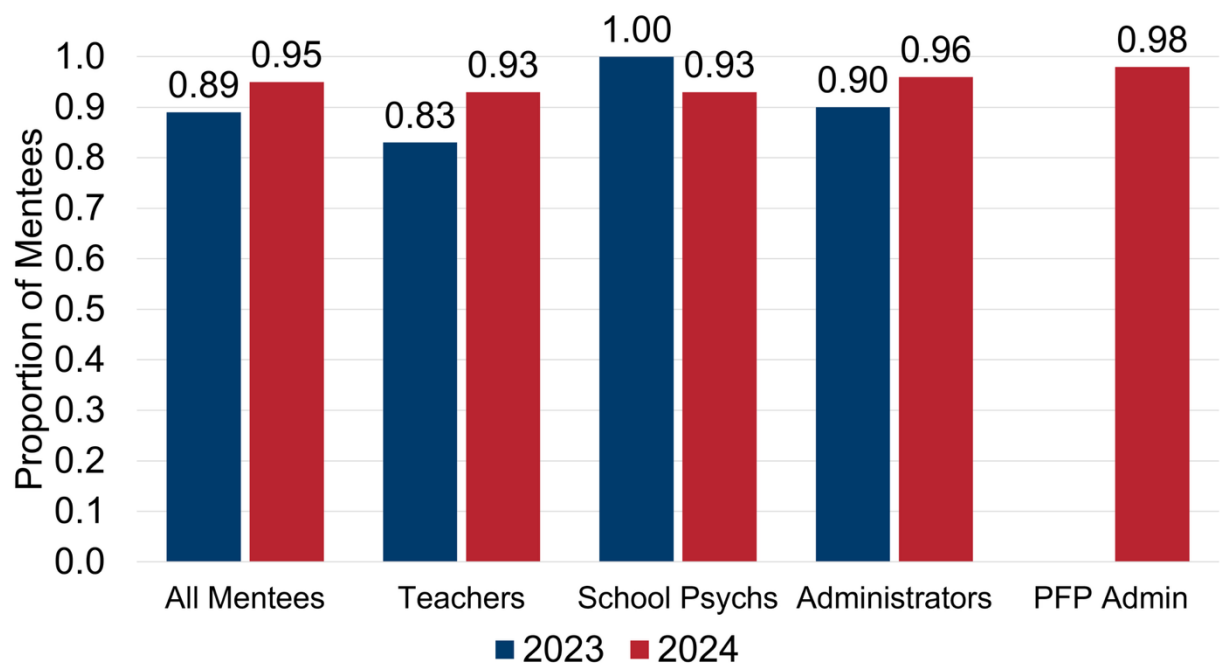
The purpose of the APR Mentoring Project is to retain special education personnel and provide additional support to facilitate their growth as professionals.

Key Finding: *Mentoring participants continue to view mentoring as beneficial for their professional growth, and mentee retention rates have improved over time.*

We examined the retention outcomes of mentees who participated in mentoring during the 2022–23 and 2023–24 school years and could be matched to administrative data. Out of the 119 mentees in 2022–23, we matched 76%; out of the 163 mentees in the 2023–24 school year, we matched 80%. We also surveyed mentors and mentees participating in 2025–26, and 57% of the 138 participating mentees completed the survey. Illustrated in Exhibit 8A, 95% of mentees

from 2023–24 who matched to administrative data were still employed by public schools in Pennsylvania, an increase of six percentage points from mentees from 2022–23. Of the survey respondents in 2025–26, 97% of mentees and 95% of mentors “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the program positively impacted the professional development of the mentee.

Exhibit 8A. Proportion of Mentees Who Stayed in Pennsylvania Public Schools the School Year Following Mentoring



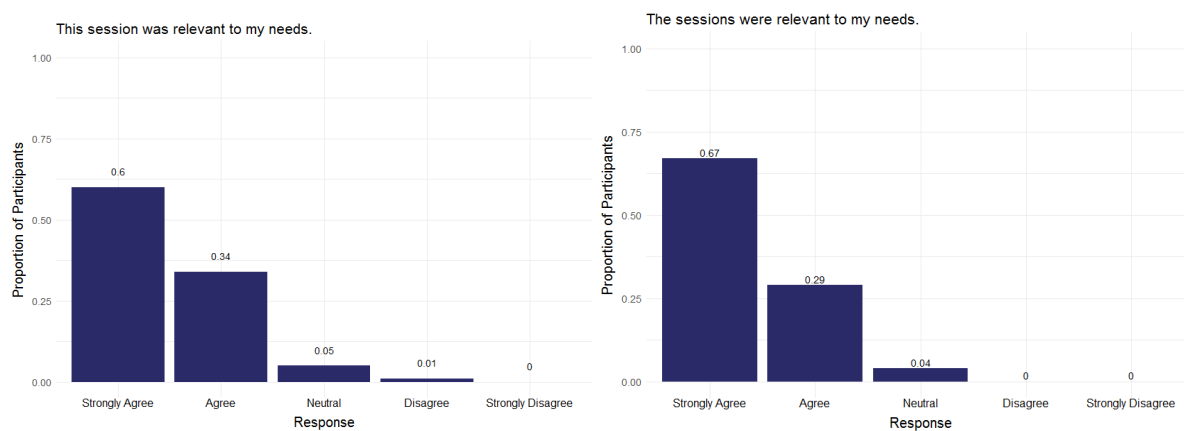
Networking and Learning Communities

Networking and Learning Communities facilitate opportunities for special educators and other special education personnel to engage in conversations with others who share similar job responsibilities.

Key Finding: *Most participants in Networking and Learning Communities or the Middle School Learning Institute in the 2025–26 school year viewed the sessions as relevant and beneficial.*

We received survey responses from more than 4,000 Networking and Learning Communities session participants and 55 participants in the Middle School Learning Institute. Among survey respondents from these programs, 94% of participants in the Networking and Learning Communities sessions and 96% of participants in the Middle School Learning Institute “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the session they attended was relevant to their needs (Exhibit 9A).

Exhibit 9A. Networking and Learning Communities (left panel) and Middle School Learning Institute (right panel) Participant Perceptions of Session Relevance



The Special Education Teacher Pipeline in Pennsylvania: Year 4 Report

Pennsylvania's Bureau of Special Education has made major investments in attracting, preparing, and retaining special education personnel over the past 4 years. This report summarizes findings from the fourth year of Attract-Prepare-Retain (APR) projects. The specific projects and grants of focus are:

- Developing Future Special Educators Grant
- World of Learning (WOL) American Sign Language (ASL) Courses
- Paraeducator Preparation Pathway Grants
- Master's Level Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) Stipend for School-Based Placements
- Accelerated Program for PK–12 Special Education Teacher Certification Grant
- APR Mentoring
- Networking and Learning Communities
- Middle School Learning Institute

Additional APR projects and grants not included in this report are School Psychology Paid Internships for Out-of-State Graduate Students and waiver registration for the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment. In the following sections, we describe each focal project and grant, our evaluation data sources, findings, and recommendations for future investments to support the special education workforce in Pennsylvania.

Developing Future Special Educators Grant

The 2024–26 Developing Future Special Educators Grant provided grants to school districts, IUs, IHEs, community colleges, charter schools, and approved private schools to

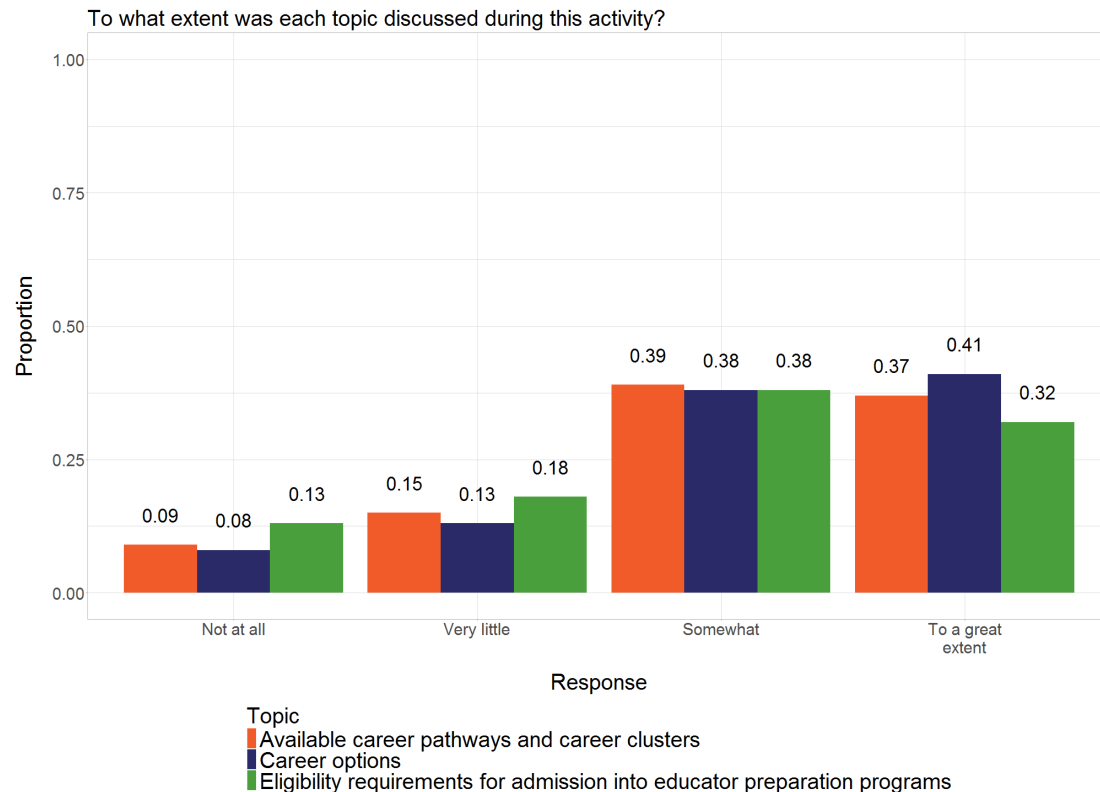
develop or expand projects and programs that provided opportunities for secondary and postsecondary students to learn about special education career pathways and work with students with disabilities. Grant awardees supported a wide array of Experiential Learning Opportunities (ELOs) that fell into three categories: career exploration, instructional opportunities, and social opportunities. Examples of ELOs included developing Autism Acceptance Day activities, paraprofessional credentialing for graduating high school students, clubs, courses, and sports. Through these experiences, students were introduced to the many career opportunities in special education and related areas.

The second cohort of grantees, which included 74 schools, received funds from July 2024 through June 2026. We reported findings from the 2024–25 school year student participants in the Year 3 report (Theobald et al., 2025). In this report we focus on the results from surveys of the 2025–26 school year participants. AIR’s IRB approved the surveys, and grant coordinators at each program distributed the surveys to participants. We received survey responses from 1,209 students before their participation in the program and 754 students after participation. Our IRB did not allow for collection of personally identifiable information of program participants so we cannot identify if students dropped out of the program before postsurvey or if they completed the program but did not complete the postsurvey.

Since a goal of the grant was to increase interest in special education careers, we asked participants about the topics discussed during their ELOs. Exhibit 1 presents the extent to which the ELO discussed available career pathways and career clusters, career options, and eligibility requirements for admission into educator preparation programs. About 41% of postsurvey respondents said career options were discussed “to a great extent,” compared to 37% for

available career pathways and career clusters and 32% for eligibility requirements for admission into educator preparation programs. Only 9% to 13% of survey respondents, depending on the topic, said these topics were discussed “not at all” during their ELO.

Exhibit 1. Extent to Which Topics Were Discussed During ELO



Many respondents to the postsurvey noted their understanding of available career pathways and career clusters, career options, and eligibility requirements for admission into educator preparation programs improved as a result of participation in an ELO activity. As shown in Exhibit 2, 39% of postsurvey respondents said their understanding of career options improved “to a great extent,” compared to 36% for available career pathways and career clusters and 32% for eligibility requirements for admission into educator preparation programs. Only 7%

to 9% of survey respondents, depending on the topic, said their understanding of each topic improved “not at all” as a result of the ELO activity.

Exhibit 2. Extent to Which Understanding of Topics Improved

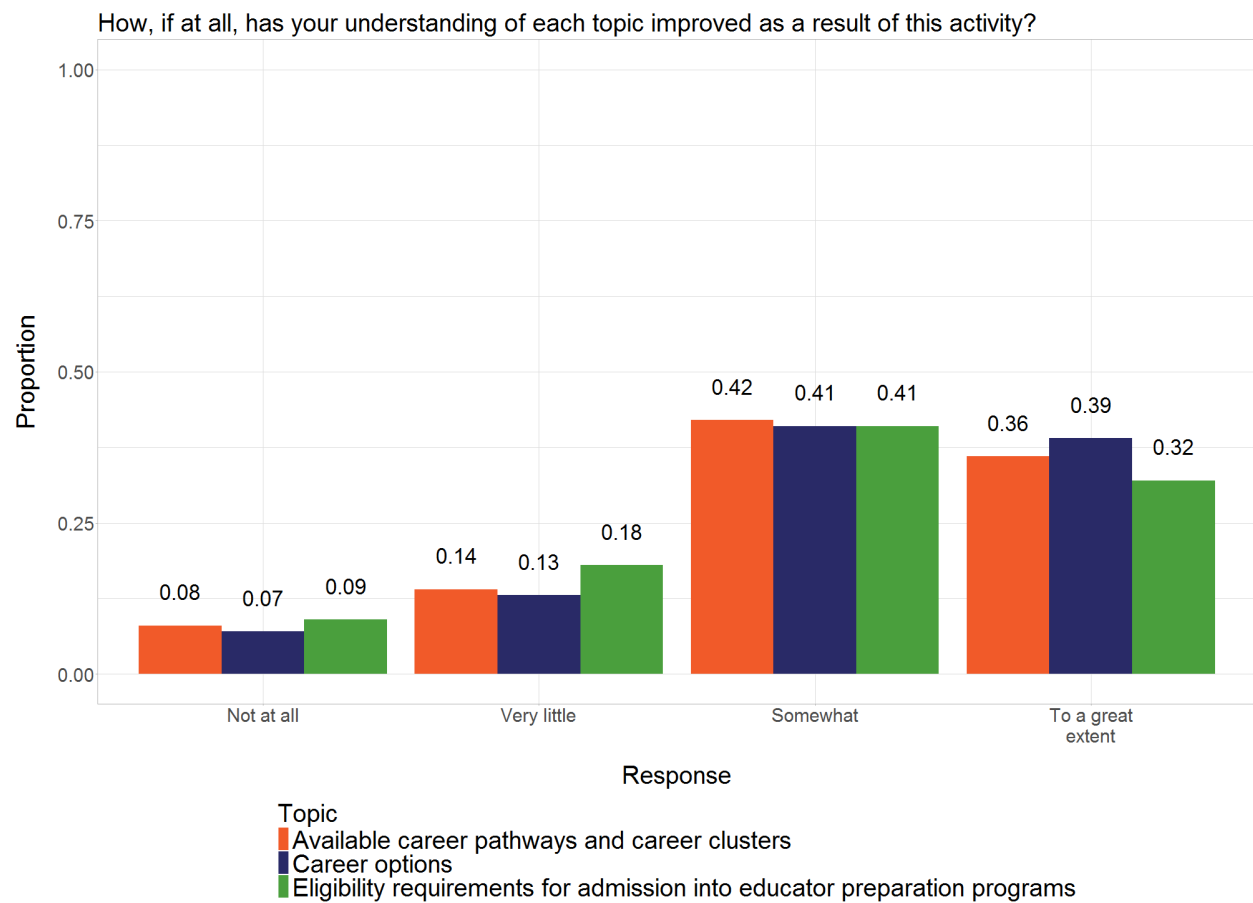
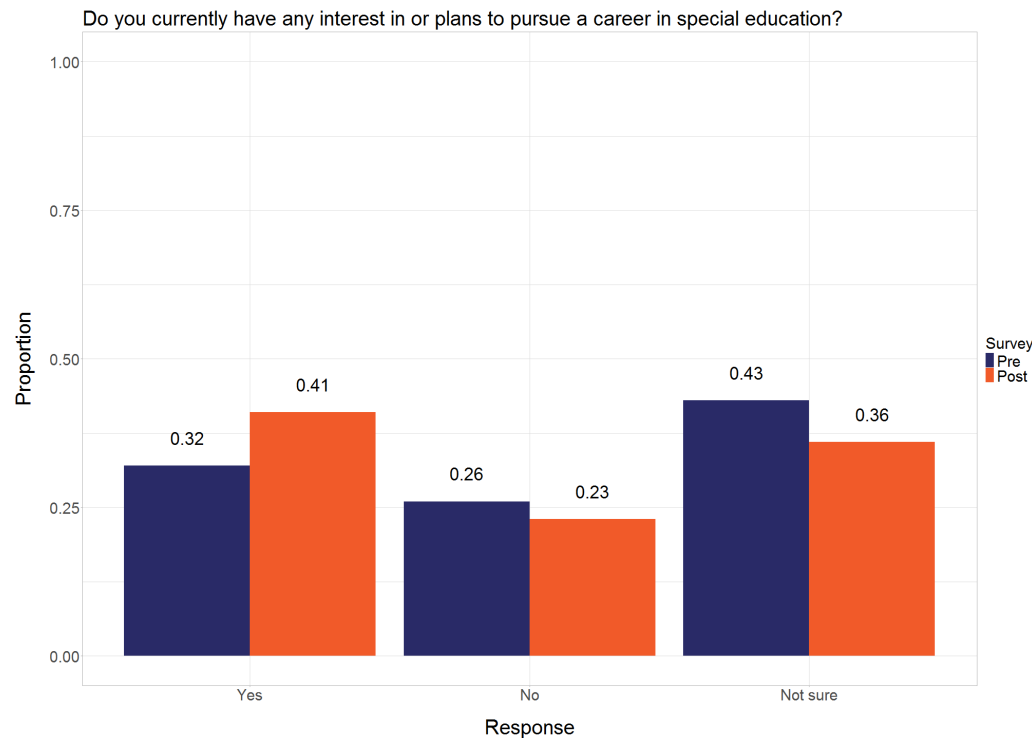


Exhibit 3 illustrates the percentage of program completers with interest or plans to pursue a career in special education before and after participating in the ELO. Thirty-two percent of respondents were interested in a special education career at presurvey. Interest or plans in pursuing a career in special education increased by nine percentage points after participation in the ELO, a statistically significant difference ($p < .001$), with 41% of respondents expressing interest in a special education career at postsurvey. Notably, the change in the proportion of respondents expressing interest in or plans in pursuing a career in special education before and after participation in the ELOs was larger (9-percentage-point increase from pre- to postsurvey) than in the prior school year (3-percentage-point increase). The increase in interest was largely driven by respondents who were initially unsure of their interest in special education careers, a finding that suggests ELO participation helped undecided students make up their minds.

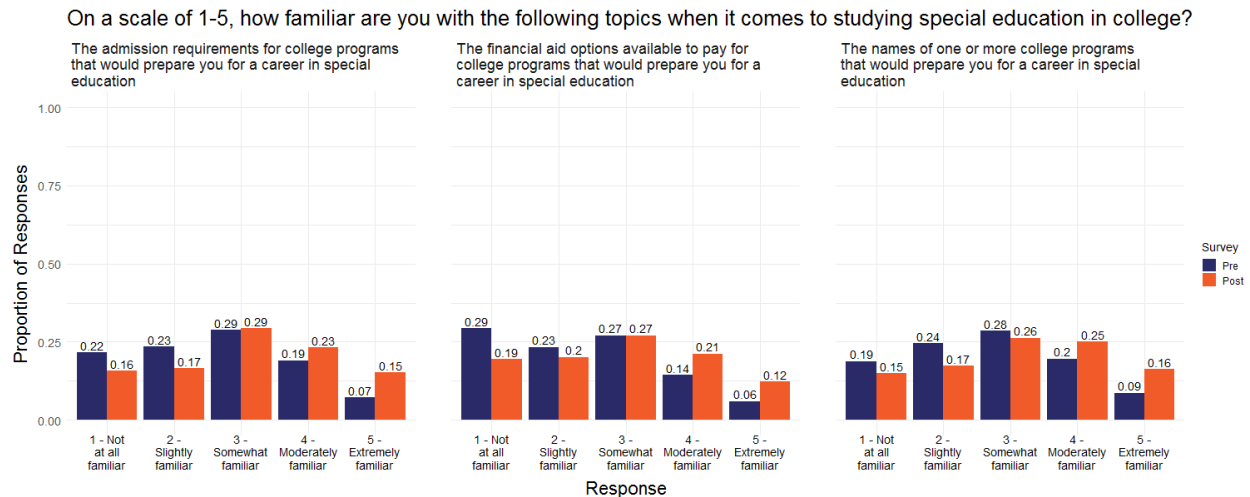
Exhibit 3. Interest or Plans in Special Education Careers Before and After ELO

Participation



The ELOs successfully introduced information about admission requirements, financial aid, and college programs, as illustrated in Exhibit 4. Only 26% of respondents reported being moderately or extremely familiar with admission requirements for college programs that prepare individuals for a career in special education prior to ELO participation; increasing to 38% after respondents participated in the ELO. One fifth of respondents entered the program moderately or extremely familiar with financial aid options, increasing to 33% after participation. Similarly, 29% of respondents were familiar with college programs in special education before ELO participation and 41% were familiar with these programs after participation. All of these increases are statistically significant ($p < .001$).

Exhibit 4. Participants Familiarity With Topics Related to Studying Special Education in College

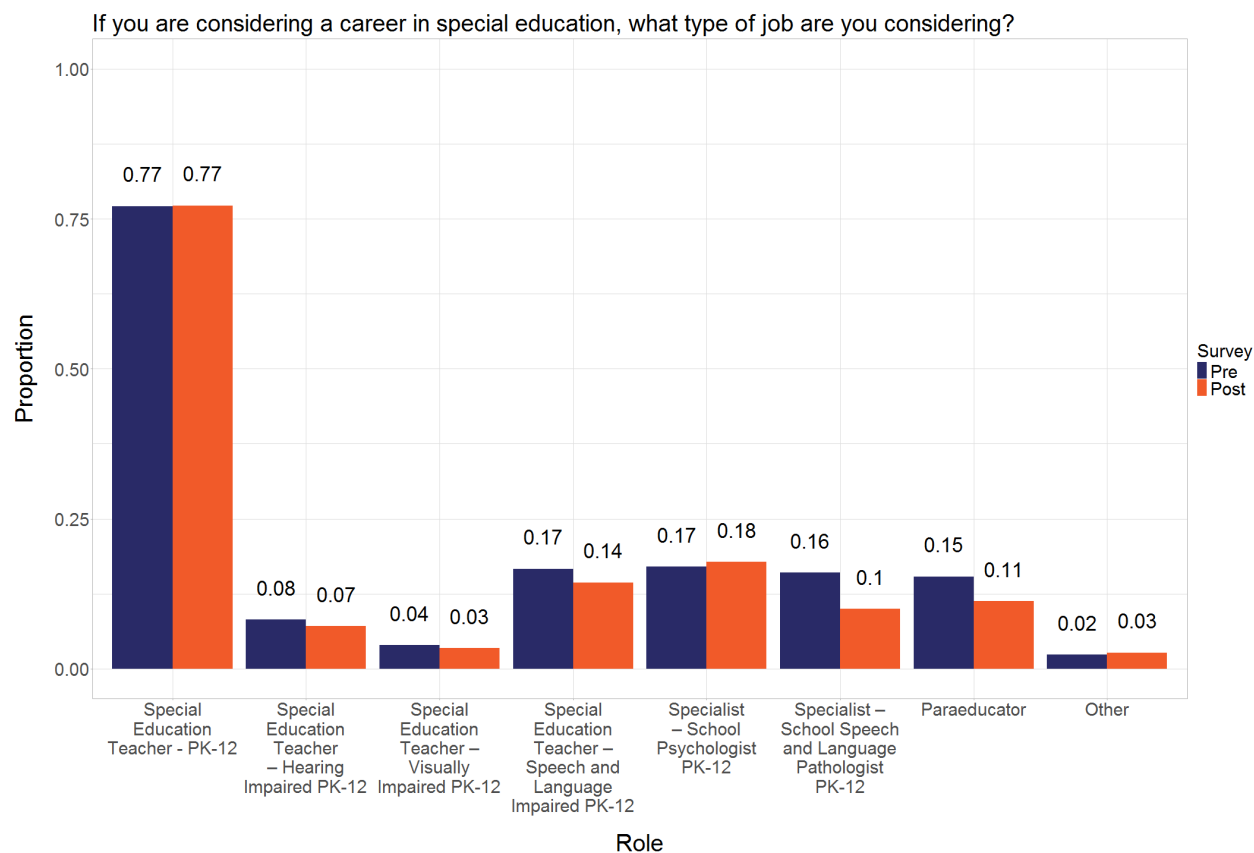


ELO participation also increased familiarity with specific special education careers. As shown in Exhibit 5, a higher proportion of respondents reported being “extremely familiar” with all seven special education careers after participating in ELOs, and a lower proportion reported being “not at all familiar” with these careers relative to respondents to the presurvey. These differences are statistically significant at conventional levels. The changes in familiarity were particularly large for careers that students were less familiar with before participation, such as speech and language pathologist. As shown in Exhibit 6, a larger number of respondents expressed interest in a PK–12 special education teacher career over other careers.

Exhibit 5. Participants' Familiarity with Specific Special Education Careers



Exhibit 6. Job Interests of Participants Considering a Career in Special Education



Note. Respondents could select more than one job category.

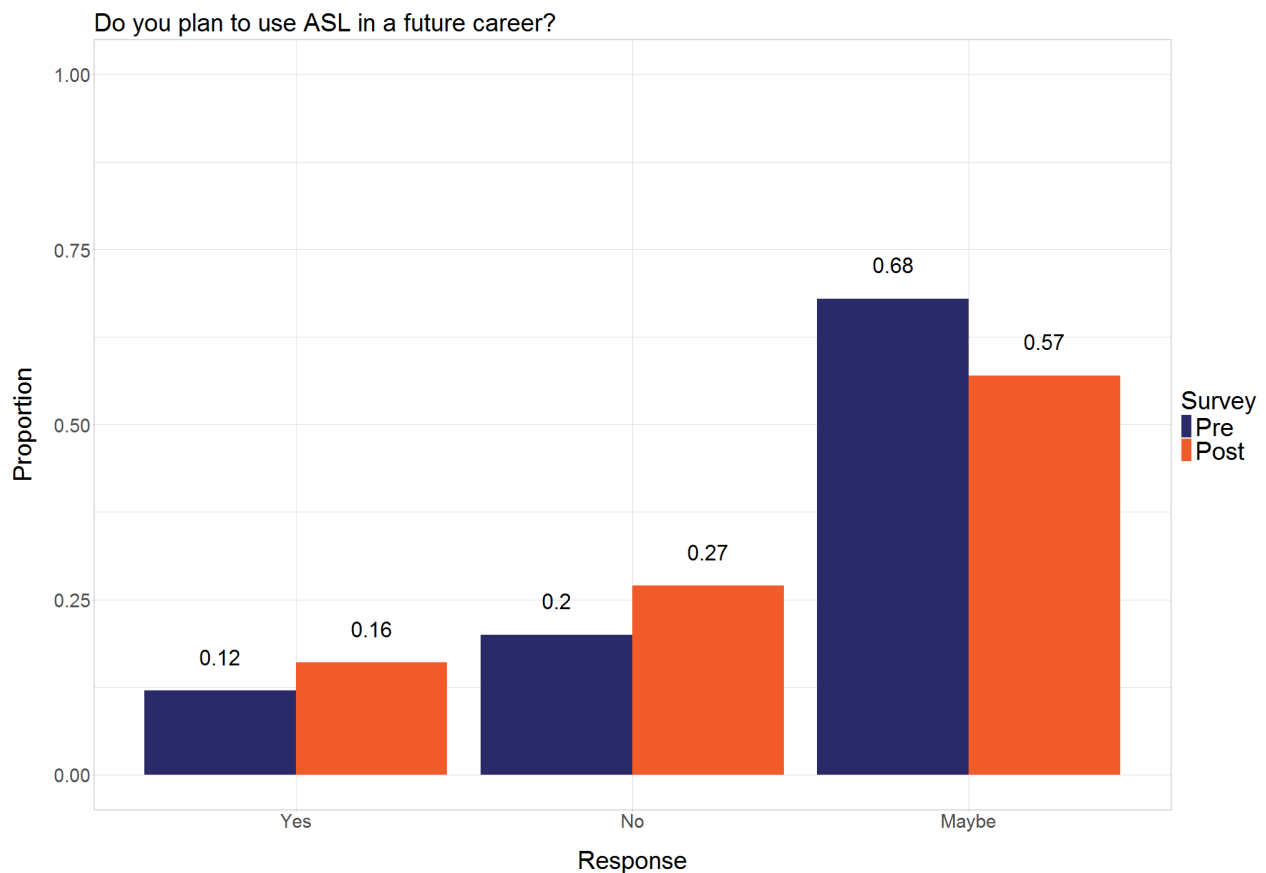
World of Learning (WOL) ASL Courses

Pennsylvania began offering ASL courses to high school students through WOL beginning in September 2023 (Theobald et al., 2024; Theobald et al., 2025). The goal of this project is to attract students to the field of special education through participation in ASL courses. During the 2025–26 school year, 254 students from 18 districts or high schools enrolled in WOL courses. Similar to prior years, 104 students responded to the presurvey (41%) and only 51 students (20%) responded to the postsurvey administered to participants.

Similar to results from last year (Theobald et al., 2025), a higher percentage of respondents reported plans to use ASL in a future career on the postsurvey compared to respondents to the presurvey. Exhibit 7 illustrates these results, with 12% of presurvey respondents reporting plans to use ASL in a future career and 16% of postsurvey respondents reporting plans to use ASL in a future career after participating in an ASL class.

Notably, PDE has additional investments that support career pathways using ASL. Beginning in 2026–27, PDE will provide \$10,000 stipends to qualifying educational interpreter interns and, during 2026, will pay registration costs for the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment. PDE should examine how these efforts affect the availability of educational interpreters in schools.

Exhibit 7. Participants Reported Plans to Use ASL in a Future Career



Paraeducator Preparation Pathway Grants

The Paraeducator Preparation Pathway Grants support paraeducators to obtain an associate of arts degree while learning and working in their Local Educational Agency (LEA). IUs partner with IHEs to provide these learning opportunities. The first cohort of grant recipients included 10 IUs and began in 2023 with paraeducators completing their program requirements by May 2026. The second cohort of grant recipients includes eight IUs each supporting a minimum of 10 current paraeducators who will complete their program requirements by the end of August 2027.

Cohort 1 Findings

We surveyed Paraeducator Pathway Program completers from the first cohort of 62 completers. After obtaining approval from AIR's IRB, PaTTAN distributed the link to the survey. Twenty-two completers responded to the survey, a response rate of 35%. The survey results may not represent the experiences of all completers. As shown in Exhibit 8, three IUs had four respondents, one IU had three, one IU had two, and five IUs had one respondent. Respondents most often reported that their current roles included assisting with behavior management and interventions, supporting individual students in special education settings or general education classrooms, and leading small group instruction (Exhibit 9).

Exhibit 8. IUs of Survey Respondents

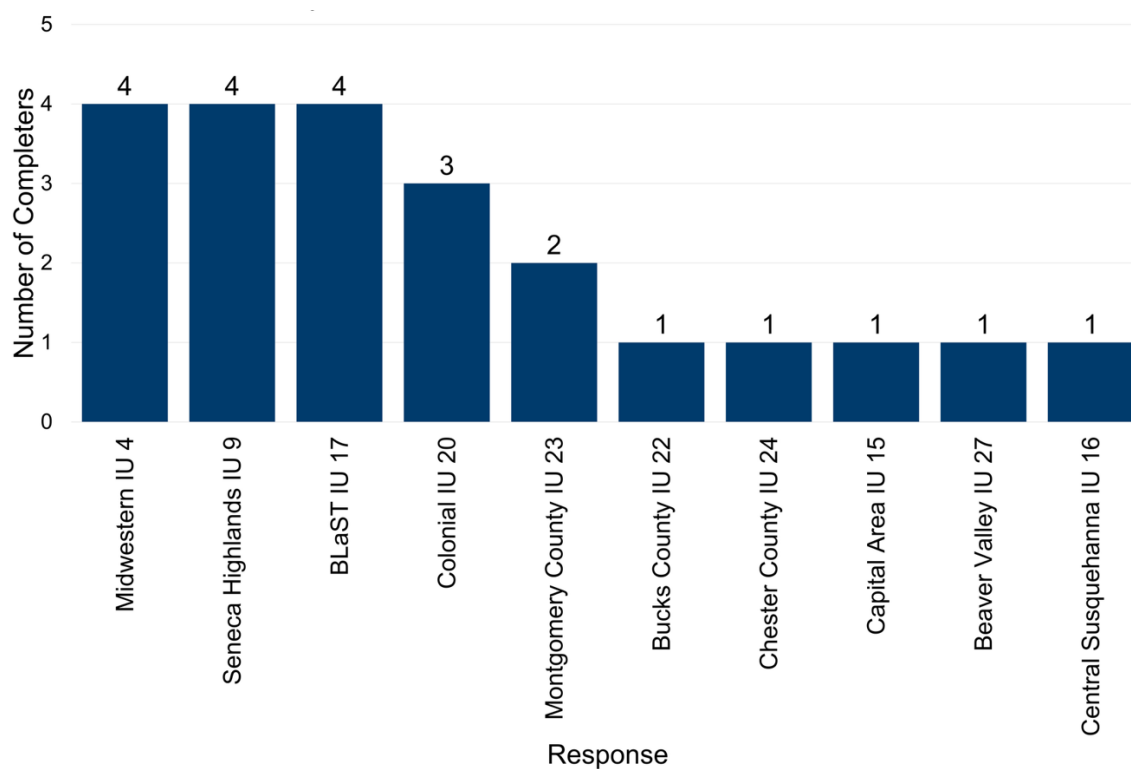
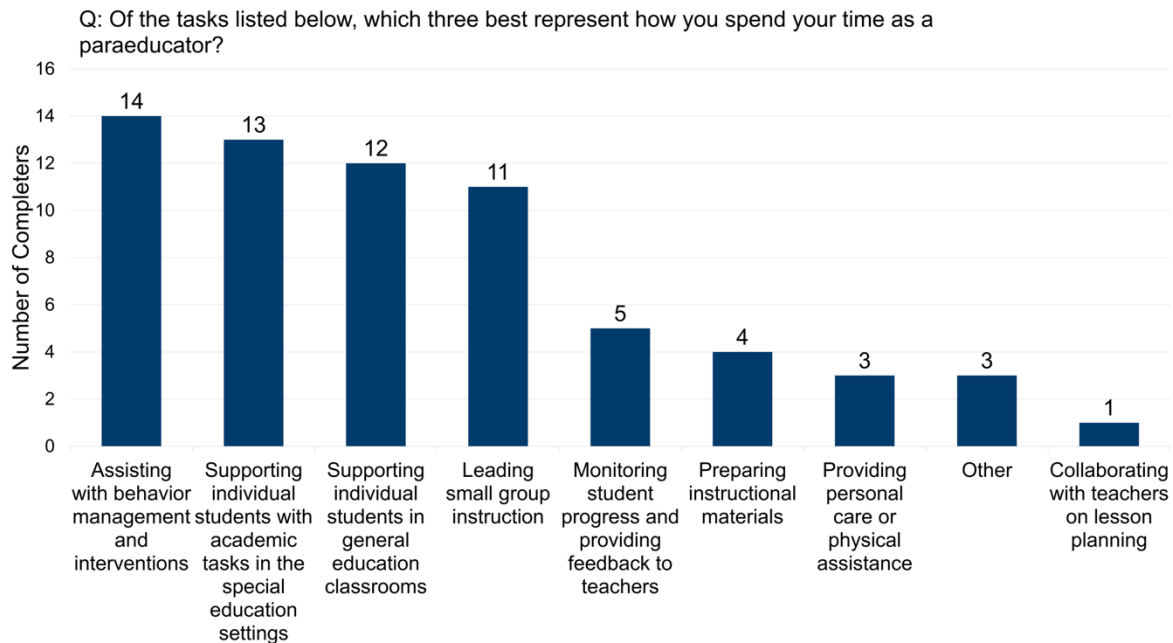
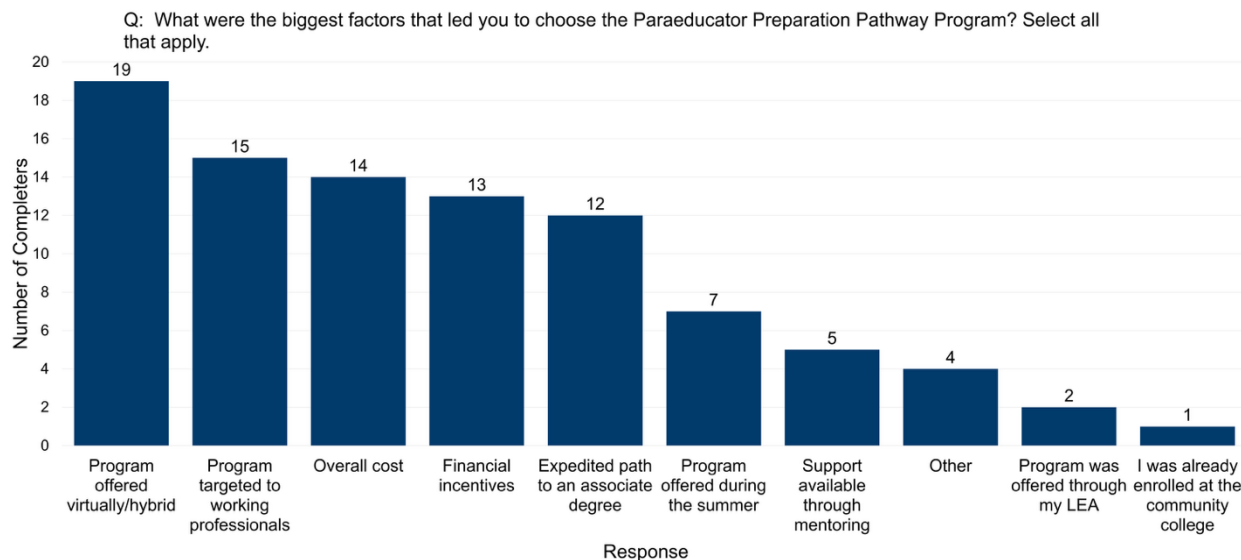


Exhibit 9. Respondents' Reports of How They Spent Their Time



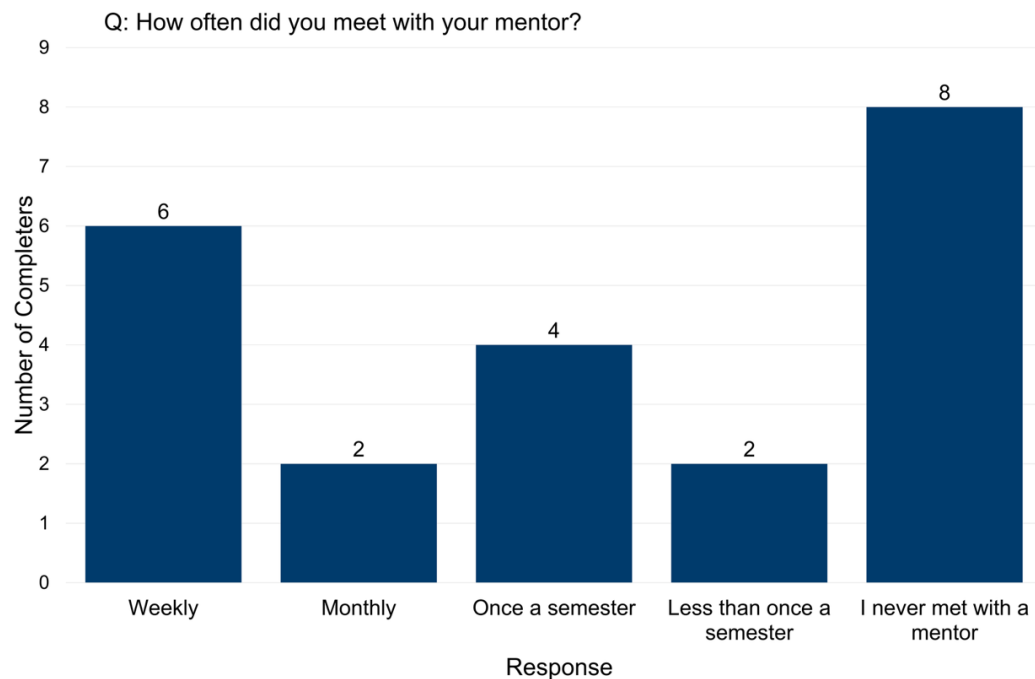
Respondents reported multiple reasons for choosing to participate in the Paraeducator Preparation Pathway Program (Exhibit 10). The most frequently reported factors were that the program was offered virtually or hybrid, that the program targeted working professionals, the overall cost, and financial incentives. Only one respondent was already enrolled at a community college, suggesting the program primarily recruited individuals who were not already working toward a degree.

Exhibit 10. Factors for Choosing to Participate



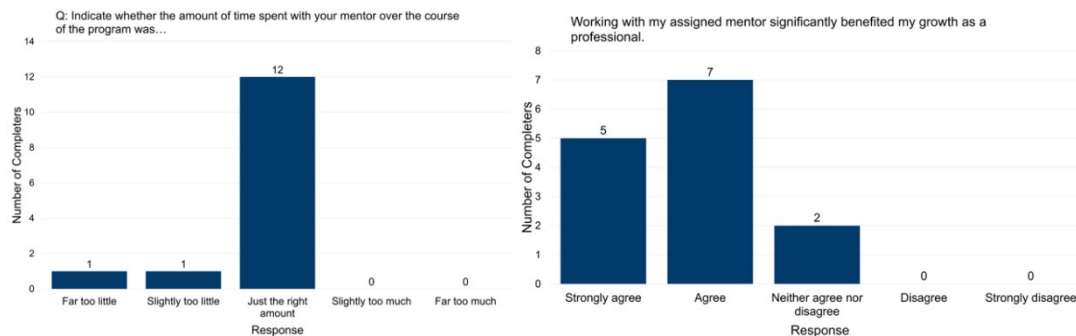
As part of the Paraeducator Preparation Pathway Program, many participants worked with a mentor. As shown in Exhibit 11, the frequency of mentor meetings varied: 27% of respondents reported they met weekly, 18% reported they met once a semester, 9% monthly, and 9% less than once a semester. Notably, 36% of respondents reported that they never met with a mentor. Of the 14 respondents who reported meeting with a mentor, most (86%) reported that the time spent with their mentor over the course of the program was just the right amount. Shown in Exhibit 12, 86% of respondents who reported meeting with a mentor strongly agreed or agreed that working with their assigned mentor significantly benefited their growth as a professional. On open-ended responses, respondents recommended strengthening mentoring and follow-up support. Suggested improvements included regular check-ins, expanded advising services, and assistance with career planning and next steps following program completion.

Exhibit 11. Reported Frequency of Mentor Meetings



Note. Only completers who reported meeting with a mentor completed items about mentoring.

Exhibit 12. Perceptions of Mentoring



Note. Only completers who reported meeting with a mentor completed items about mentoring.

Paraeducator Preparation Pathway Program participants also had access to networking opportunities. However, similar to mentoring, not all respondents participated in networking

opportunities, as shown in Exhibit 13. Among the 11 respondents who participated in networking opportunities, the most common frequency was once a semester (45%). Half of respondents reported the frequency of networking opportunities as “just the right amount” while the other half reported there were slightly too few or far too few networking opportunities (Exhibit 14). As illustrated in Exhibit 14, most respondents who participated in networking events participated in formal meetings or informal peer discussions rather than regional events. Nearly all the respondents (91%) reported that the quality of networking opportunities was excellent or good (Exhibit 14).

Exhibit 13. Reported Frequency of Networking Opportunity

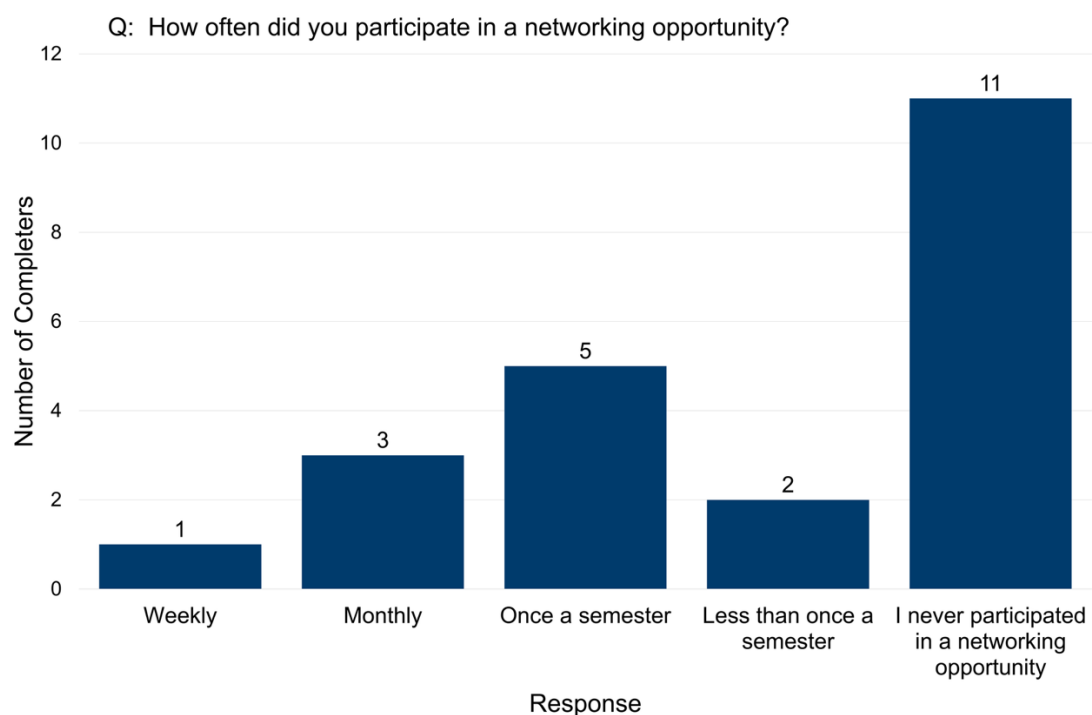
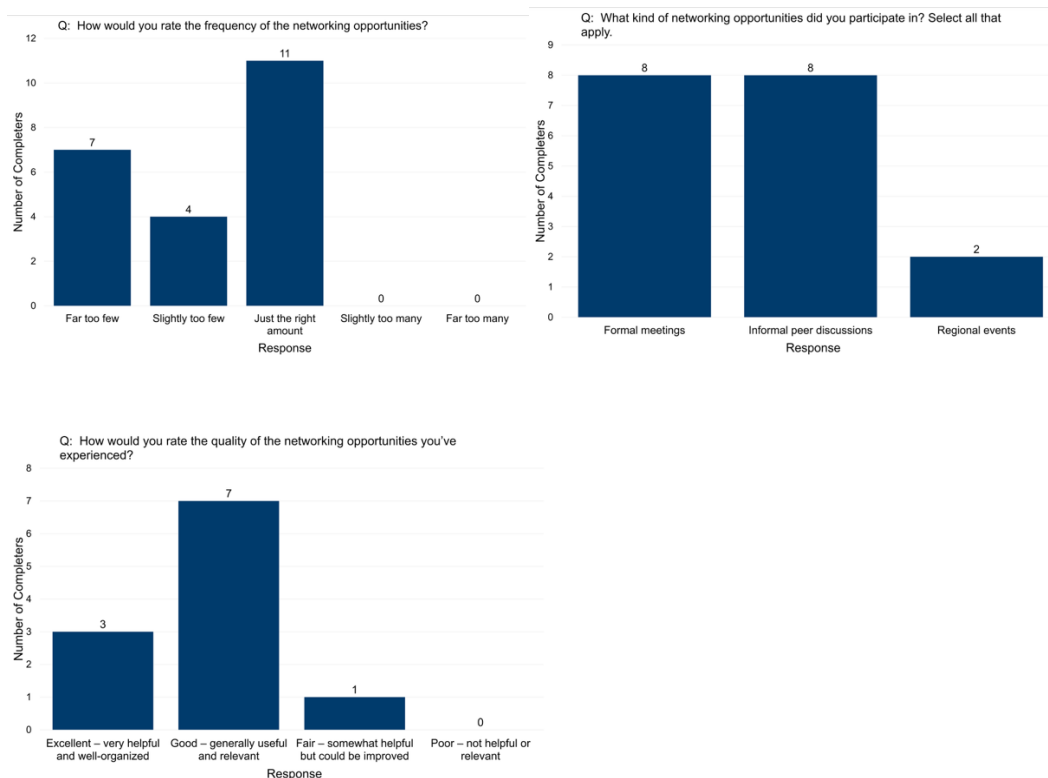


Exhibit 14. Networking Opportunities and Perceptions



Even without all completers participating in mentoring and networking, the survey results support the overall success of the Paraeducator Preparation Pathway Grants. The Paraeducator Preparation Pathway programs deepened paraeducators skills, attracted participants who would not have started the path toward becoming a certified special education teacher without the program, and completers reported positive perceptions of the program. As shown in Exhibit 15, all respondents reported that they were unlikely or very unlikely to have pursued an associate degree if the program did not exist. A majority of completers who responded to the survey reported they were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience in the program (86%), with no respondents reporting they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (Exhibit 16). On open-ended

responses, many respondents described the experience as supportive, valuable, and transformative, noting that it helped them achieve important academic and career goals.

Exhibit 15. Completers' Likelihood of Completing an Associate Degree Without the Paraeducator Preparation Pathway Program

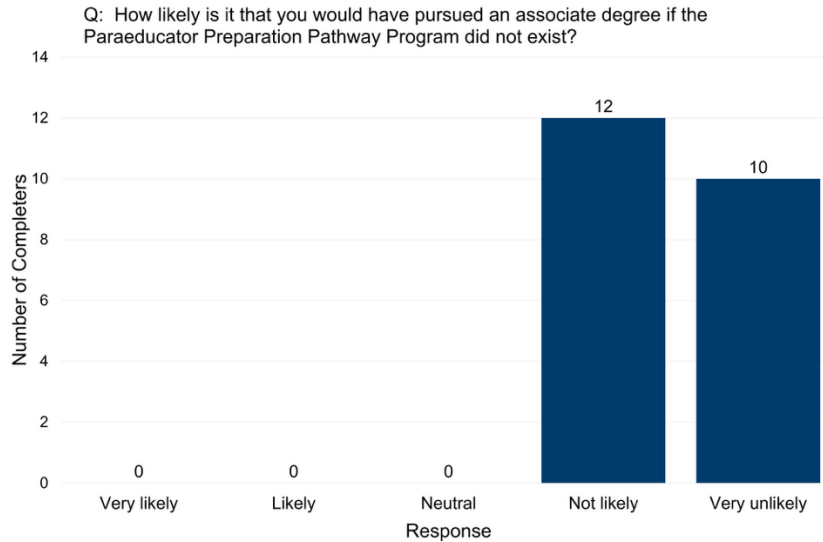
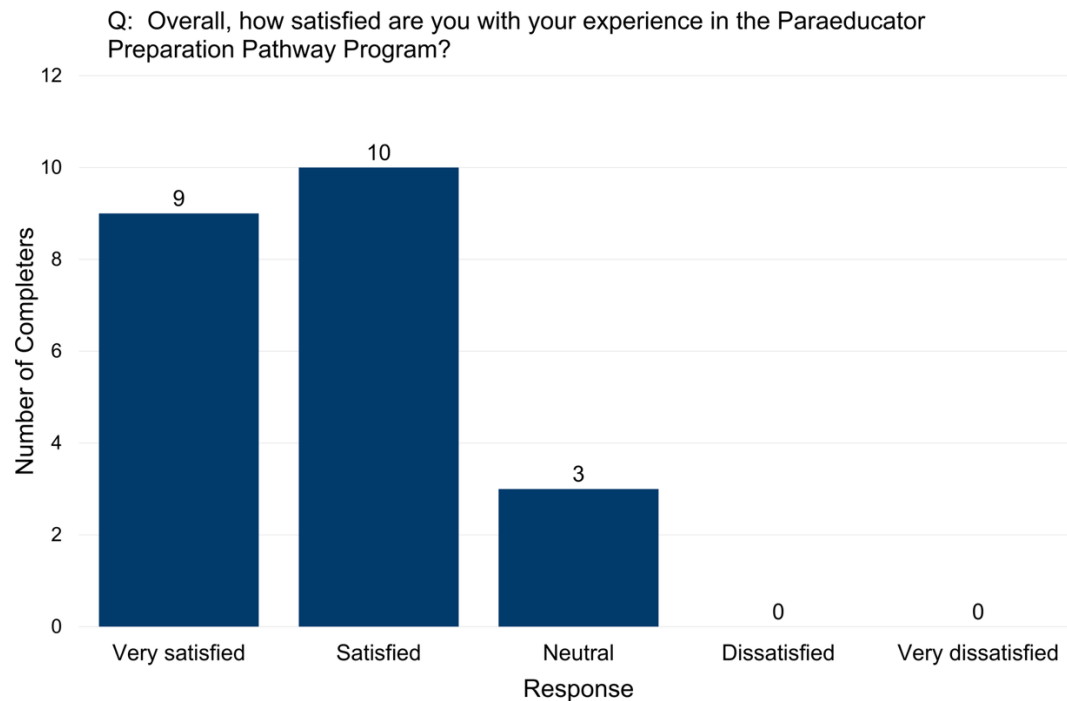
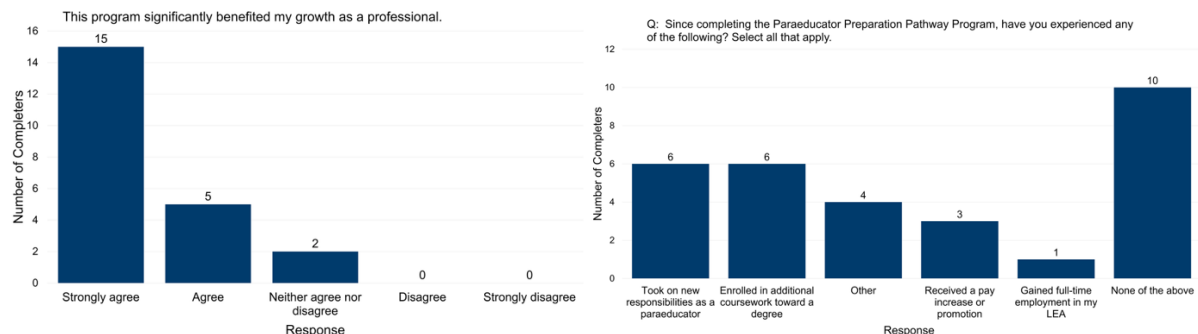


Exhibit 16. Satisfaction With Experience in the Paraeducator Preparation Pathway Program



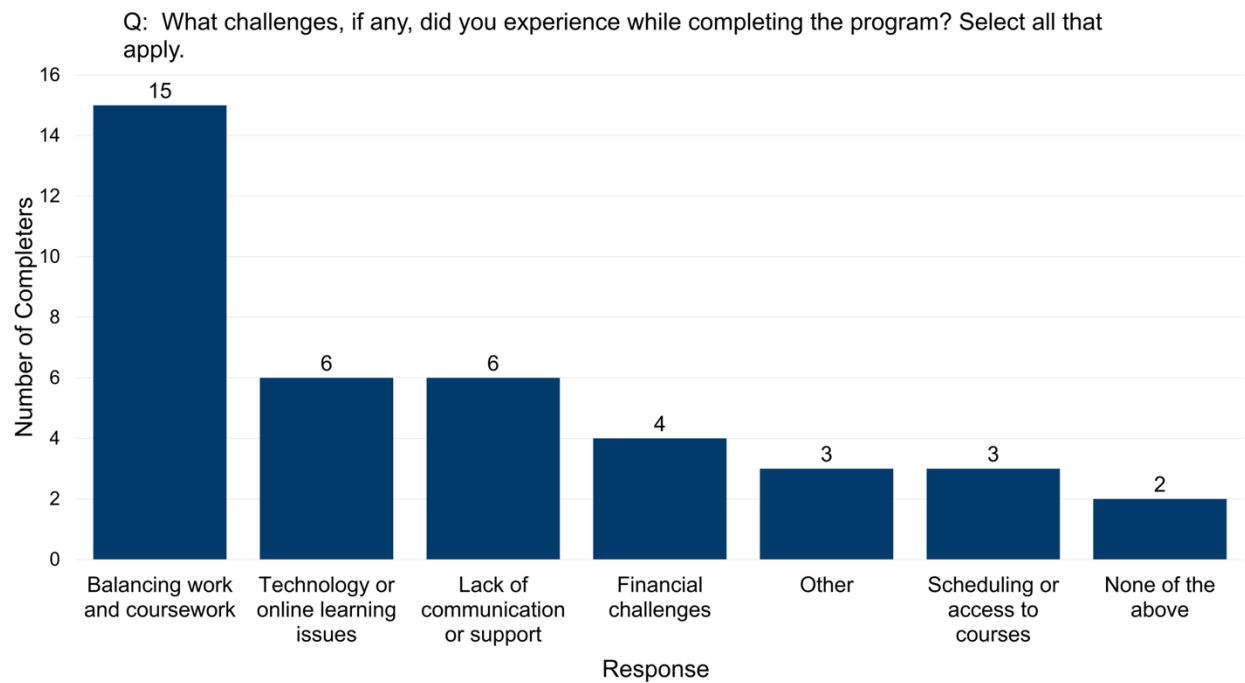
The Paraeducator Preparation Pathway Program supported completer's' growth as professionals. As illustrated in the first panel of Exhibit 17, 91% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the program significantly benefited their growth as a professional. They also reported their roles in schools had changed since completing the program. As shown in the second panel of Exhibit 17, over half of respondents reported they took on new responsibilities, enrolled in additional coursework, received a pay increase or promotion, gained full-time employment, or had a different change since participating in the program.

Exhibit 17. Completers' Perceptions of the Paraeducator Preparation Pathway Program's Benefit on Their Growth as a Professional and Changes in Roles



Overall perceptions of the program were positive, but most respondents reported that they experienced challenges while completing the program. As shown in Exhibit 18, the most frequently reported challenge was balancing work and coursework (68% of respondents). Notably, this challenge was so pronounced that the completion window for the grant was extended from December 2025 to May 2026. Other challenges included technology or online learning issues, lack of communication or support, and financial challenges. Increased participation in mentoring and networking could help provide participants with supports and strategies for balancing competing demands.

Exhibit 18. Reported Challenges While Completing the Program

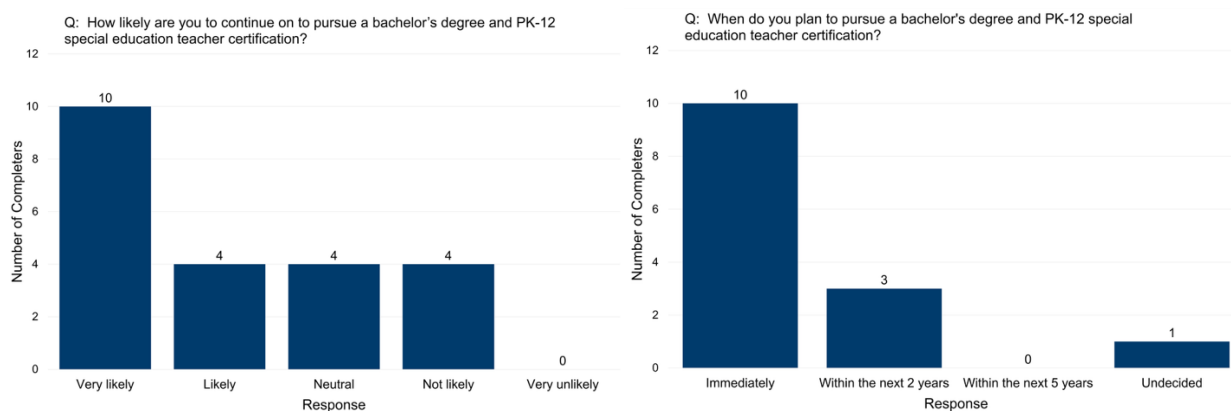


Open-ended survey responses provided further insight into the main challenges experienced by respondents. The most frequently cited area of concern—raised by nearly one third of respondents—was confusion, miscommunication, or difficulty related to program funding and tuition. Participants reported confusion regarding tuition payments, reimbursement procedures, and grant-related financial processes. Some respondents noted that being reimbursed for expenses rather than expenses covered up front presented a challenge. Many indicated that clearer information about program costs, reimbursement timelines, and future funding opportunities would improve the participant experience.

Completers who responded to the survey appeared eager to continue their path toward a bachelor’s degree and special education certification. Exhibit 19 displays information about respondents’ future plans. Nearly two thirds of completers responding to the survey reported they

were likely or very likely to continue their education in pursuit of a bachelor's degree and special education teacher certification, with 71% of these individuals planning to do so immediately. Notably, the new Paraeducator Advancement Grant for Bachelor's Degree and PK–12 Special Education Teacher Certification given to 11 IUs will support these efforts.

Exhibit 19. Respondents' Future Education Plans



Grant coordinators at each IU also provided quarterly updates on the progress of paraeducators and the successes and challenges that program participants encountered. A notable success across IUs was the number of paraprofessionals successfully completing their associate degrees and the excitement of many participants for continuing toward a bachelor's degree. Grant coordinators also reported that the ability to restructure the program to allow more time for associate degree completion was a key factor in supporting participant success.

Grant coordinators reported two main challenges. First, some participants struggled to successfully complete coursework, primarily math courses. Second, it was sometimes challenging for IUs to coordinate with community colleges and districts around billing, scheduling, and supporting students. However, one grant coordinator described how they

successfully collaborated with community colleges by establishing agreements to speak to faculty about the performance of program participants. This allowed the IU to offer more support to participants who were at risk of failing a course.

Cohort 2 Emerging Findings

Grant coordinators at each IU provided updates each quarter about the number of participating paraeducators, current number of LEAs, courses, networking, program successes, and program challenges for the second cohort of the Paraeducator Preparation Pathway Grants. Based on the most recently reported data from each IU, a total of 49 paraeducators were enrolled in Cohort 2 with an average of six paraeducators per IU. The IUs reported working with a total of 20 LEAs. Seven out of the eight participating IUs (88%) reported providing networking opportunities for participating paraeducators. Six of the eight participating IUs (75%) reported providing academic supports to participating paraeducators. Types of academic supports included academic advising and tutoring, often through the community college.

Grant coordinators noted multiple successes, including close collaboration with community colleges, increased interest and enrollment in the program, and the academic success of many participants. Reported challenges included obtaining life experience credits (when adult learners receive credit for professional work), participants' limited technology skills, participants failing courses, participants' abilities to balance courses with other work and life responsibilities, and difficulties working with LEAs. The Year 6 report will include survey data for Cohort 2 when they complete their programs by August 2027.

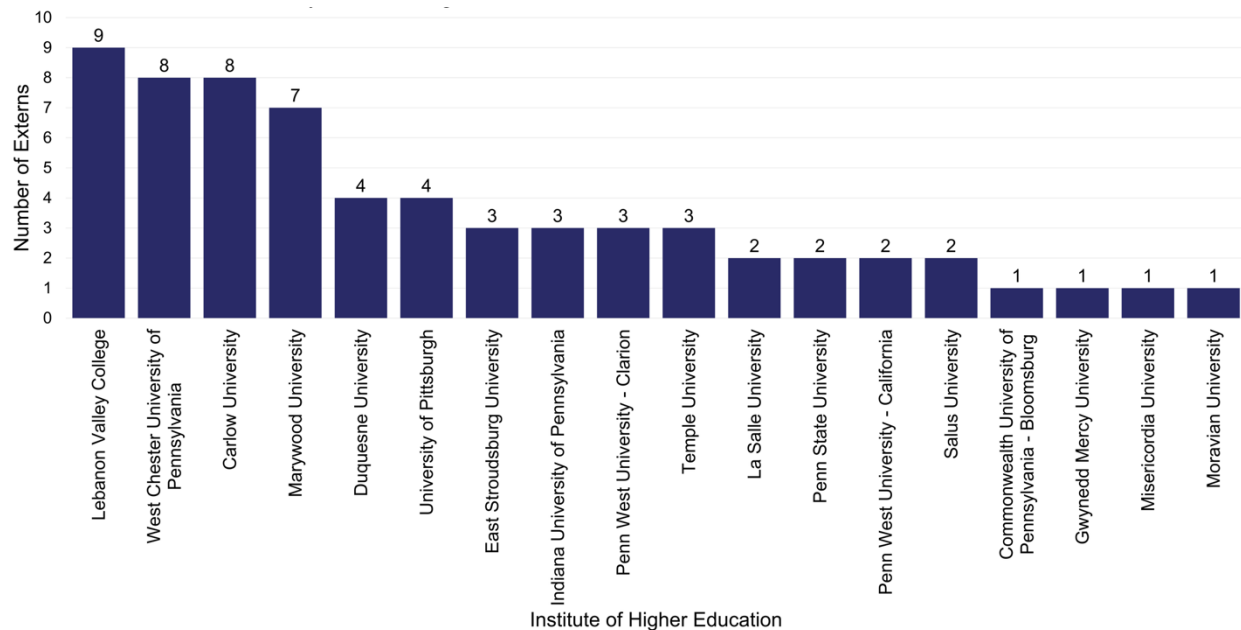
Master's Level Speech Language Pathologist Stipend for School-Based Placements

The goals of the Master's Level Speech Language Pathologist Stipend for School-Based Placements are to establish or expand school-based placements (i.e., externships) that provide high-quality services and increase the number of SLP students who pursue an Instructional I or education specialist certificate and work in LEAs in Pennsylvania. Qualifying LEAs applied to the grant program and grantees provided \$5,000 stipends for graduate SLP student externships. Only graduate students enrolled in Pennsylvania Department of Education-approved SLP programs were eligible for the stipend.

Externs participated in PaTTAN professional development opportunities that their site supervisors were also invited to attend. Site supervisors at the LEAs had a minimum of 5 years of experience working in educational settings. LEAs were also expected to provide externs with experiences across grade levels, opportunities to attend school-based meetings, opportunities to collaborate with IEP team members, engagement in direct and indirect service delivery, opportunities for family engagement, and exposure to communication disorders.

The 2025–26 school year marked the second year of the stipend program. PaTTAN (2025) reported that during the first year, 35 of the 40 eligible LEAs provided stipends to 54 externs. During the second year, the stipend program had 66 externs from 31 LEAs, who attended 20 IHEs. Here we report on survey data from the 64 externs who completed the survey, 58 site supervisors, nine LEA contacts, and two IHE contacts. When comparing pre and postsurvey results, we only include 61 externs who completed the survey at both timepoints. PaTTAN developed and fielded the extern and LEA and site supervisor surveys.

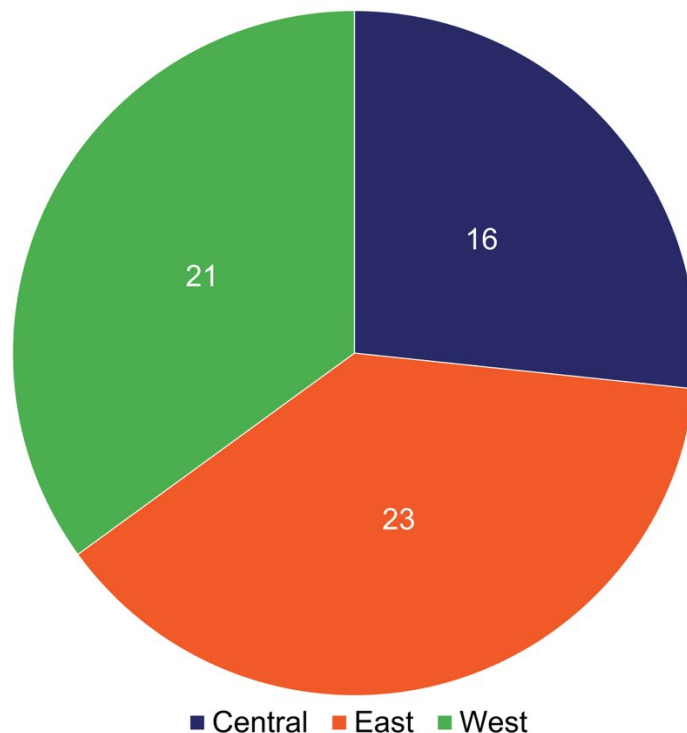
Exhibit 20. Number of Externs by Institute of Higher Education



Note. The exhibit includes the 18 IHEs reported by the externs who completed the survey.

Exhibit 20 displays the number of externs by IHE. The number of IHEs with SLP externs receiving stipends ranged from one to nine. Of the 60 externs who provided information on their region, 38% were in the PaTTAN East region, 35% in the PaTTAN West region, and 27% in the PaTTAN Central region, as shown in Exhibit 21.

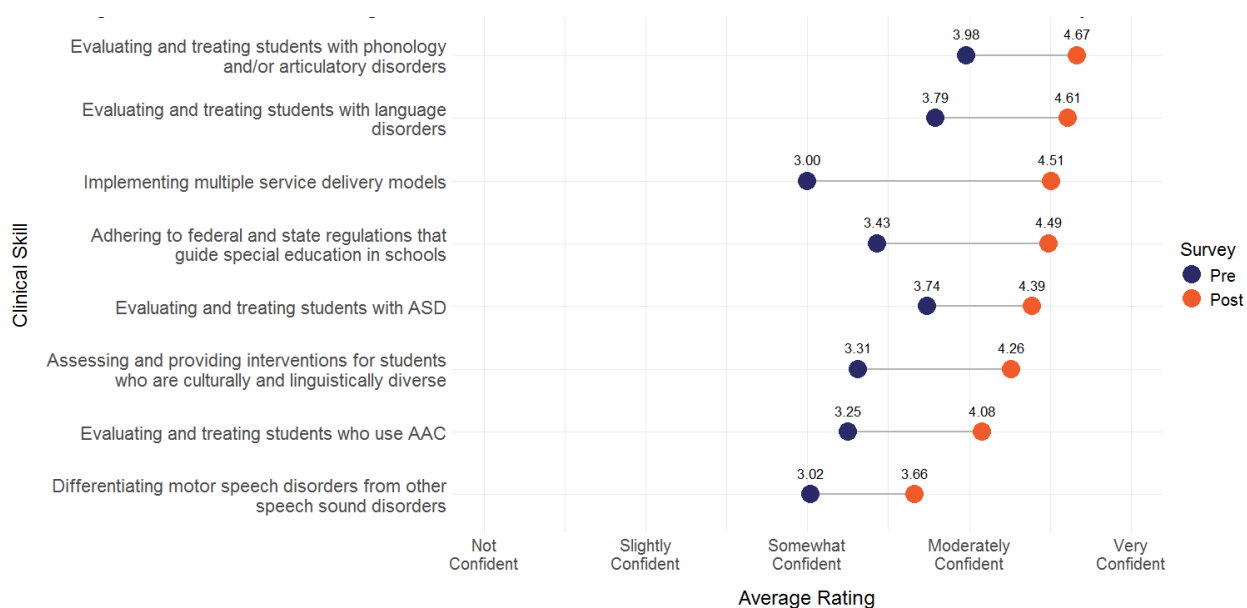
Exhibit 21. Number of Externs by PaTTAN Region



Overall, externs reported improvements in their confidence in their clinical skills, and they also reported that their externships met Pennsylvania’s requirements and their interests in working in public schools. Exhibit 22 displays each clinical skill identified by PDE and externs’ ratings of their confidence before completing the externship and after completing the externship. The 61 externs with pre and postsurveys reported, on average, an increase in their confidence in clinical skills. Respondents reported the most confidence in evaluating and treating students with phonology and/or articulatory disorders and evaluating and treating students with language disorders both before and after completing the externship. The largest increase in reported confidence was on “Implementing multiple service delivery models.” This item had the lowest average rating of confidence at presurvey, a rating of 3.00 corresponding to somewhat confident, and it improved to a rating of 4.51 at postsurvey, corresponding to between moderately confident

and very confident. Respondents reported relatively less confidence with differentiating motor speech disorders from other speech sound disorders, with an average rating of 3.02 on the presurvey, corresponding to somewhat confident, increasing to 3.66 on the postsurvey, corresponding to between somewhat and moderately confident.

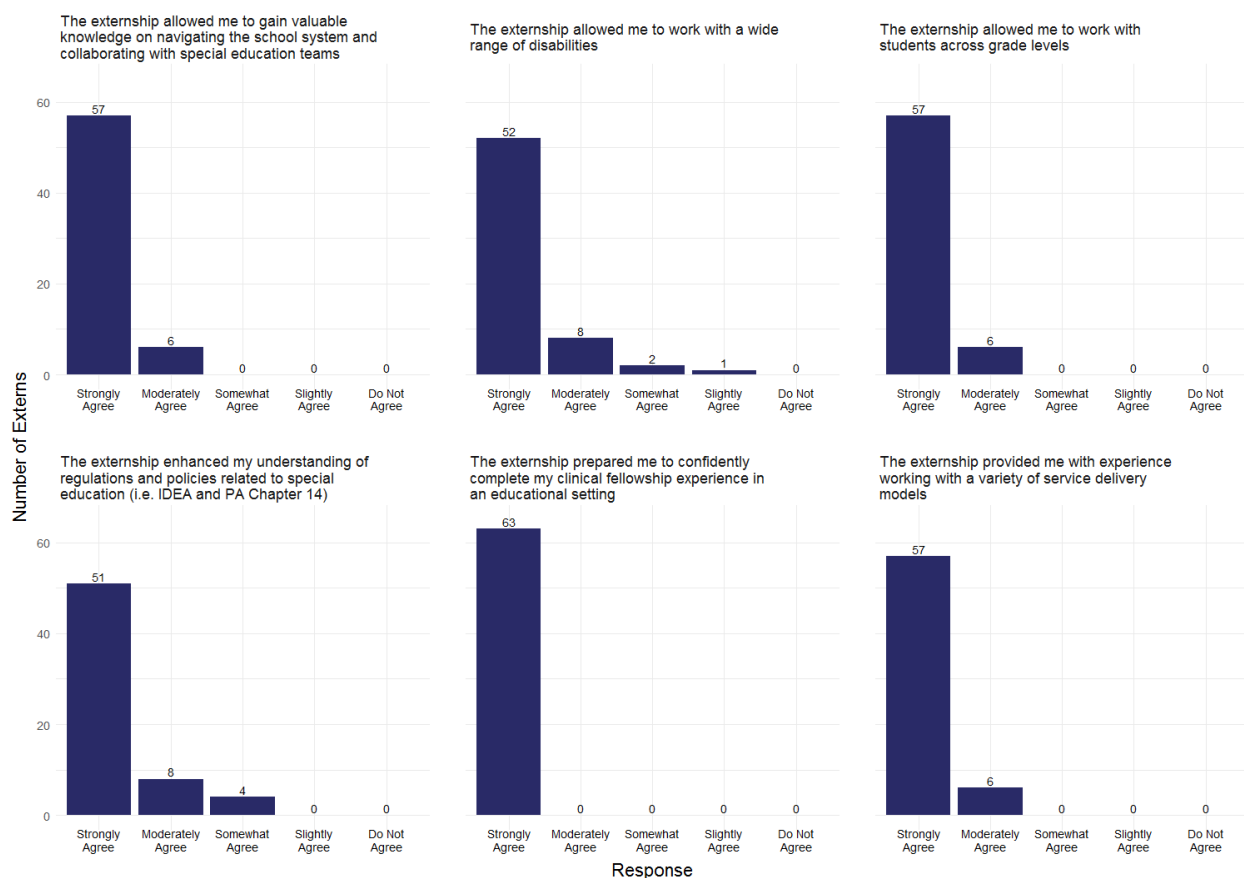
Exhibit 22. Average Confidence Level Rating of Clinical Skills for Externs, Pre and Postsurvey



On the postsurvey, externs rated the extent to which the externship provided different opportunities that met PDE's required assurances. Results for these items are displayed in Exhibit 23. All respondents (100%) strongly agreed that the externship prepared them to confidently complete their clinical fellowship experience in an educational setting. All respondents strongly or moderately agreed that the externship allowed them to gain valuable knowledge on navigating the school systems and collaborating with special education teams, allowed them to work with students across grade levels, and provided them with experience

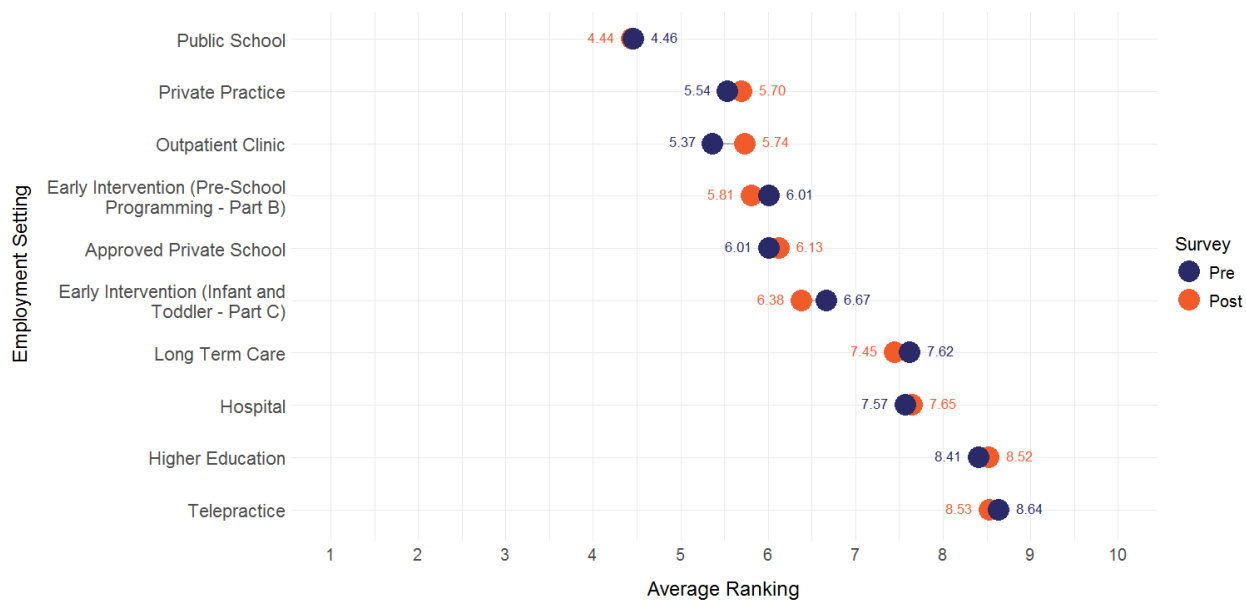
working with a variety of service delivery models, with 91% of respondents selecting strongly agree for these indicators. There were slightly lower levels of agreement that the externship allowed them to work with a range of disabilities, with 83% of respondents strongly agreeing, 13% moderately agreeing, 3% somewhat agreeing, and 2% slightly agreeing the externship allowed them to work with a range of disabilities. Similarly, 81% of respondents strongly agreed, 13% moderately agreed, and 6% somewhat agreed that the externship enhanced their understanding of regulations and policies related to special education.

Exhibit 23. Externs' Ratings of the Extent to Which the Externship Met PDE's Required Assurances



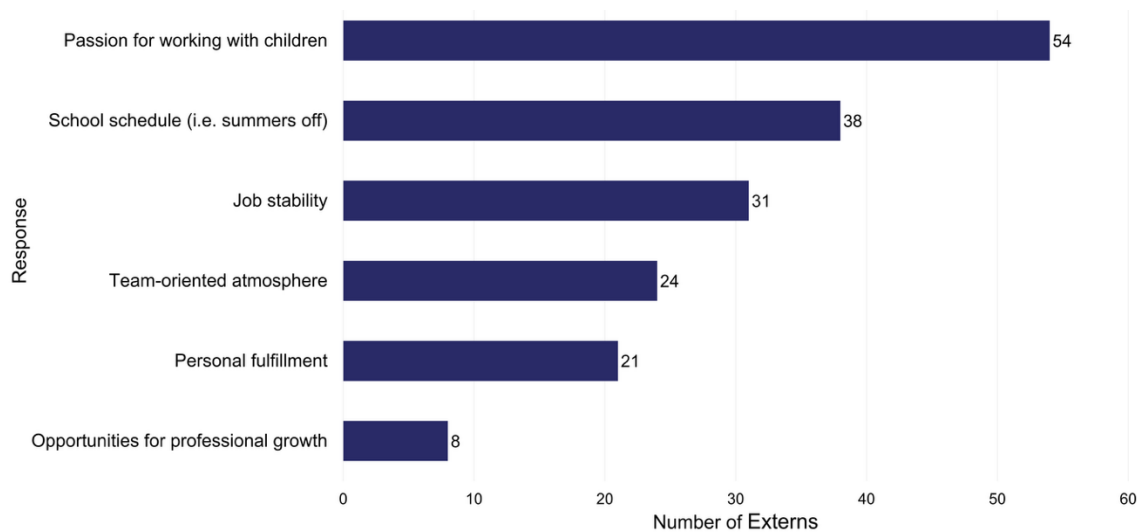
On the pre and postsurvey, externs ranked their preferences for different employment settings. Externs ranked ten potential employment settings, with “1” representing their most desirable employment setting and “10” representing their least desirable employment setting. Exhibit 24 displays the pre and postsurvey average ranking by setting results for externs responding to both surveys. Similar to externs in the 2024–25 school year (PaTTAN, 2025), respondents ranked public schools as their most desired employment setting, on average. Public schools were followed by private practice and outpatient clinics. The least desirable employment settings for extern survey respondents were hospitals, higher education, and telepractice. Notably, average rankings of employment settings changed little from before and after participating in the externship. This finding is different from the first year of the program, when externs reported a lower preference for private practice on the postsurvey compared to the presurvey and a higher preference for public schools on the postsurvey compared to the presurvey. Overall, externs reported improvements in their confidence in their clinical skills, that their externships met Pennsylvania’s requirements, and their interests in working in public schools.

Exhibit 24. Average Forced Rank of Desired Employment Setting



Externs provided their reasons for pursuing a career in education. As illustrated in Exhibit 25, the most frequently reported reasons for pursuing a career in education were a passion for working with children, the school schedule, and job stability. The least frequently reported reason for pursuing a career in education was opportunities for professional growth. The results align with the results from externs in the 2024–25 cohort.

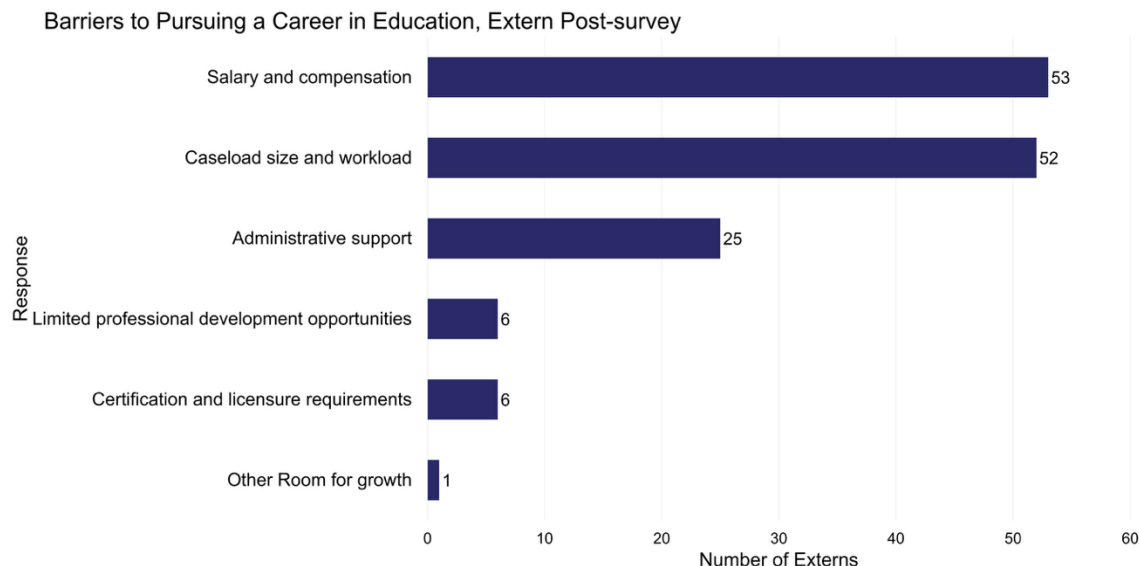
Exhibit 25. Reasons for Pursuing a Career in Education



Note. Externs could select up to three responses.

Respondents also provided information about their perceived barriers to careers in education. As illustrated in Exhibit 26, most respondents identified salary and compensation and caseload size and workload as potential barriers to pursuing a career in education. Aligning with results from 2024–25, a small number of respondents noted limited professional development opportunities and certification and licensure requirements as barriers. One respondent selected “other” and noted room for growth as a barrier to pursuing a career in education.

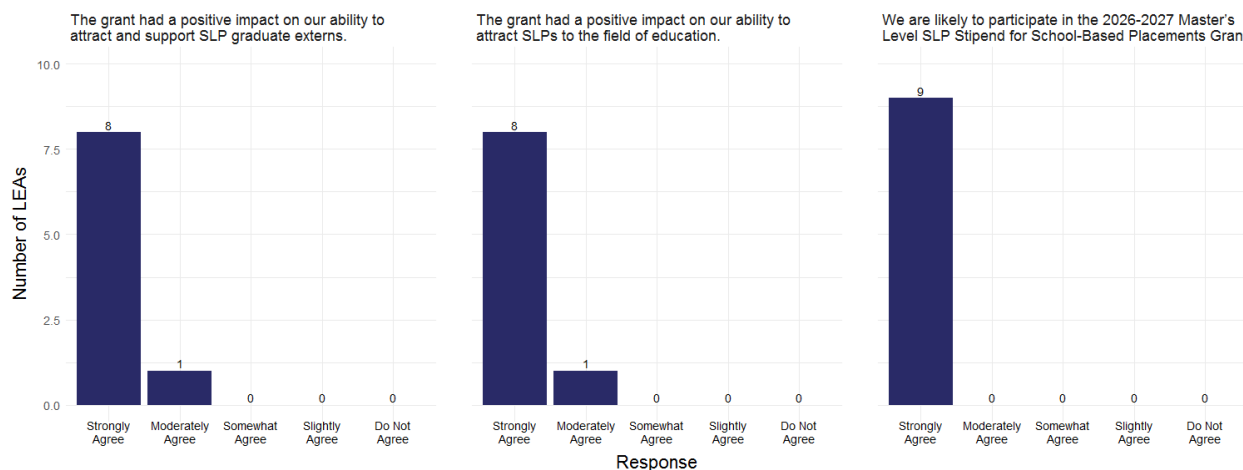
Exhibit 26. Perceived Barriers to Pursuing a Career in Education



Note. Externs could select up to three responses.

Results from LEA contacts, IHE contacts, and site supervisors reinforced the externs' survey results. As illustrated in Exhibit 27, LEA contacts strongly agreed or moderately agreed that the stipend grant had a positive impact on their ability to attract and support SLP graduate externs and that the stipend grant had a positive impact on their ability to attract SLPs to the field of education. All nine respondents to the LEA survey reported they were likely to participate in the next year of the program. These ratings were more positive than the LEA contacts' ratings in 2024–25.

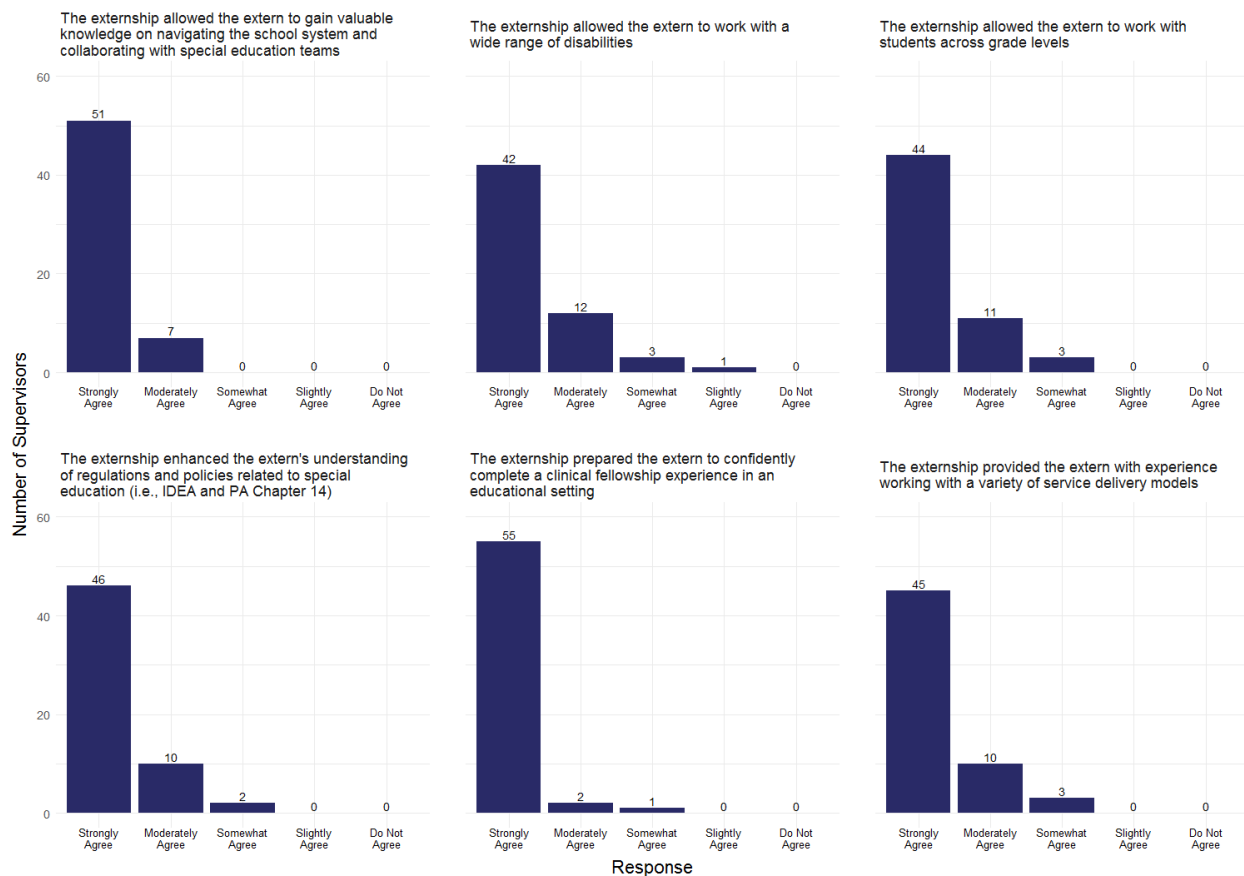
Exhibit 27. LEA Contacts' Ratings of Grant Impact



Similar to the externs, site supervisors rated high levels of agreement with the extent to which the externship met PDE's required assurances. These results are reported in Exhibit 28. Ninety-five percent of responding site supervisors strongly agreed that the externship prepared the extern to confidently complete their clinical fellowship experience in an educational setting, with 3% moderately agreeing and 2% somewhat agreeing. All respondents strongly or moderately agreed the externship allowed externs to gain valuable knowledge on navigating the school systems and collaborating with special education teams. Although agreement ratings were slightly lower for other elements of the externship, no respondents expressed disagreement: On the statement that the externship enhanced externs' understanding of regulations and policies related to special education, 79% of respondents strongly agreed, 17% moderately agreed, and 4% somewhat agreed. Seventy-six percent of responding site supervisors strongly agreed that the externship allowed the extern to work with students across grade levels; 19% moderately agreed and 5% somewhat agreed. Results were similar for the externship allowing the extern to work with a wide range of disability types and a variety of service delivery models.

Exhibit 28. Site Supervisors' Ratings of the Extent to Which the Externship Met PDE's

Required Assurances



Although only two IHE contacts completed the survey, the responses provide some contextual information for the stipend program. Both respondents reported that PaTTAN could support site supervisors through comprehensive supervisor training and recognition programs. Aligning with the externs' reported barriers to working in educational settings, both respondents reported that competitive salary and benefits were a strategy they recommended to attract and retain SLPs in educational settings. Both respondents also noted workload management as the biggest challenges for graduates entering the education field post-externship.

Together, these findings suggest the stipend is strengthening the pipeline of public school-based SLPs in Pennsylvania. In future years of the program, PDE could provide guidance and support to site supervisors for ensuring all externs have an opportunity to work across disabilities and grade levels. Pennsylvania should continue surveying participants and consider tracking the long-term employment outcomes of stipend recipients.

Accelerated Program for PK–12 Special Education Teacher Certification Grant

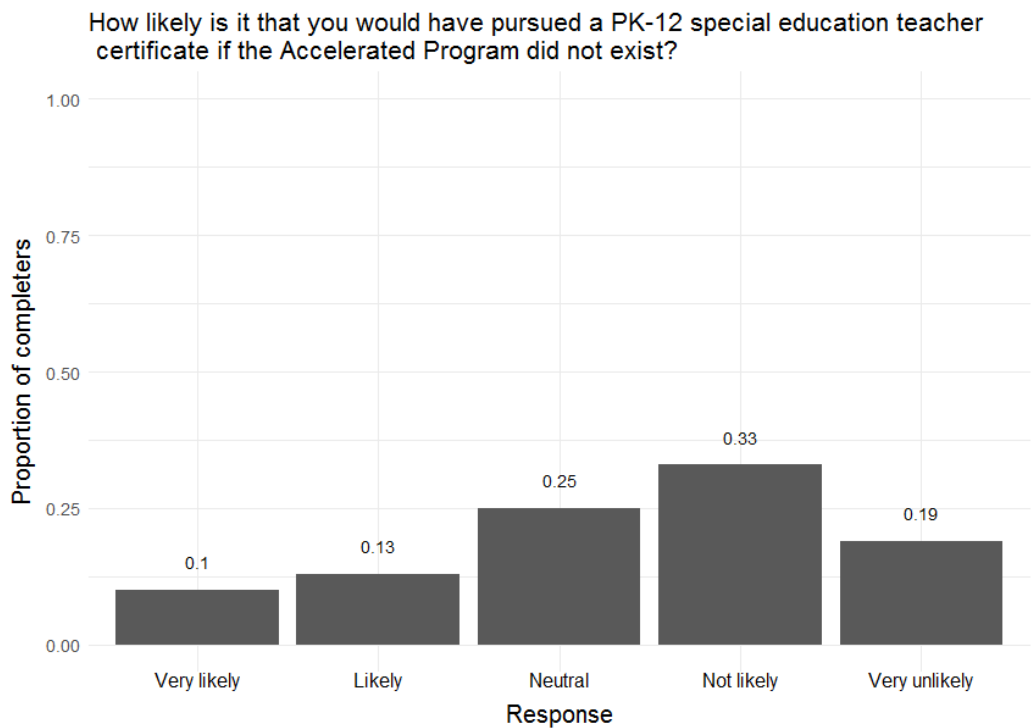
The Accelerated Program for PK–12 Special Education Teacher Certification Grant (Accelerated Program) incentivizes institutions of higher education (IHEs) to create 18-month special education teacher certification programs. The Accelerated Program addresses two related challenges with supporting entry into special education teaching in Pennsylvania: (a) growing reliance on special education teachers with emergency permits; and (b) low percentages of emergency permitted special education teachers obtaining full certification. As described in our Year 3 report, only 6% of new special education teachers were teaching on emergency permits in 2017 compared to 23% of new special education teachers in 2023 (Theobald et al., 2025). Prior to the grant, only 33.6% of these new special education teachers teaching on emergency permits obtained special education certification within 4 years.

The Accelerated Program was created to provide a faster mechanism for moving emergency permitted special education teachers to full special education certification. In addition to shortening the length of time required to obtain certification, the program features courses that are designed to support new special education teachers. Each program is required to include a classroom management course the summer a cohort begins classes, followed by coursework that covers structured literacy, individualized education program (IEP) development and

implementation, and special education law in the fall semester. Programs also provided mentoring and coaching by experienced special educators, summer field experiences, and flexible delivery of courses such as using online and hybrid courses.

The first cohort from 15 participating IHEs completed the Accelerated Program in December 2024. A second cohort from 14 participating IHEs will complete the Accelerated Program in December 2026, and a third cohort from 10 participating IHEs will begin the Accelerated Program in summer 2026. Our previous reports have described survey results for the Cohort 1 program completers and interviews with grant coordinators about designing and implementing their IHE's Accelerated Program (Theobald et al., 2025). Initial survey evidence suggested that the Accelerated Program successfully recruited individuals to special education teacher certification who would not have typically been interested; over half of completers reported they were not likely or very unlikely to have pursued a PK–12 special education teacher certificate if the Accelerated Program did not exist (Exhibit 29). Although employment data from Cohort 1 will not be available until Fall 2026 and turnover data will not be available until Fall 2027, we can examine the certification outcomes of Cohort 1 and where program completers worked while they completed the program. We also report emerging findings about Cohort 2 provided by grant coordinators.

Exhibit 29. Responses to the Survey Item “How Likely Is It That You Would Have Pursued a PK–12 Special Education Teacher Certificate if the Accelerated Program Did Not Exist?”



Cohort 1 Initial Certification and Work Outcomes

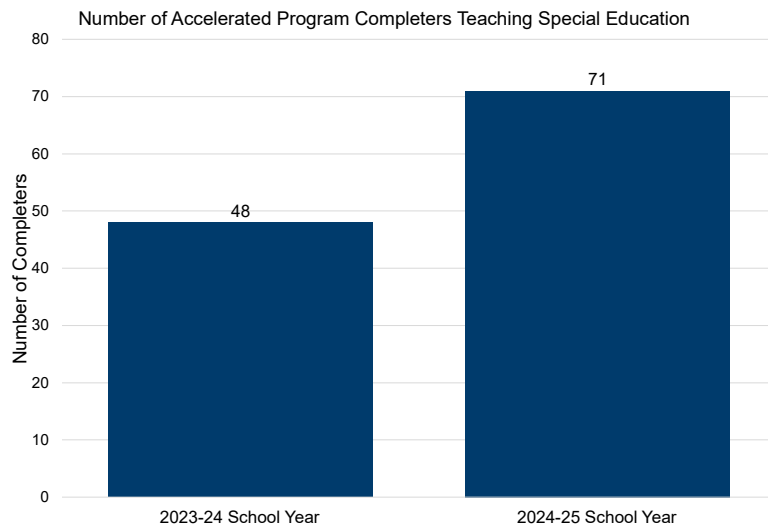
The first cohort included 142 program completers. Using names, we matched completers to administrative staffing and certification data to describe initial certification and work outcomes. Overall, we matched 125 (88%) of program completers to administrative staffing and/or certification data that was up to date as of August 2025. We matched 88 program completers to both staffing and certification data and 37 program completers to certification data only. Twelve completers could not be matched to the administrative data, and five completers had common names that prevented matching. The 12 we were unable to match to the administrative data may not have worked in Pennsylvania public schools during the Accelerated Program, may not have completed their certification paperwork by August 2025, or may have

moved out of state. The initial results reported here are for the 125 program completers matched to the administrative data.

The Accelerated Program was open to all and did not target participants based on where they worked or their characteristics. There were some differences between participants in the Accelerated Program and other special education teachers in the state. Higher shares of Accelerated Program completers were under 30 years old (38%) compared to emergency permitted special education teachers who were not enrolled in the Accelerated Program (14%) or fully certified special education teachers (5%).

Many program completers worked in Pennsylvania public schools while they completed the Accelerated Program. Exhibit 30 displays the number of program completers teaching special education during the 2023–24 school year, the first year of their program, and the 2024–25 school year, their last semester in the program. In 2023–24, 48 program completers taught special education in public schools. This number increased to 71 program completers in 2024–25. This initial evidence suggests the Accelerated Program resulted in more special education teachers in schools. We expect that this number will increase further in the 2025–26 school year, which was the first full school year following program completion. Cohort 1 program completers finished their certification requirements in December 2024, and in a typical hiring cycle, most would find employment by fall 2025. However, data from the 2025–26 school year are not yet available. Notably, a limitation of the administrative data is that it does not include paraeducators. Some program completers may have worked as paraeducators while completing their program.

Exhibit 30. Number of Accelerated Program Completers Teaching Special Education in the 2023–24 and 2024–25 School Years



Program completers worked in a range of settings while completing the program. Exhibit 31 shows the proportion of program completers who were working in Pennsylvania public schools by district urbanicity during the 2023–24 and 2024–25 school years. In both years, larger shares of program completers worked in suburban districts than in cities or rural districts. Exhibit 32 illustrates the types of schools program completers worked in. There was a slight increase in the proportion of program completers working in regular public schools in 2024–25 (61%) compared to 2023–24 (54%) with a commensurate decline in the proportion of program completers working in Intermediate Units (IUs), although these differences between years were not statistically significant. Exhibit 33 shows the proportion of program completers who were working in public schools by Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) regions during the 2023–24 and 2024–25 school years. Consistent across both school years, most program completers were in the PaTTAN East region.

Exhibit 31. Urbanicity of Schools Where Accelerated Program Completers Worked During the 2023–24 and 2024–25 School Years

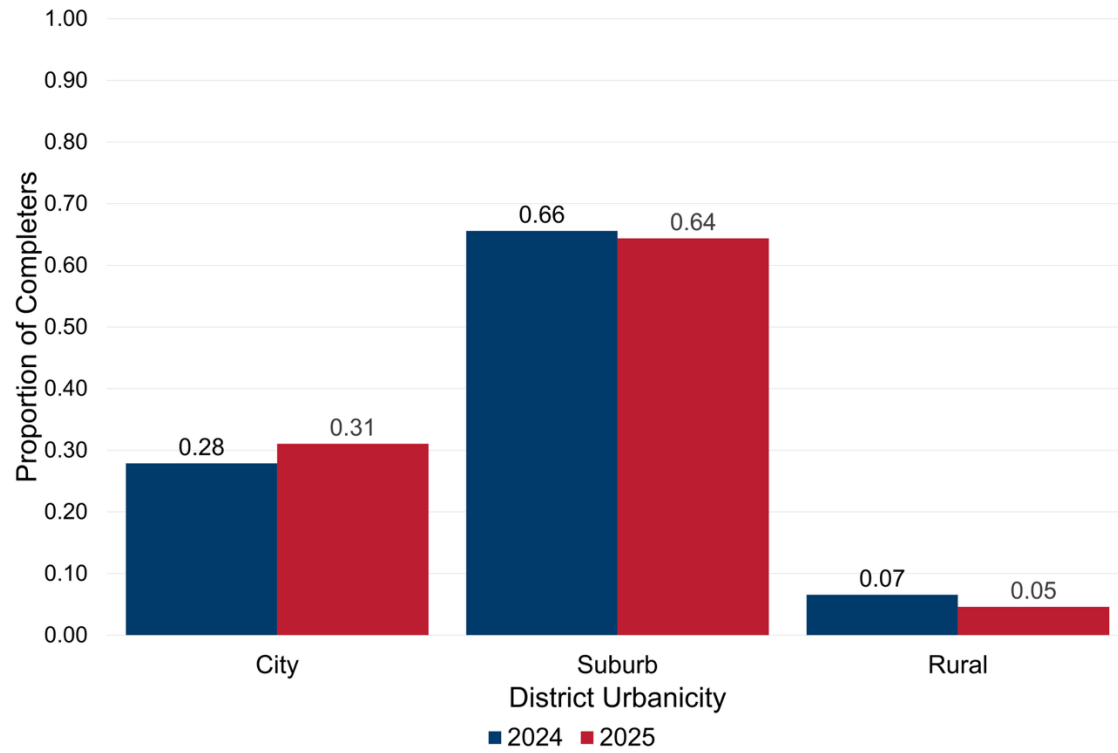


Exhibit 32. Types of Schools Where Accelerated Program Completers Worked During the 2023–24 and 2024–25 School Years

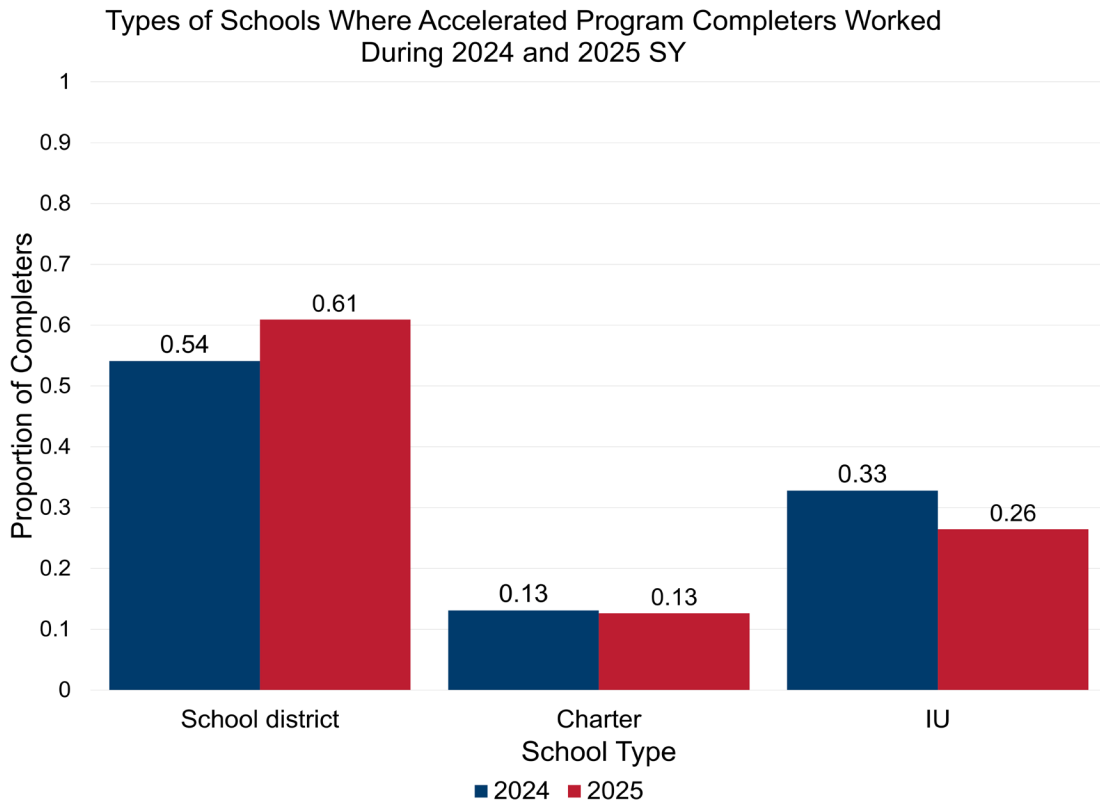
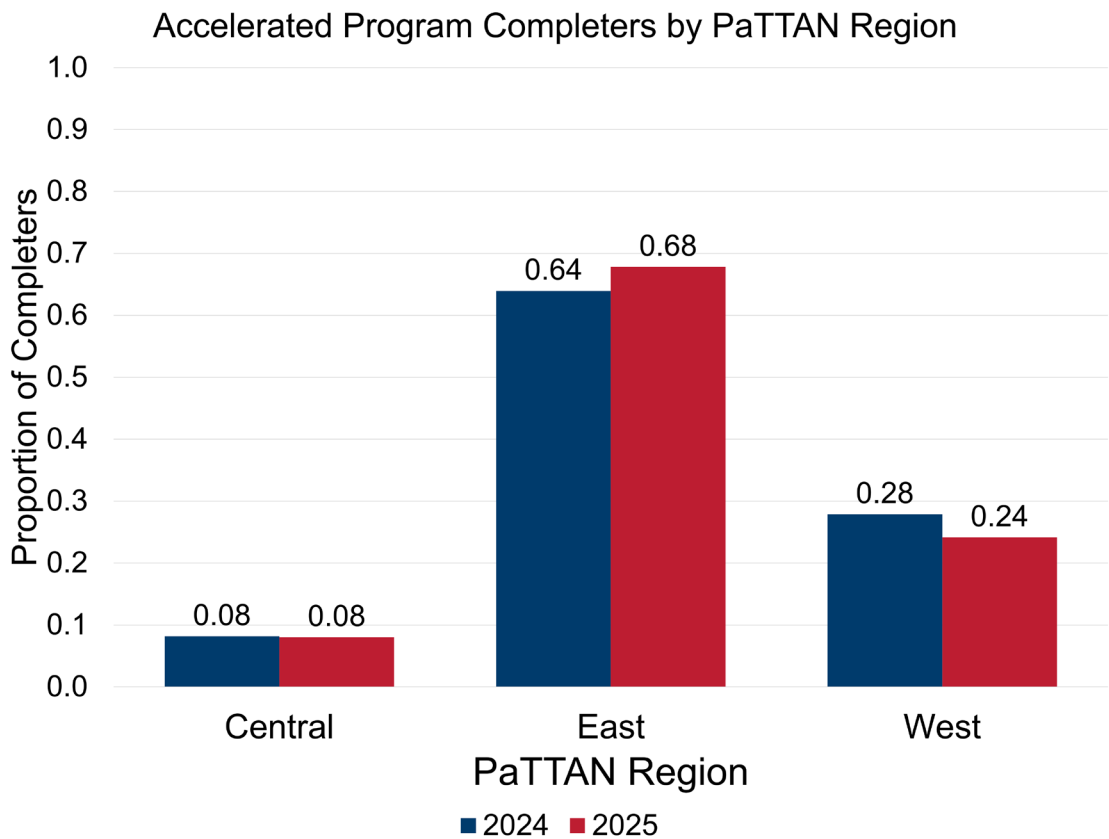
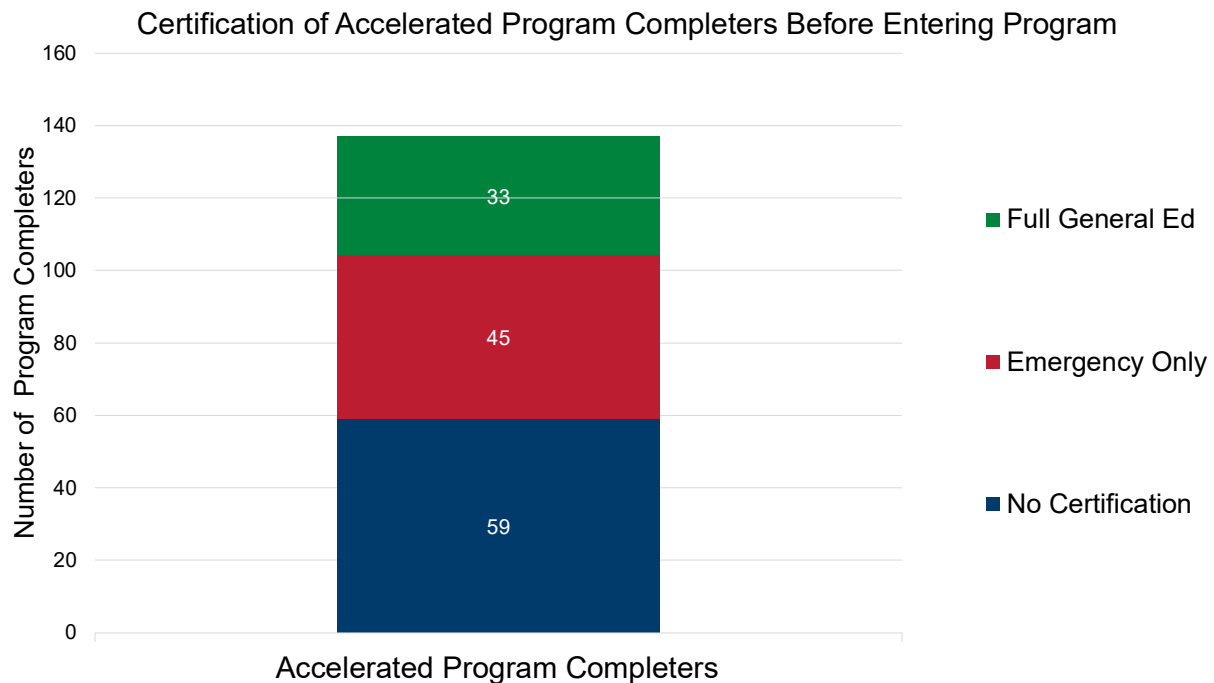


Exhibit 33. PaTTAN Region Where Accelerated Program Completers Worked During the 2023–24 and 2024–25 School Years



Program completers entered their programs with different types of certification. As illustrated in Exhibit 34, which includes 137 program completers—all program completers except for those with names we could not match to administrative data—the largest share of program completers was not certified in any area (43%), one third (33%) had an emergency permit, and nearly a quarter (24%) of program completers were certified in general education.

Exhibit 34. Certification of Accelerated Program Completers Before Entering the Program



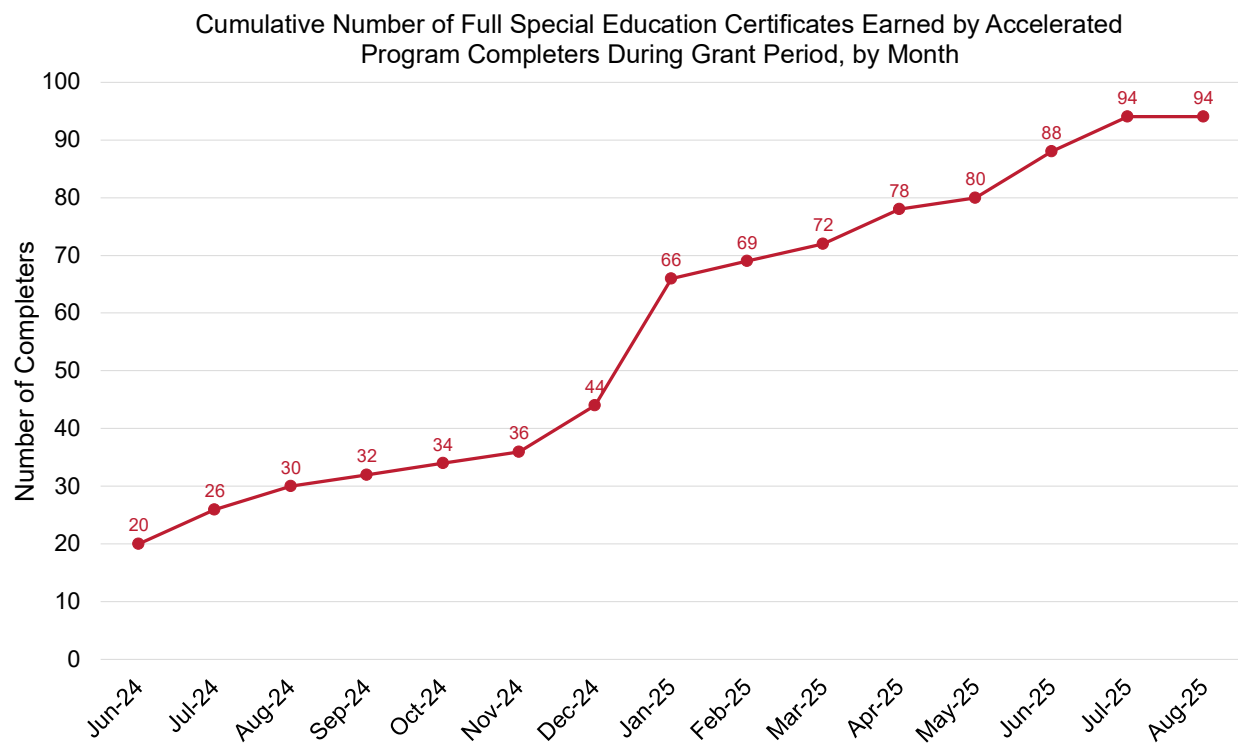
A majority of program completers (69%) were fully certified in special education by August 2025. Exhibit 35 illustrates the cumulative number of program completers with special education certification by month from June 2024 to August 2025. The largest increase occurred between December 2024 and January 2025, rising from 44 to 66, corresponding with the completion of the program in December. Notably, as reported in the Year 3 report, historically only 34% of new special education teachers with emergency permits received full certification within 4 years (Theobald et al., 2025). By contrast, 69% of Accelerated Program completers obtained full special education certification in less than a year from their program ending.

The initial results from Cohort 1 suggest the Accelerated Program resulted in more special education teachers and individuals with special education certification, as illustrated by the increase in the number of participants filling special education positions during their program

(Exhibit 30) and the growth in participants earning special education certification (Exhibit 35).

The initial results also suggest that the Accelerated Program decreased the timeline to obtaining special education certification. Data from the 2025–26 school year will provide information about the extent to which program completers entered special education teaching in Pennsylvania public schools following the completion of their program, and data from the 2026–27 school year will allow us to assess if program completers remain in teaching.

Exhibit 35. Cumulative Number of Program Completers with Full Special Education Certification by Month

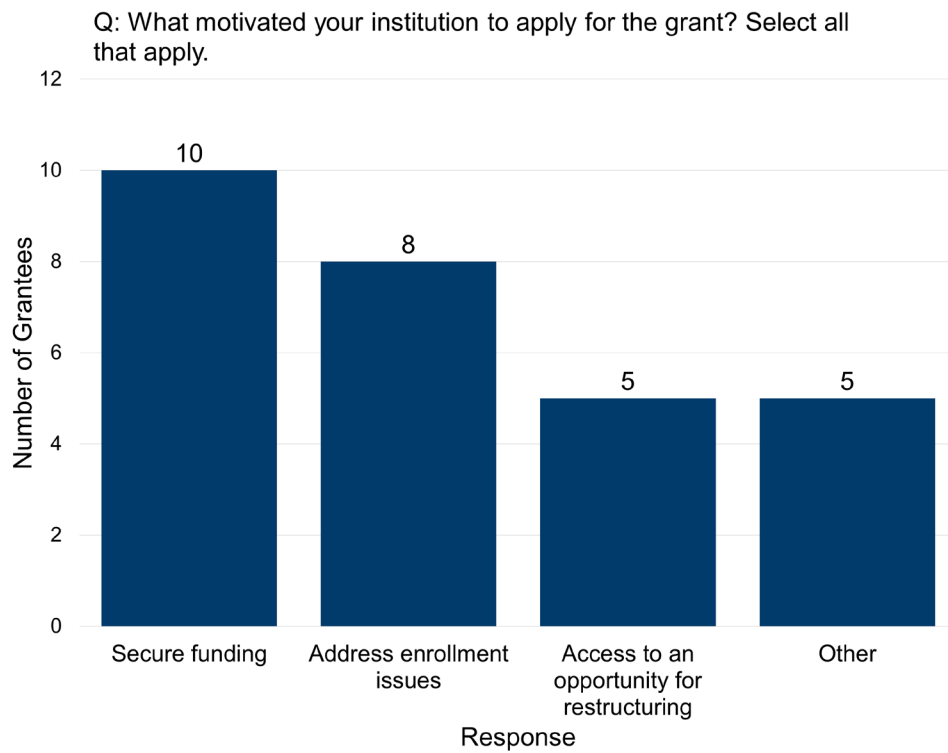


Cohort 2 Emerging Findings

The Accelerated Program's second cohort will complete the program in December 2026. As of December 15, 2025, Cohort 2 included 137 participants, a slight decrease from the 143 participants reported from the same IHEs in July 2025. It is unclear if this decrease is due to participants finishing the program early, participants leaving the program, or reporting errors from IHEs. On quarterly reports, grant coordinators noted successes with the Accelerated Program including the use of Extended School Year (ESY) to provide summer field experiences, opportunities to strengthen relationships with local districts and IUs, strong coaching and mentoring relationships, and the cohort model where the Accelerated Program participants within their IHE provide supports to one another. Grant coordinators at multiple IHEs noted challenges with recruitment due to timing of the grant award and decreased funding available from local districts for coursework.

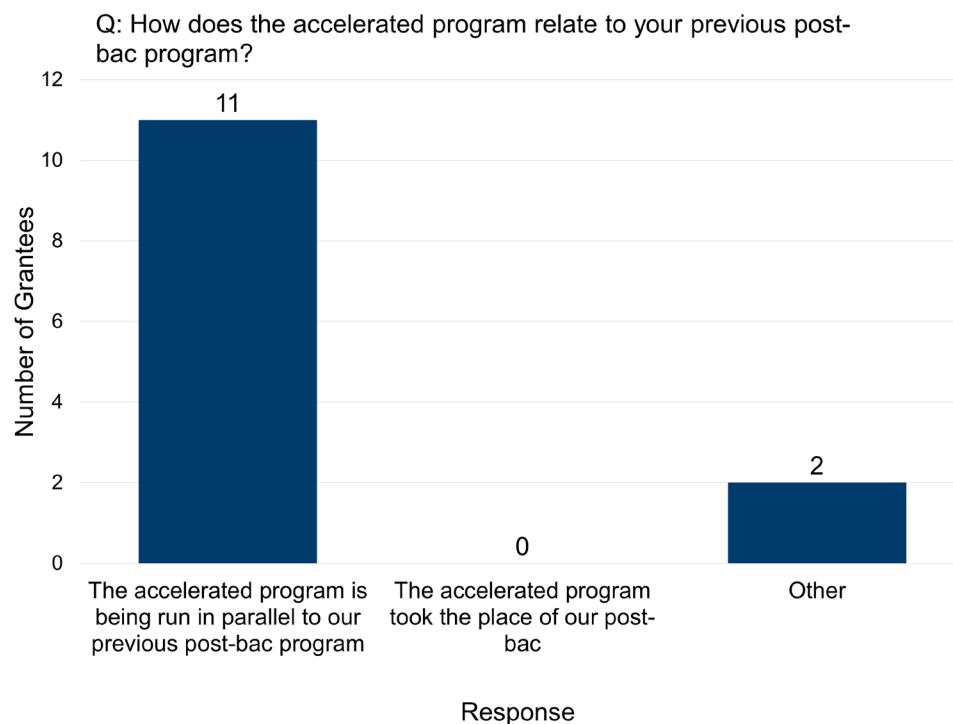
In addition to the quarterly reports, grant coordinators completed a survey about their program and experiences—providing information about their motivations to participate in the Accelerated Program and information about Accelerated Program components and program participants. The institutional review board (IRB) at the American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) approved the survey, and PaTTAN distributed the survey to grant coordinators. Grant coordinators at 13 of the 14 participating IHEs completed the survey.

Exhibit 36. Motivations to Apply for the Accelerated Program Grant



Grant coordinators most often reported that their institution applied for the Accelerated Program grant to secure additional funding, followed by addressing enrollment issues (Exhibit 36). Eighty-five percent of grant coordinators reported their Accelerated Program was separate from their IHE's previous post-baccalaureate program (Exhibit 37), suggesting that the grant successfully incentivized IHEs to develop new programs and expand available pathways to special education certification in the state. IHEs have made meaningful changes to their programs to remove barriers to becoming a special education teacher, and they intend to retain many of those changes after the grant ends.

Exhibit 37. How the Accelerated Program Related to Previous Post-Baccalaureate Programs



Key components of this iteration of the Accelerated Program are the inclusion of mentoring and instructional coaching for program participants. Mentors support the development of program participants by sharing knowledge and experiences. Instructional coaches develop and enhance the skills of program participants through modeling, support, and performance feedback related to evidence-based practices and supports for students with disabilities. Mentoring and coaching are viewed as successful supports for program participants with IHEs providing materials to support effective mentoring and coaching. Sixty-two percent of grant coordinators reported that the mentors in their programs also served as instructional coaches. The other 38% of programs separated the roles of mentors and instructional coaches. Across approaches, all programs except one had articulated expectations for mentors or instructional

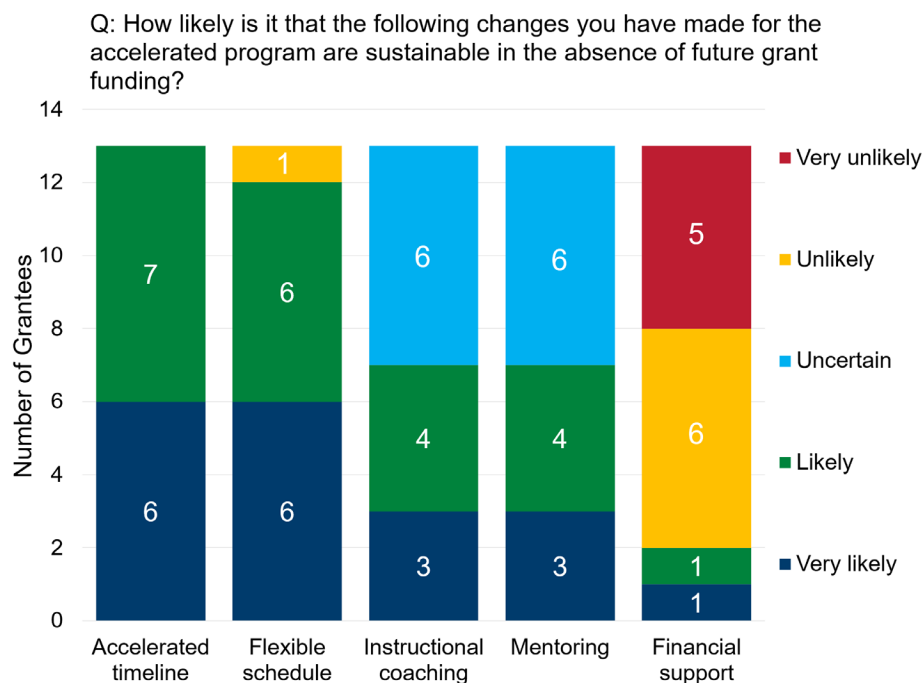
coaches. Mentors were most frequently cooperating teachers. When programs separated mentor and instructional coach roles, instructional coaches were most frequently university professors. Programs had an average of eight mentors supporting program participants; across programs, the number of mentors ranged from 1 to 62. The median time spent on mentoring per month was 4 hours. When the mentor and instructional coach roles were split, program participants spent an average of 5 hours per month receiving instructional coaching (median of 4 hours).

On open-ended responses, grant coordinators reported five common mentoring topics: (1) instructional support and lesson planning, (2) classroom management and behavior support, (3) time management and balancing responsibilities, (4) special education procedures and compliance, and (5) professional encouragement and problem solving. Grant coordinators reported that most institutions provided mentors and coaches with supports such as handbooks, orientation sessions, training modules, observation rubrics, coaching resources, monthly meetings, and ongoing communication. Several respondents highlighted professional development opportunities and online resource repositories designed to strengthen mentoring and coaching effectiveness. Grant coordinators also noted a strength of the grant program was Pennsylvania Department of Education's (PDE's) strong communication and technical assistance practices.

Grant coordinators reported that they would sustain many of their program changes in the future without grant funds (Exhibit 38). Specifically, 100% of grant coordinators reported they were likely or very likely to retain the accelerated timeline, and 92% of grant coordinators reported they were likely or very likely to retain the flexible schedule. Grant coordinators were less likely to report that changes related to instructional coaching, mentoring, or financial

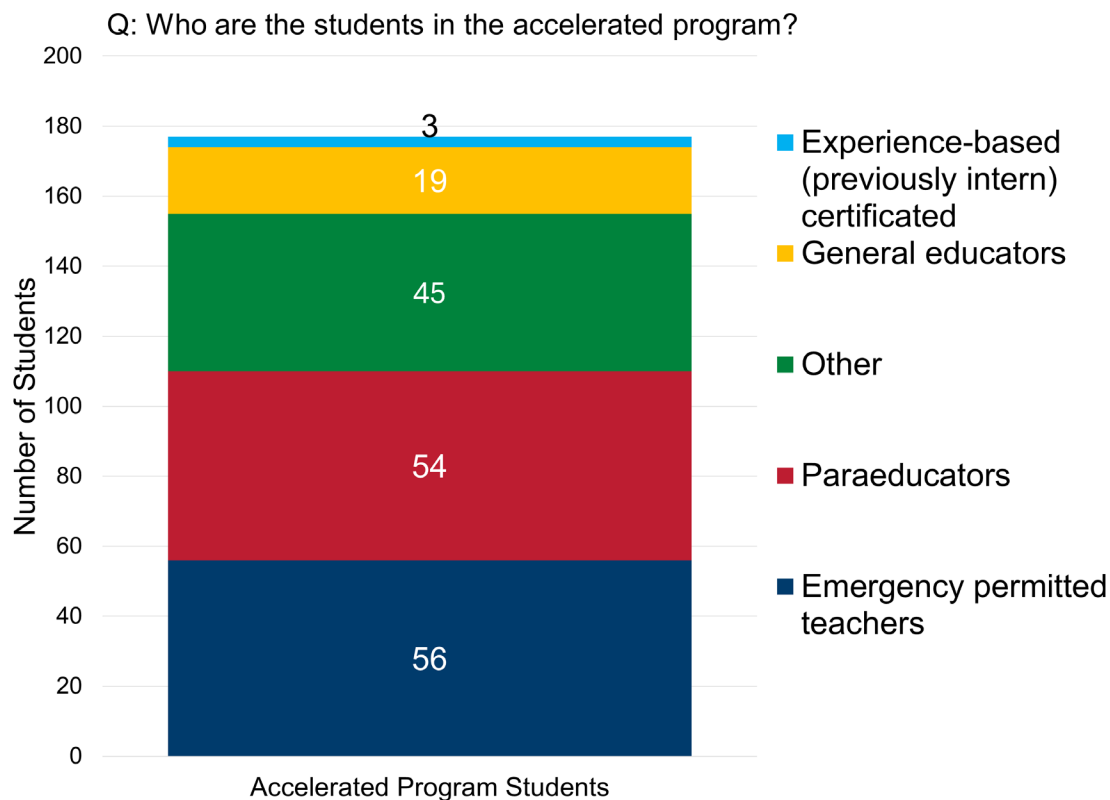
supports for participants could be maintained without grant funding. Notably, instructional coaching, mentoring, or financial support all require substantial ongoing financial investments.

Exhibit 38. Reported Sustainability of Accelerated Program Changes



Program participants in Cohort 2 are filling a variety of roles while they complete their program. As shown in Exhibit 39, most are currently emergency permitted teachers (32%) or paraeducators (31%). The number of reported participants may differ from quarterly reporting due to the timing of data collection and the fact that grant coordinators may have included participants who were no longer in the program. Grant coordinators reported that, on average, 90% of participants were on track to complete the program by December 2026. The median number of students to leave the Accelerated Program was 1, an average of 12% percent of participants, most often due to difficulty with coursework and personal reasons.

Exhibit 39. Cohort 2 Accelerated Program Participants



To continue and expand the success of the Accelerated Program, PDE could consider providing more guidelines and supports for mentoring and coaching. PDE could also consider supporting IHEs in identifying funding sources to retain aspects of the program that were reported as unsustainable without the grant. There was wide variability in the number of hours participants received mentoring and instructional support. This could reflect the specific needs of candidates or different program approaches. PDE could develop a statewide or cross-institution network of mentors and coaches to promote collaboration, sharing of best practices, and long-term sustainability. IHEs also noted the need for continued financial support to implement all aspects of the program. PDE could consider developing information about funding sources to sustain program changes, such as personnel preparation grants from the U.S. Department of

Education. Guidance for establishing mechanisms for direct billing and streamlined reimbursement processes could help to reduce financial barriers for candidates. PDE should continue their strong communication and technical assistance practices, which were consistently viewed as a strength of the grant program.

APR Mentoring Project

As described in prior reports (Theobald et al., 2023, 2024, 2025), the purpose of the APR Mentoring Project is to retain special education personnel and provide additional support to facilitate their growth as professionals. The 2025–26 program paired Pennsylvania special education personnel (special education teachers, school psychologists, teachers of the deaf, teachers of the visually impaired, SLPs, orientation and mobility specialists, educational interpreters, Career and Technical Education special populations coordinators, special education administrators, and Pennsylvania Fellowship Program special education administrators) with 3 or fewer years of experience with mentors who had 5 or more years of experience. The mentors were expected to meet with their mentees for at least 30 minutes once a month to discuss educational practices and processes. Each month, mentors were provided with recommended topics and resources by PaTTAN consultants. Mentors received a stipend at the conclusion of the project.

Building on the Year 4 report (Theobald et al., 2025), we connected data on the second cohort of mentees (2023–24 school year) to administrative data provided by the state to examine the characteristics, school and district settings, and attrition rates of the mentees. The second cohort of mentees included special education teachers, teachers of the deaf, teachers of the visually impaired, school psychologists, and special education administrators. We grouped

teachers of the deaf and teachers of the visually impaired with special education teachers because of small sample sizes and labeled this category special education teachers for ease of discussion. We also presented results from participants in the 2023–24 Pennsylvania Fellowship Program for School-Age Special Education Leaders (PFP). We presented these results alongside the results from the first cohort (2022–23 school year). We did not report results for the third cohort (2024–25) because information about attrition is not available for these mentees until September 2026. We also surveyed both mentees and mentors during the 2025–26 school year (fourth cohort) to collect formative data on their experiences in the mentoring program and report on these survey results.

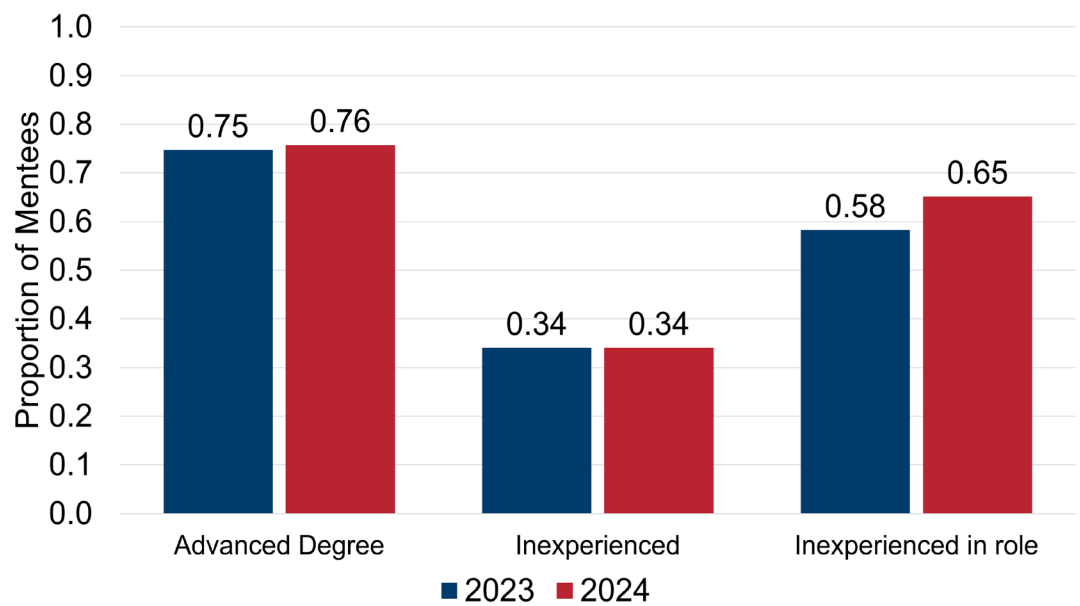
Administrative Data Analysis

The administrative data analysis results include mentees that we could match with the administrative data: 76% of the 119 mentees from the 2022–23 cohort and 80% of the 163 mentees from the 2023–24 cohort. Reasons for not matching to the administrative data include that the mentee worked in an approved private school, started their position after the fall staffing data collection deadline, or had a common name.

Like all APR projects, mentoring was not designed to support special education personnel who taught in specific settings or with certain characteristics. Instead, mentoring was open to all novice (3 years or less of experience in their current position) special education personnel who chose to participate. Exhibit 40 displays the characteristics of all mentees. Mentees in the 2023–24 cohort were 7 percentage points more likely to be inexperienced in their role (i.e., in their first 3 years in their role in Pennsylvania public schools), but this difference

was not statistically significant. Similar shares of mentees had advanced degrees or were inexperienced overall (i.e., in their first 3 years working in Pennsylvania public schools).

Exhibit 40. Characteristics of All Mentees



Exhibits 41 through 44 display the characteristics of mentees by four roles: special education teacher, school psychologist, administrator, and PFP participant. Special education teacher mentees in the 2023–24 cohort were more often inexperienced (i.e., in their first 3 years of working in Pennsylvania public schools) or inexperienced in their roles than special education teacher mentees in 2022–23 (Exhibit 41). School psychologist mentees in the 2023–24 cohort were more inexperienced overall and in their roles than in the 2022–23 cohort (Exhibit 42). They were also more likely to have an advanced degree. Similar to school psychologist mentees, administrator mentees in the 2023–24 cohort were more likely to have advanced degrees than administrator mentees in the 2022–23 cohort. They were also 21 percentage points more likely to be inexperienced in their role (Exhibit 43). PFP participants in 2023–24 had similar

characteristics to administrator mentees in the 2022–23 cohort (Exhibit 44). These descriptive differences across years were not statistically significant, likely due to small sample sizes.

Exhibit 41. Characteristics of Special Education Teacher Mentees

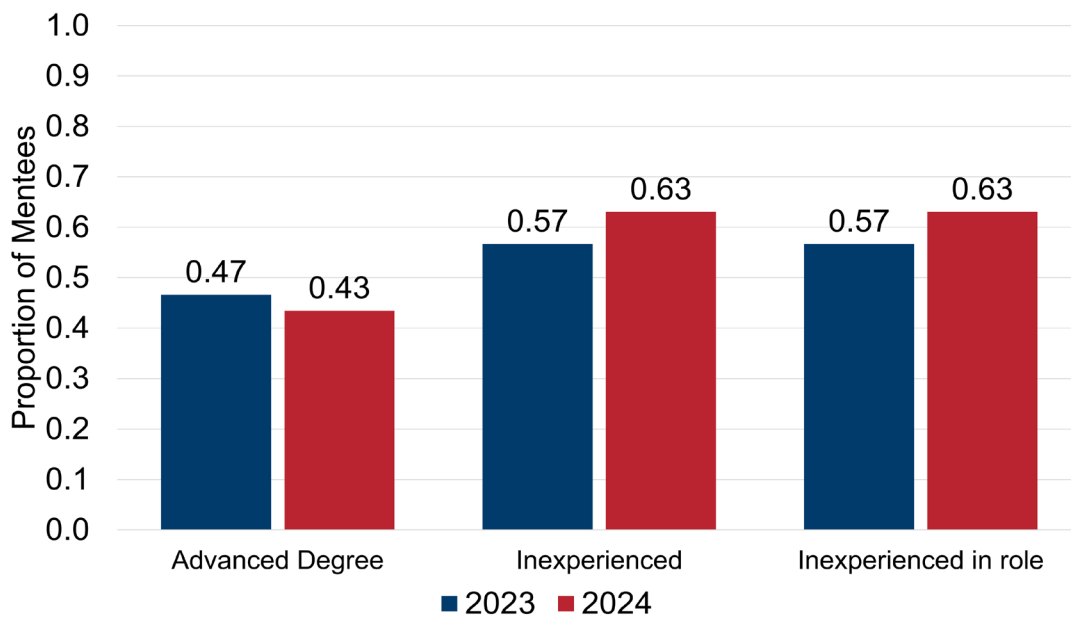


Exhibit 42. Characteristics of School Psychologist Mentees

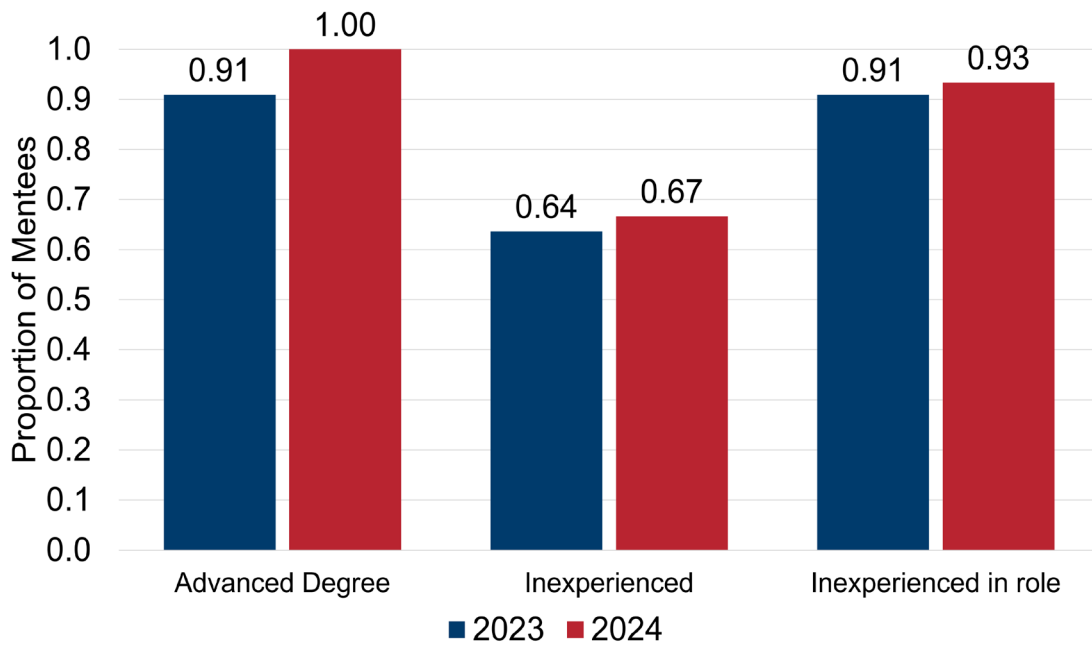


Exhibit 43. Characteristics of Administrator Mentees

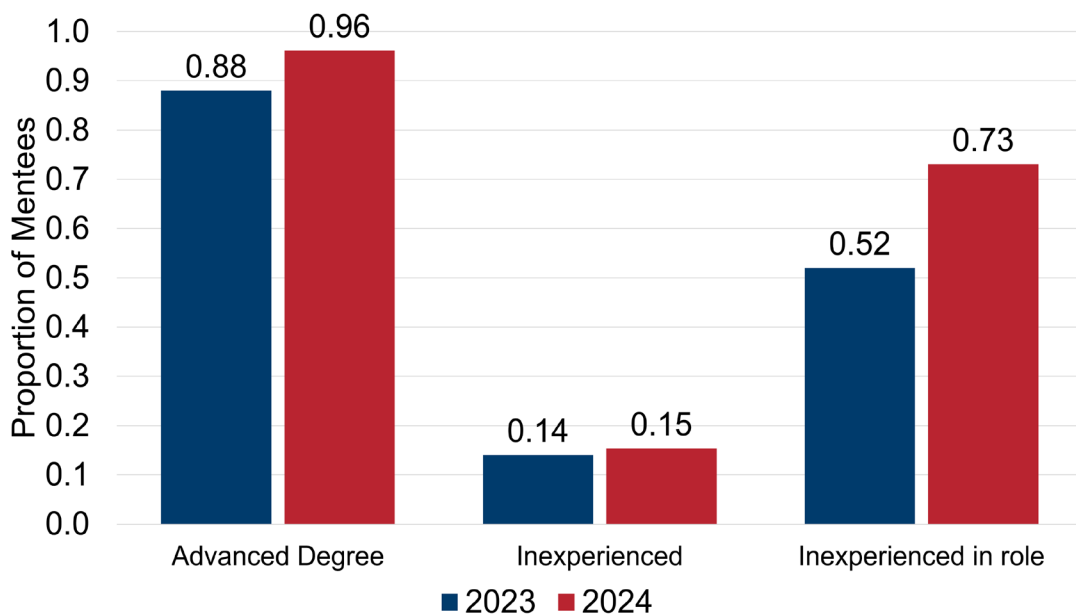
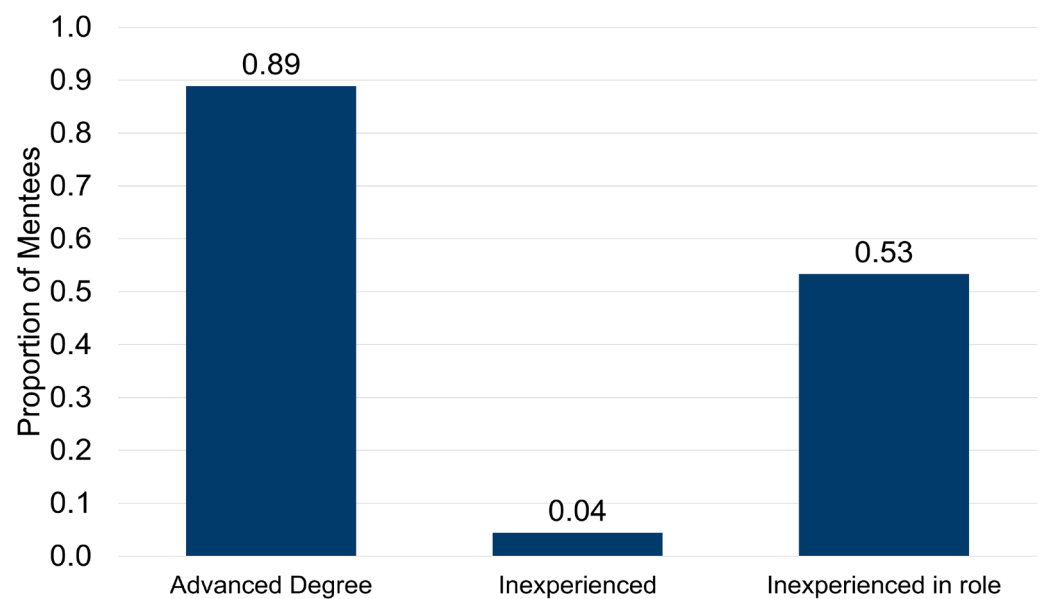


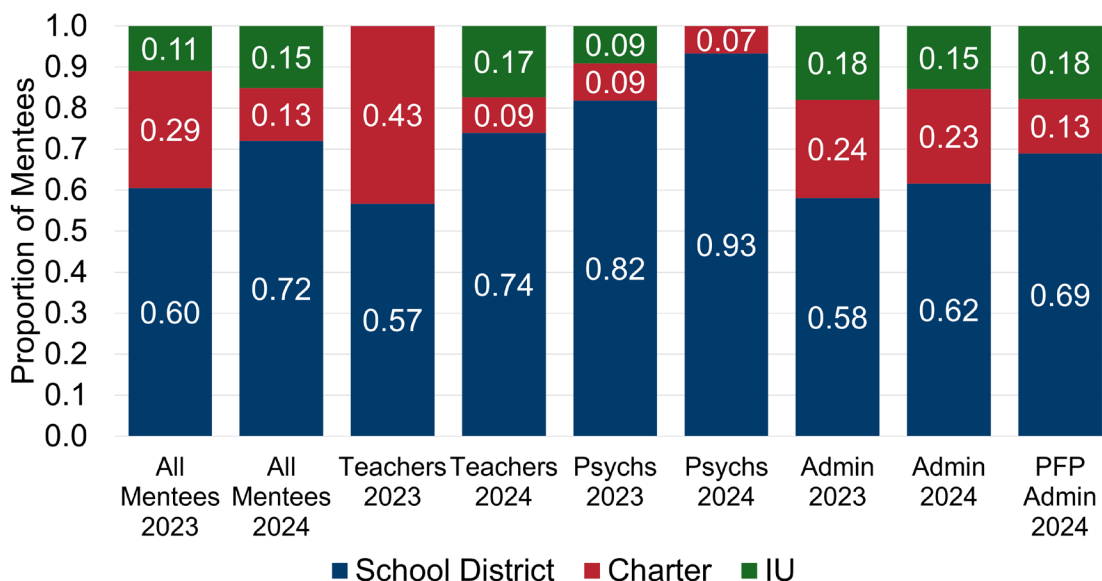
Exhibit 44. Characteristics of 2023-24 PFP Mentees



Note. PFP mentoring participants were not disaggregated in 2022–23 APR. The data reported here are from the 2023–24 cohort.

Mentees in the 2023–24 cohort more often worked in regular districts than mentees in the 2022–23 cohort (Exhibit 45). This pattern was present across special education teachers, school psychologists, and administrators. The most notable differences in district types between the cohorts was for special education teachers. Seventeen percent of special education teacher mentees in the 2023–24 cohort worked in IUs compared to none in the 2022–23 cohort, a statistically significant difference. In addition, only 9% of special education teacher mentees in the 2023–24 cohort worked in charter schools, a marked decrease from 43% of special education mentees in the 2022–23 cohort.

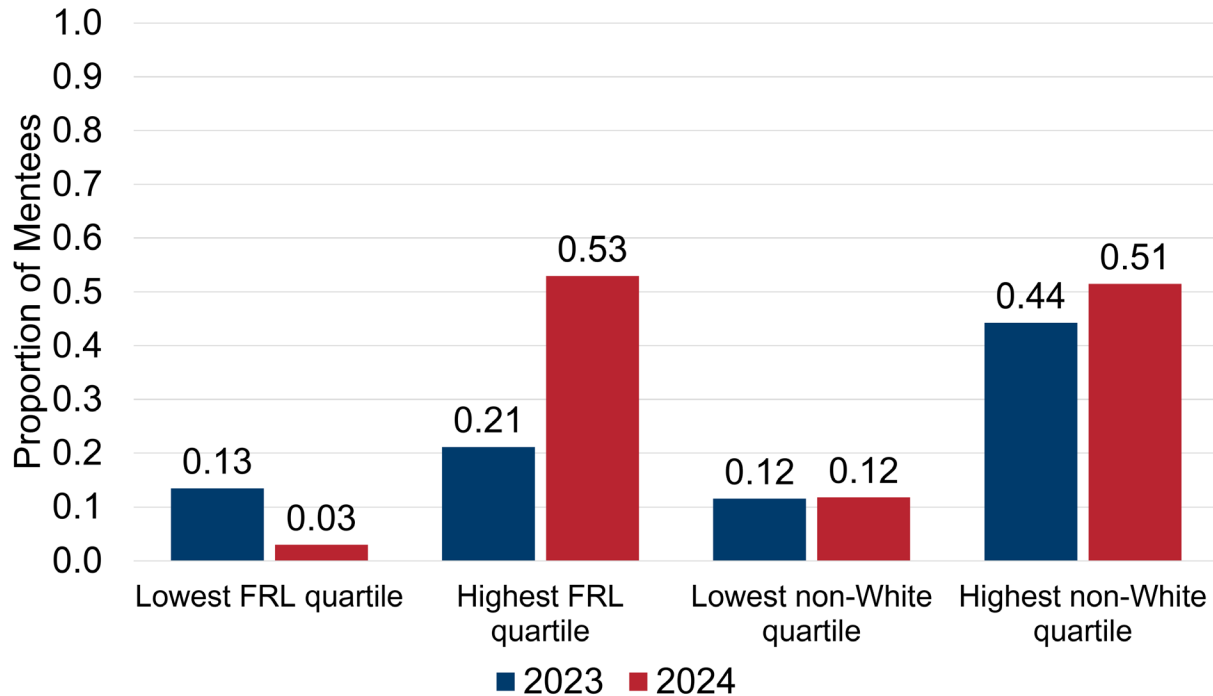
Exhibit 45. Mentee’s’ Types of Schools Overall and by Role



Note. PFP mentoring participants were not disaggregated in 2022–23 APR. The data reported here are from the 2023–24 cohort.

Large proportions of mentees worked in schools with high percentages of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch (FRL) or high percentages of non-White students. Exhibit 46 displays the proportion of all mentees in the 2022–23 cohort and 2023–24 cohort who worked in schools in the lowest and highest quartiles of (a) percentage of students qualifying for FRL and (b) percentage of non-White students. Over half (53%) of the mentees in the 2023–24 cohort worked in schools with the highest proportions of students qualifying for FRL compared to a one fifth of mentees in the 2022–23 cohort (21%), a statistically significant difference. More mentees in the 2023–24 cohort worked in schools with the highest proportions of non-White students than in the 2022–23 cohort, but the differences between cohorts was smaller than for FRL and not statistically significant.

Exhibit 46. Characteristics of Schools Where Mentees Were Employed



Exhibits 47 through 50 display the characteristics of schools where special education teachers, school psychologists, and school administrators were employed while participating in the mentoring program. Across all mentee groups, the 2023–24 cohort had higher proportions of mentees working in schools in the highest quartile of FRL eligibility or non-White student enrollment compared to the 2022–23 cohort. However, only the differences across cohorts for the proportion of school psychologists in high-FRL schools was statistically significant.

Exhibit 47. Characteristics of Schools Where Special Education Teacher Mentees Were Employed

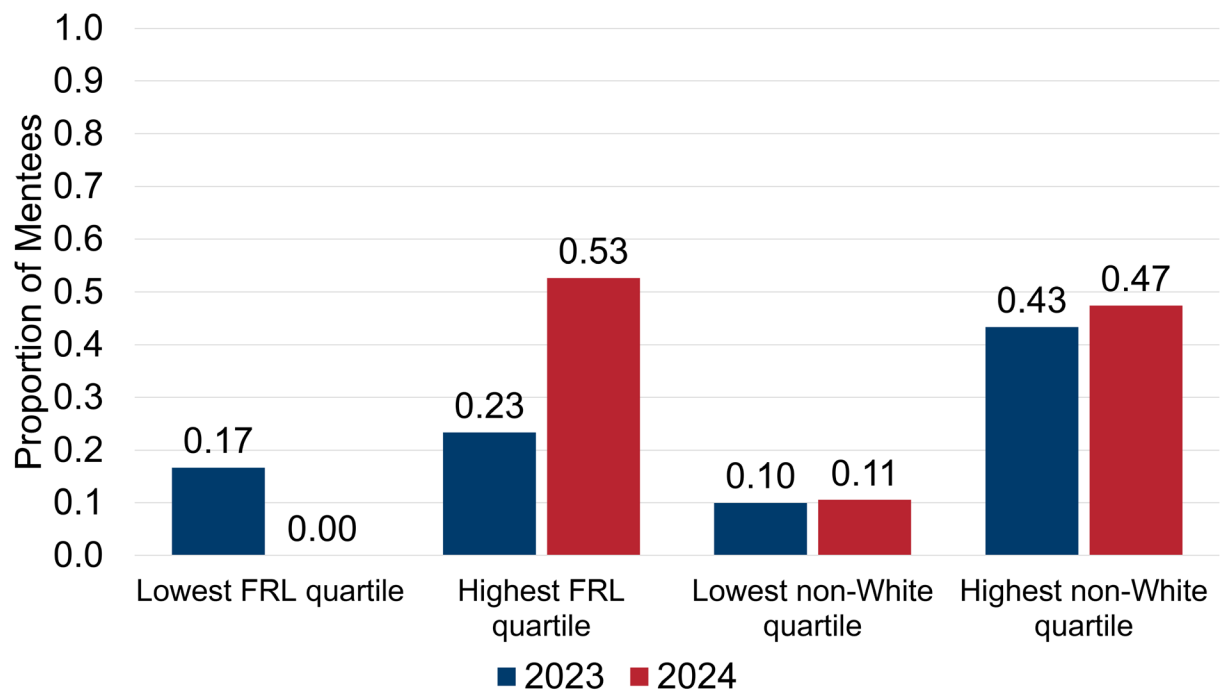


Exhibit 48. Characteristics of Schools Where School Psychologist Mentees Were Employed

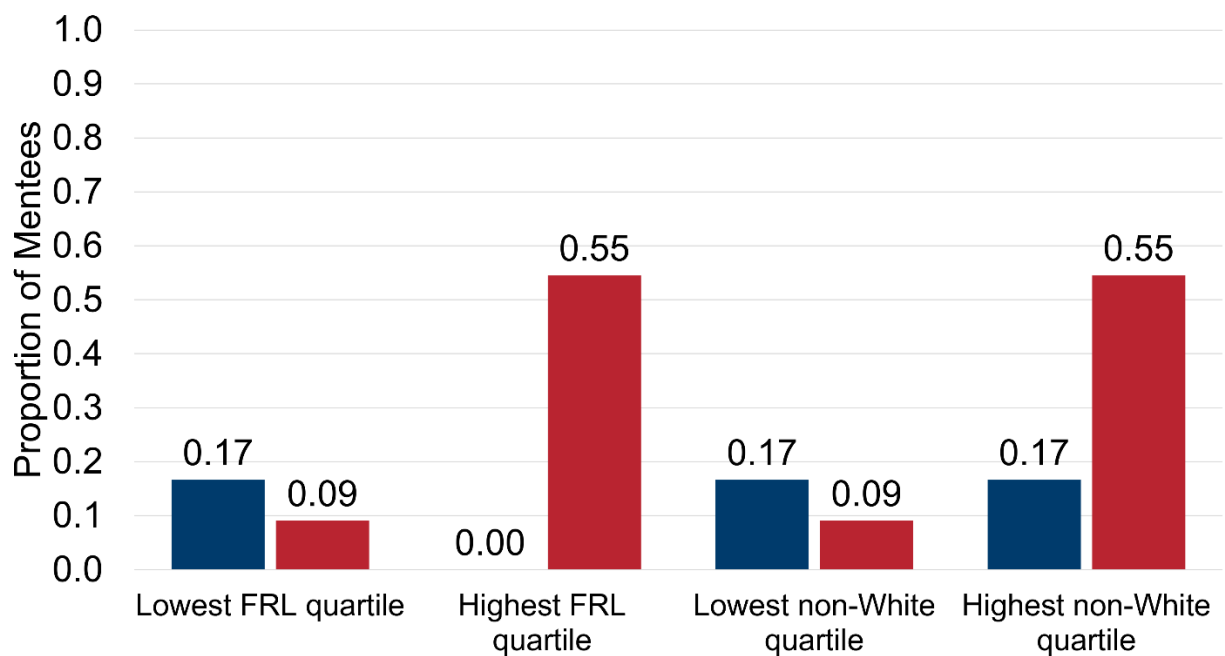


Exhibit 49. Characteristics of Schools Where Administrator Mentees Were Employed

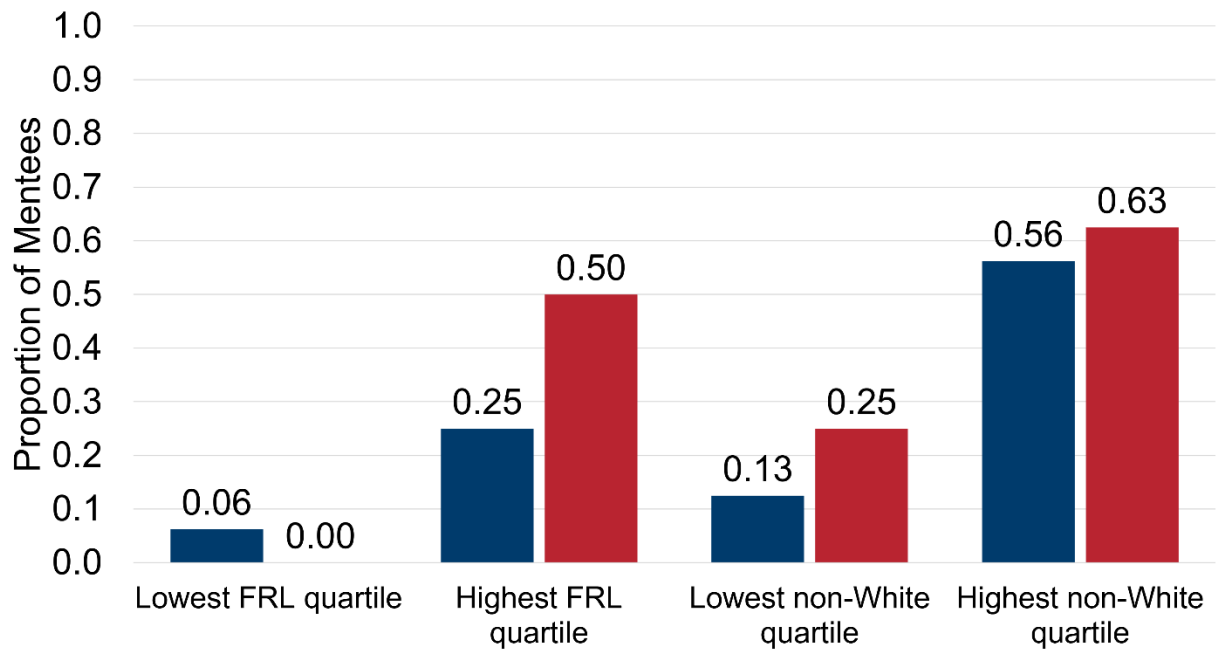
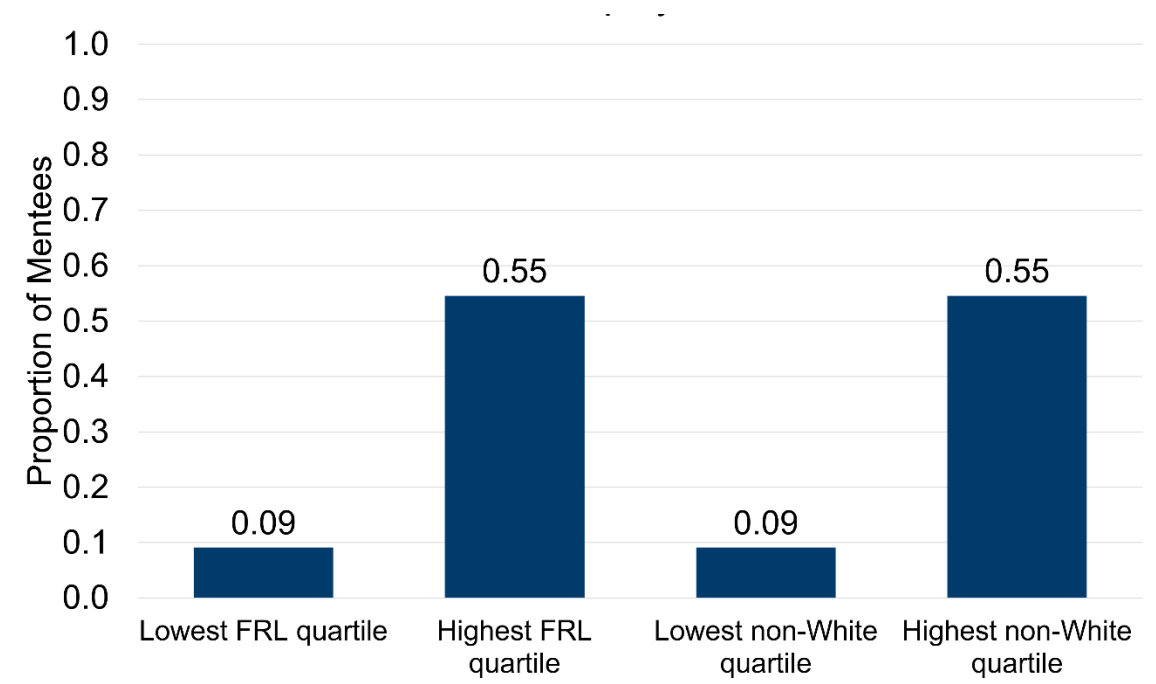


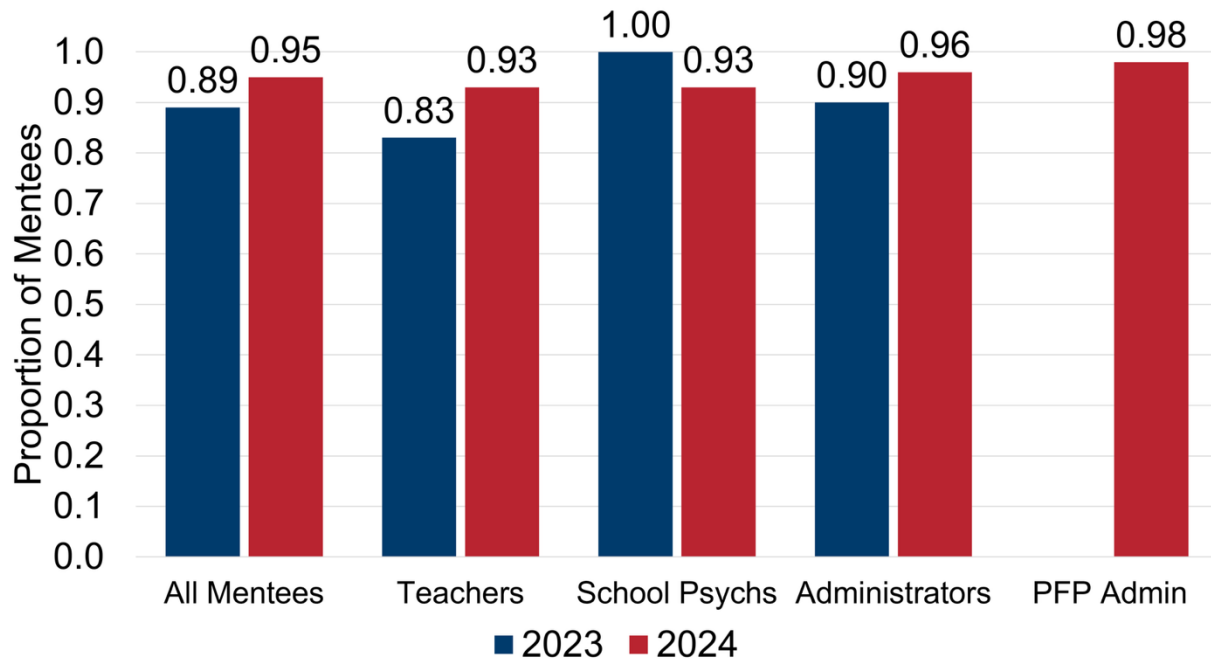
Exhibit 50. Characteristics of Schools Where PFP Mentees Were Employed



Note. PFP mentoring participants were not disaggregated in 2022–23 APR. The data reported here are from the 2023–24 cohort.

Across all mentees, 95% of the 2023–24 cohort with administrative data were still working in Pennsylvania public schools in 2024–25, compared to 89% of the 2022–23 cohort (Exhibit 51). Special education teacher mentees in the 2023–24 cohort were 10 percentage points more likely to remain in Pennsylvania public schools than those in the 2022–23 cohort. Special education administrator mentees in the 2023–24 cohort were 6 percentage points more likely to remain in Pennsylvania public schools than the earlier cohort. School psychology mentees saw a decline in retention across cohorts of 7 percentage points. None of the differences in retention across cohorts were statistically significant. We will continue to report the outcomes of mentoring participants in future reports.

Exhibit 51. Proportion of Mentees Who Stayed in Pennsylvania Public Schools the School Year Following Mentoring



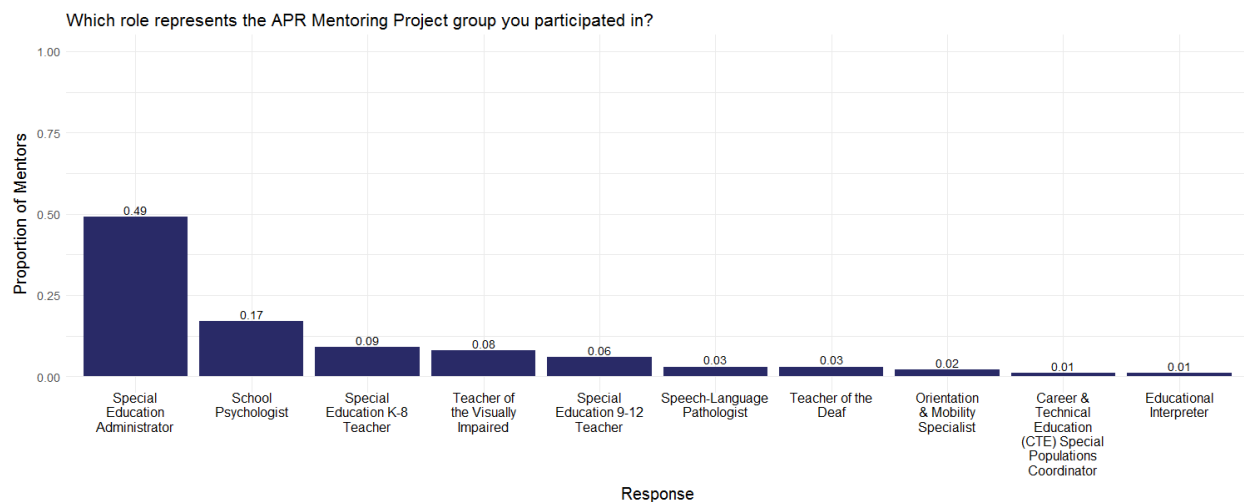
Note. PFP mentoring participants were not disaggregated in 2022–23 APR. The data reported here are from the 2023–24 cohort.

Mentee/Mentor Surveys, Fourth Cohort

We used surveys to collect mentors’ and mentees’ perspectives of their experiences in the fourth cohort (2025–26 school year) after they completed the program. AIR’s IRB approved the survey, and PaTTAN staff distributed the survey to participating mentors and mentees. We received survey responses from 96 out of 104 mentors, a response rate of 92%, and 78 out of 138 mentees, a response rate of 57%. Although these response rates are high, the survey results may not be representative of all participants in the mentoring program.

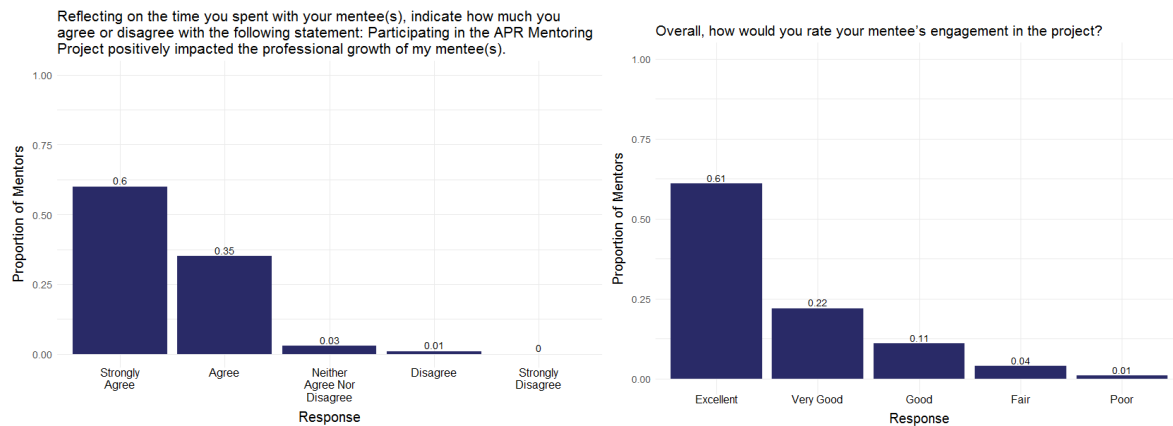
Mentors occupied a variety of roles. Exhibit 52 displays the roles of those who responded to the survey. Nearly half of the mentors were special education administrators, 17% were school psychologists, 15% were K–12 special education teachers, 8% were teachers of the visually impaired, and the remaining 10% were speech-language pathologists, teachers of the deaf, orientation & mobility specialists, CTE special populations coordinators, and educational interpreters.

Exhibit 52. Mentors' Roles



Mentors provided their perspectives on the project's impact on the professional growth and engagement of their mentees. As illustrated in Exhibit 53, 95% strongly agreed or agreed that participating in the mentoring program positively impacted the professional growth of their mentee, with only 1% disagreeing. Also shown in Exhibit 53, 83% rated their mentee's engagement in the project as excellent or very good, with only 5% rating engagement as fair or poor. These ratings of mentor's perceptions of impact and engagement were higher than ratings from the 2024–25 school year survey.

Exhibit 53. Mentors' Perspectives on Mentees



Mentors also reported on their experiences in the mentoring program. Shown in Exhibit 54, the majority of respondents, 89%, reported that the amount of time spent with their mentees over the course of the project was just right, with 10% reporting the amount of time was slightly too little or far too little. Only 11% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that formal training on mentoring would have better prepared them to serve as a mentor (first panel of Exhibit 55). As illustrated in the middle panel of Exhibit 55, a higher share of mentors, 33%, strongly agreed or agreed that they would have benefited from networking with other mentors throughout the year. Overall perspectives were positive with 95% of mentors agreeing or strongly agreeing that they would like to serve as a mentor again next year (final panel of Exhibit 55).

Exhibit 54. Mentors’ Ratings of the Amount of Time Spent With Mentees

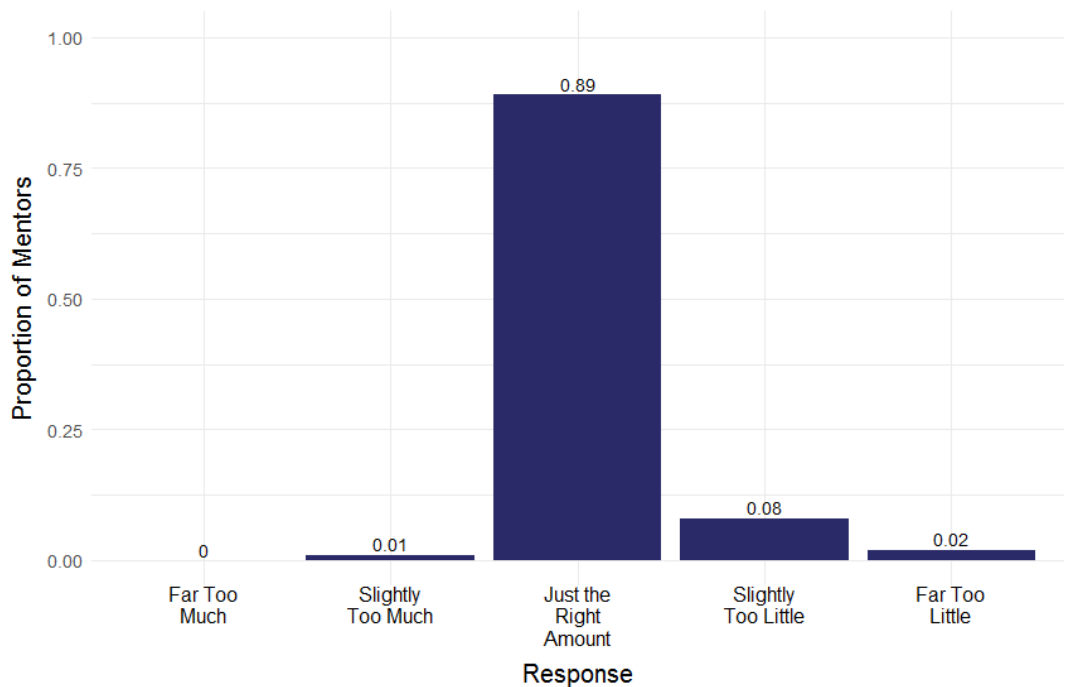
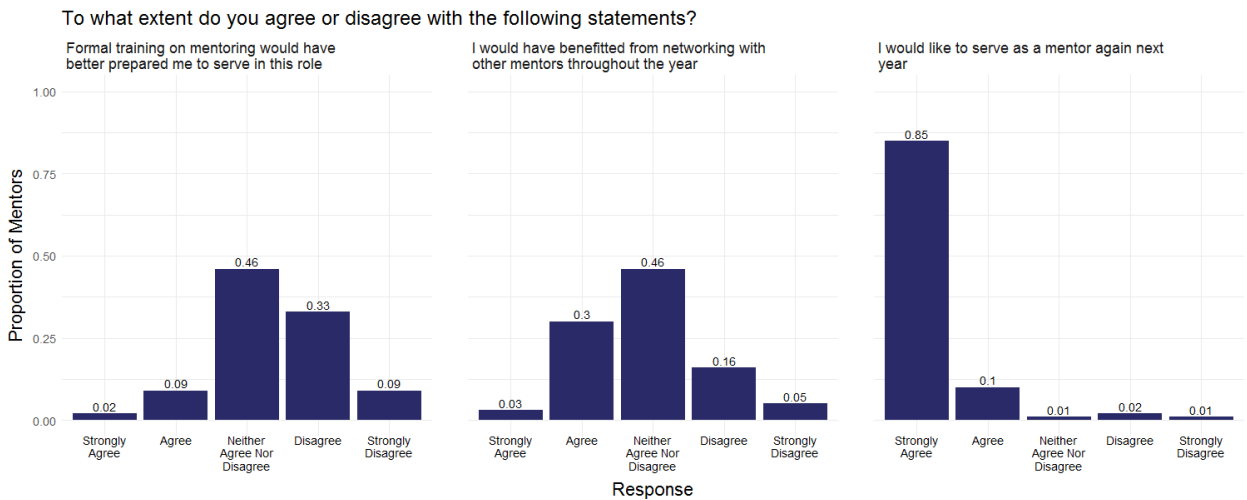


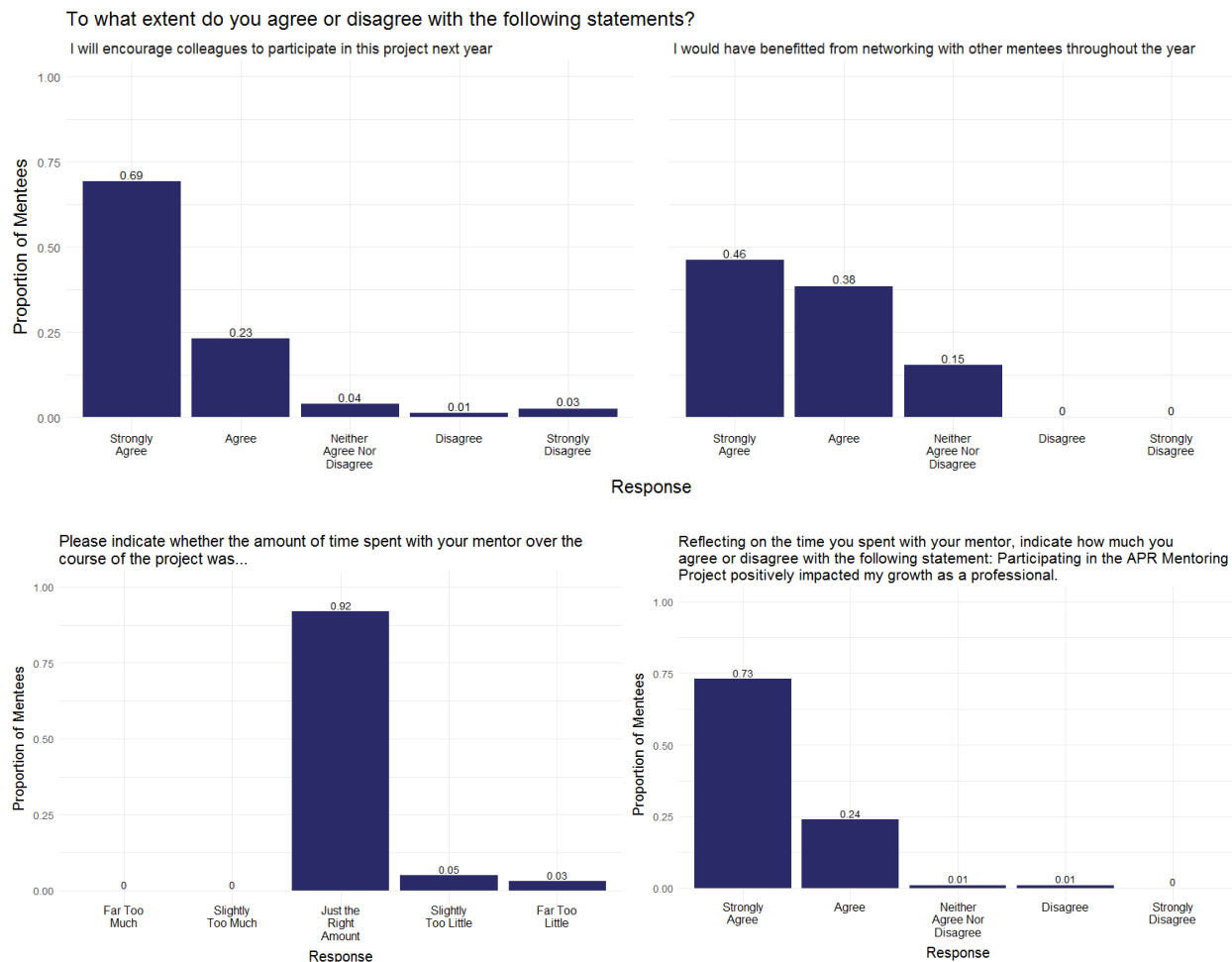
Exhibit 55. Mentors’ Perspectives of the Program



Mentees' Perspectives

Mentees who responded to the survey also shared their perspectives on the mentoring program. As shown in Exhibit 56, 92% of mentees strongly agreed or agreed that they would encourage colleagues to participate in the mentoring program next year, a higher percentage than in the 2024–25 survey. Many responding mentees (84%) reported they strongly agreed or agreed that they would have benefitted from networking with other mentees throughout the year, as shown in Exhibit 56. While many respondents wanted more networking time with other mentees, 92% reported the amount of time spent with their mentor was just the right amount, with only 8% reporting the amount of time was slightly too little or far too little. Future iterations of the mentoring project might consider increasing opportunities for in-person networking through regional events and conferences and expanding opportunities for cross-cohort networking and sharing of successful practices. Most importantly, 97% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the mentoring program positively impacted their growth as a professional.

Exhibit 56. Mentees' Perspectives on the Program



Mentees' open-ended responses identified specific ways their mentors supported their professional growth. Mentors acted as a trusted advisor who provided mentees with access to expertise. Mentors provided different perspectives and problem-solving support for addressing real-world situations. In addition to supporting classroom practice, mentors supported mentees with understanding policies, procedures, assessments, forms, and compliance guidance. The collegial support from mentors also supports mentees in networking and developing a cohort of

peers. Overall, mentees reported that their mentors' support led to greater confidence in their decision-making skills.

Networking and Learning Communities

Networking and Learning Communities facilitate opportunities for special educators and other special education personnel to engage in conversations with others who share similar job responsibilities. These opportunities provide participants with ongoing support and professional development. In 2025–26 the Networking and Learning Communities included special education teachers, including emotional support and autistic support teachers, teachers of the deaf, teachers of the visually impaired, certified orientation and mobility specialists, corrections education staff, Enhanced Core Reading Instruction implementers, professionals and families supporting students who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), occupational and physical therapy practitioners, paraprofessionals, Pennsylvania material specialists, school psychologists, special education administrators, SLPs, related service supervisors for physical therapists, occupational therapists, and SLPs, and visual phonics practitioners. Often these professionals may be isolated in their schools or districts; Networking and Learning Communities provide single-session opportunities to virtually connect with others in their role across the state. The Middle School Learning Institute was an in-person workshop at the PaTTAN central office to provide general and special education teachers with tools for executive functioning, content-area literacy, effective teaming, and transition assessment.

PaTTAN distributed surveys to participants at the end of each Networking and Learning Community session and after the Middle School Learning Institute; AIR's IRB approved the surveys. We received survey responses from 4,473 participants in Networking and Learning

Communities sessions and 55 participants in the Middle School Learning Institute. Because not all participants completed the survey, the survey results may not be representative of all participants.

Networking and Learning Communities

Exhibit 57 displays the proportion of respondents who participated in each Networking and Learning Communities session. The largest share of responses were from participants in the AAC community (17%), followed by related services practitioners (occupational therapists, physical therapists, and SLPs; 10%), and school psychologists (9%). As shown in Exhibit 58 and in alignment with the session participation results, the largest share of participants were SLPs (26%) followed by school psychologists (10%) and occupational therapists (8%).

Exhibit 57. Networking and Learning Communities Session Participation

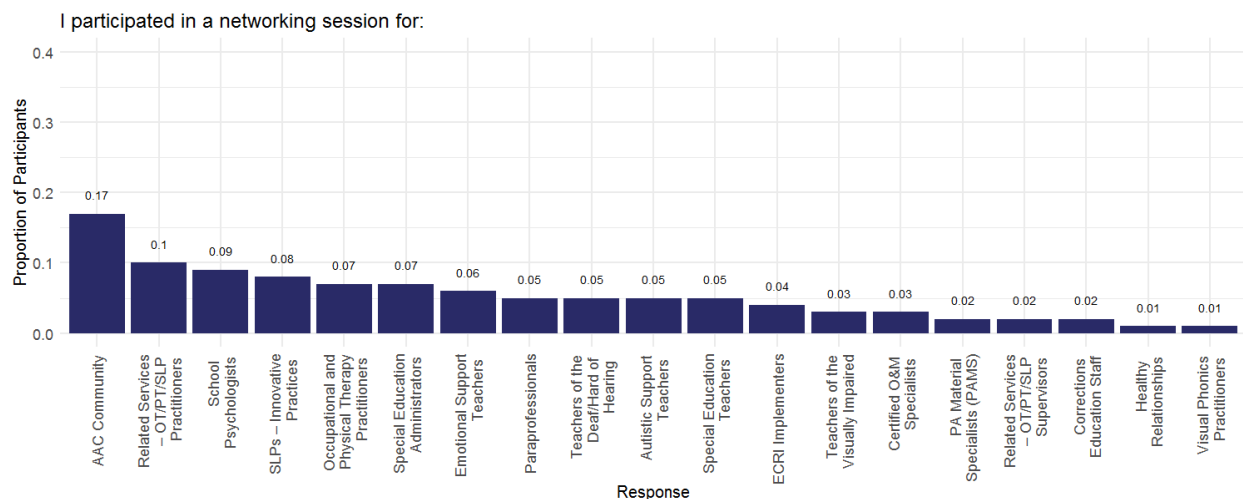
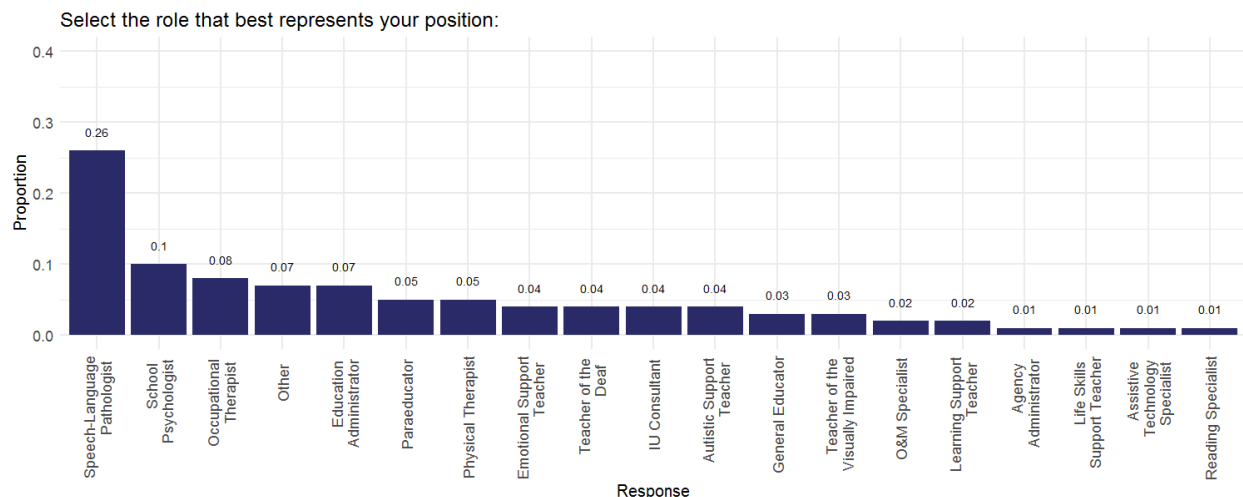
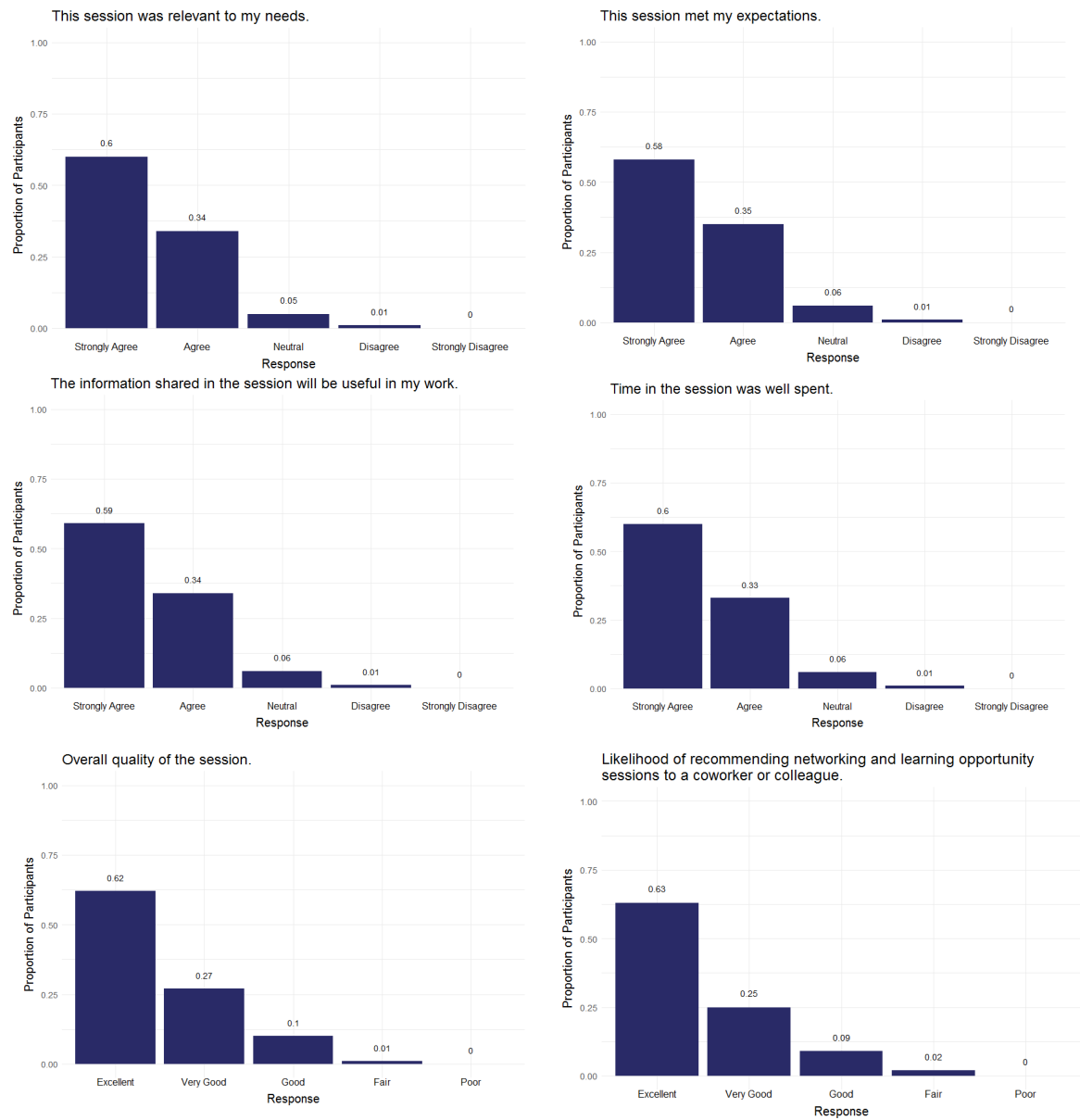


Exhibit 58. Positions of Networking and Learning Communities Participants



Participants' perceptions of the Networking and Learning Communities sessions were overwhelmingly positive. As shown in Exhibit 59, 94% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the session was relevant to their needs, 93% agreed or strongly agreed that the session met their expectations, 93% agreed or strongly agreed that the information in the session will be useful to their work, and 93% agreed or strongly agreed that the session was time well spent. Further, 99% of respondents rated the overall quality of the session as good, very good, or excellent and 97% of respondents said there was a good, very good, or excellent likelihood that they would recommend the session to a coworker or colleague. These overall positive responses align with the findings from Networking and Learning Communities during the 2024–25 school year (Theobald et al., 2025).

Exhibit 59. Participants’ Perceptions of Networking and Learning Communities



Middle School Learning Institute

Survey respondents who participated in the Middle School Learning Institute filled a variety of roles. As illustrated in Exhibit 60, 40% of respondents were special education teachers, 24% regular education teachers, 13% were IU consultants, 9% were education administrators, and 15% filled other roles. The vast majority of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the information shared in the sessions will be useful to their work (98%), the sessions met their expectations (97%), the sessions were relevant to their needs (96%), and time in the sessions was time well spent (98%), with full results reported in Exhibit 61. Overall impressions of the Middle School Learning Institute were positive: 91% of respondents noted that there was an excellent or very good likelihood of them recommending a Learning Institute to a coworker or colleague and 91% of respondents rating the quality of the sessions as excellent or very good (Exhibit 62).

Exhibit 60. Roles of Participants in the Middle School Learning Institute Who Responded to the Survey

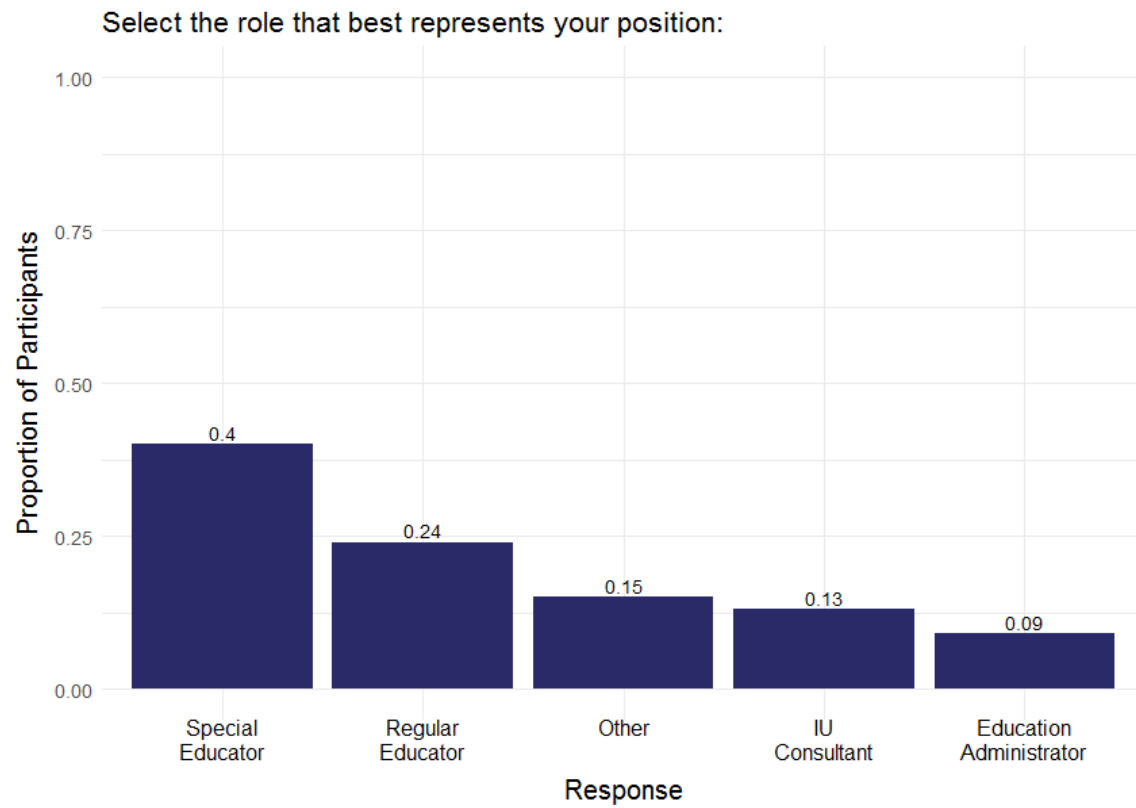


Exhibit 61. Participants' Perceptions of the Middle School Learning Institute

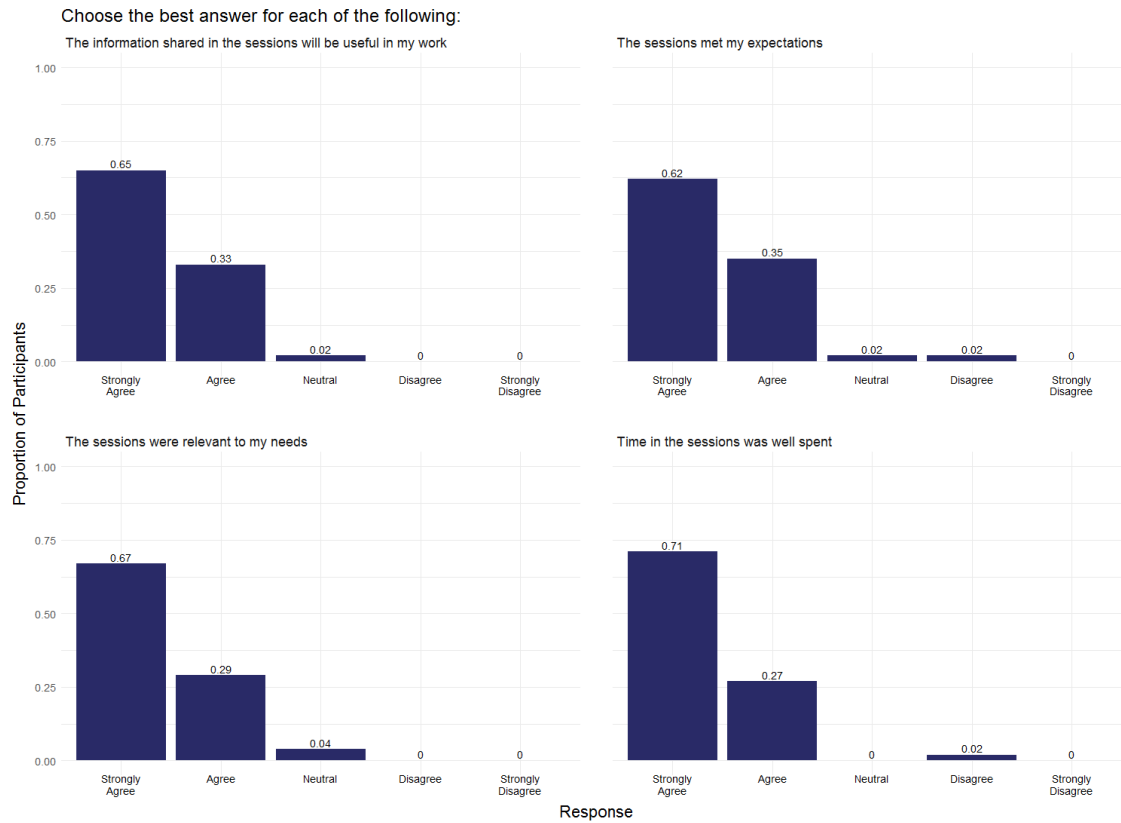
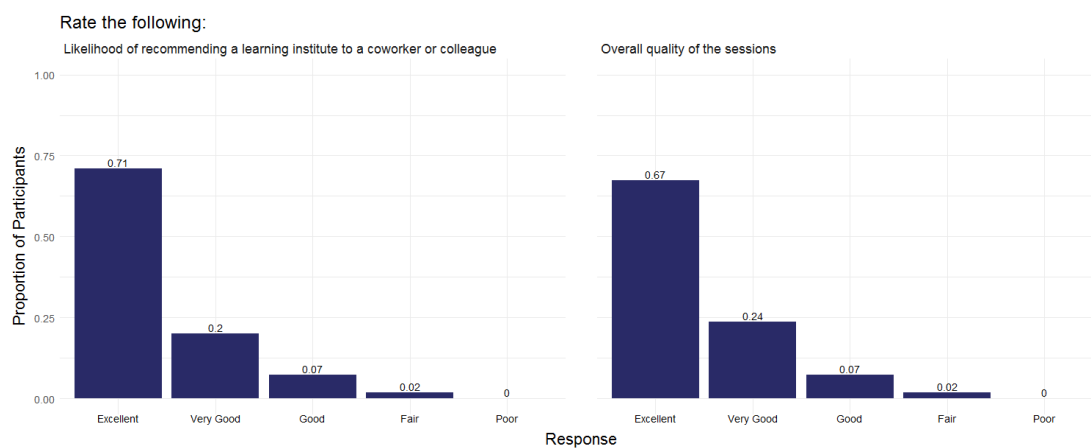


Exhibit 62. Participants' Overall Ratings of the Middle School Learning Institute



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<https://doi.org/10.63302/CDUV4974>