

Successes and Challenges of a Pilot Residency Program: Interim Findings

Adrienne Reitano and Sydney Negus, Office of Research and Evaluation, School District of Philadelphia

BACKGROUND

In 2017-2018, the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) partnered with Relay Graduate School of Education (Relay) to develop and implement a graduate-level teacher preparation program that targets current SDP employees and career changers, with the goal of preparing them to be successful teachers in hard-to-fill schools and hard-to-fill content areas. In year 1 of the partnership (2017-2018), Relay and SDP recruited and are training 20 Relay resident teachers. In addition to working in a SDP classroom with a mentor teacher, the residents complete coursework developed and taught by Relay faculty.

OBJECTIVES

In collaboration with the Office of Talent (Talent), the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) developed a logic model and implementation support plan to articulate and track implementation and short-term outcomes of the Relay Residency Pilot. Questions driving planned activities include:

1. To what degree is the Relay program aligned with other evidence and research-based teacher residency programs?
2. What are the perceptions of the Relay teacher residents, the mentors, and the principals of the Relay PD and coursework?
3. How do residents perceive their relationship with their mentor, principal, and the rest of the school community?
4. What is the role of the Relay resident according to the mentors and the principals?
5. In what ways are the residents most prepared for this role, and in what ways are they unprepared?
6. What are some of the biggest challenges and benefits of having a Relay resident?
7. What percentage of residents identify as people of color? What percentage are former SDP employees?

METHODS

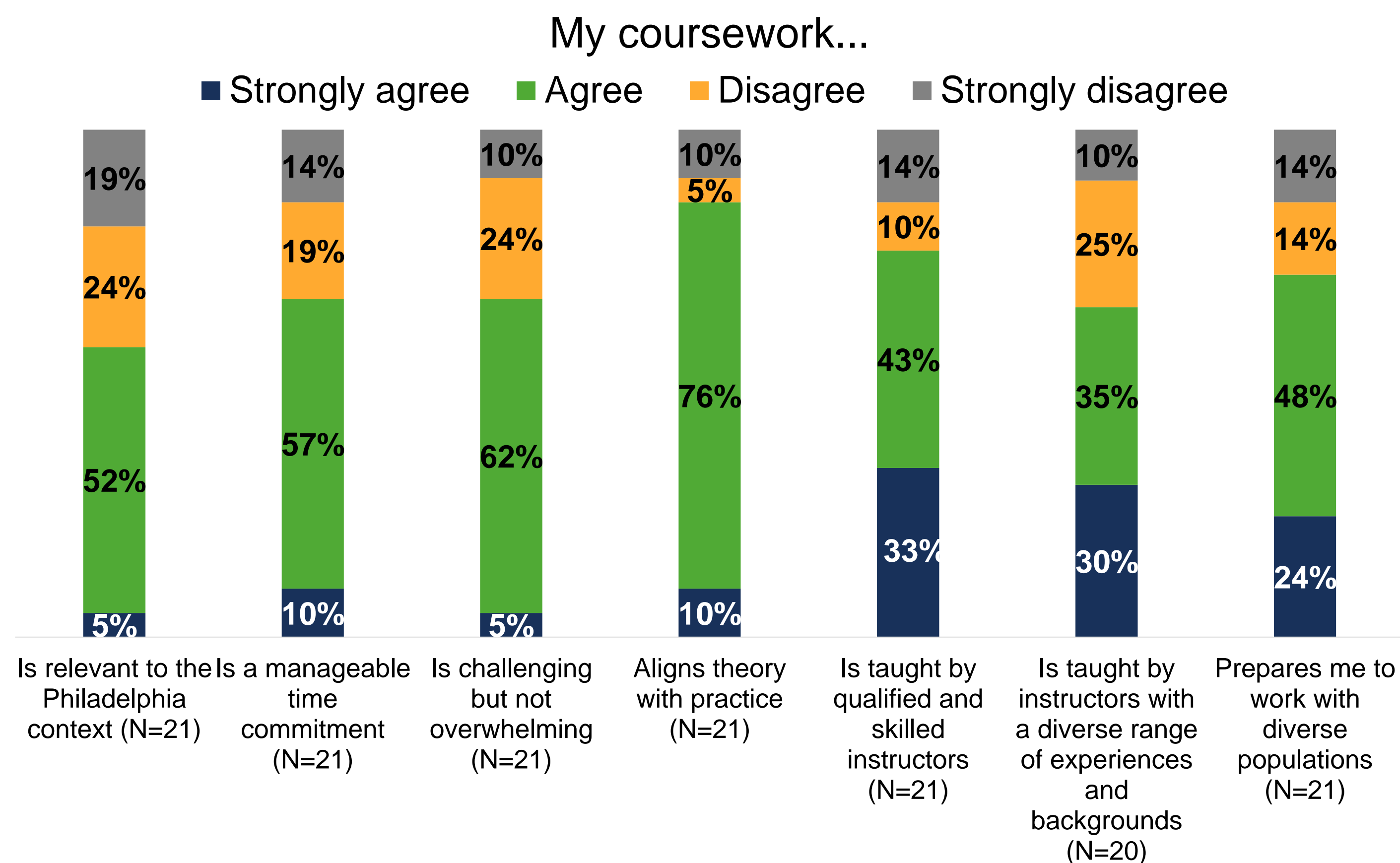
In order to answer the implementation support plan questions, ORE is conducting:

- A literature review of studies and best practices for teacher residency programs
- Mid-year surveys of residents, mentors, and principals
- End-of-year-focus groups with residents and mentors
- End-of-year interviews with principals

INTERIM FINDINGS

Mid-year survey feedback shows Relay participants see room for improvement in aligning the Relay coursework with the realities of teaching in an SDP classroom, particularly for those not working in an elementary setting (Figure 1). On the mid-year mentor survey, a higher percentage of mentors (11%) strongly agreed that the coursework was relevant to the Philadelphia context.

Figure 1: Five percent of residents strongly agreed that the coursework was relevant to the Philadelphia context



For each of the seven survey questions about their relationships with their mentor, at least a third of the residents selected **the most positive** response (strongly agree). For example:

- 38% **strongly agreed** that their mentor provided them with constructive feedback,
- 33% **strongly agreed** that their mentor helps them set clear goals for improvement,
- 38% **strongly agreed** that their mentor models best practices, and
- 100% **either agreed or strongly agreed** that their mentor values their unique strengths and knowledge.

Other themes that emerged from the surveys were:

- There is a need for better communication across, and cooperation between, Relay program staff, residents, mentor teachers, and principals.
- Open-ended feedback suggested residents considered frequent and timely feedback that is constructive and actionable to be crucial factor in a productive mentor-mentee relationship.
- Residents also reported having few interactions with the school principals.

Data provided by the Office of Talent shows that **they met their mid-year goals** of hiring a Residency Program Coordinator and hiring and placing 20 Relay residents. Additionally, 55% of residents identify as people of color and 65% have previous experience working in SDP.

NEXT STEPS

Focus groups with residents and mentors and interviews with principals are scheduled for this spring to gain deeper insight into the preliminary findings.

Contact Information:

Adrienne Reitano, Office of Research and Evaluation, SDP, (areitano@philasd.org)
 Sydney Negus, Office of Research and Evaluation, SDP, (snegus@philasd.org)

