



# Take a Seat at the Table

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## The Role of Educator Preparation Programs in Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Programs

Where are all the teachers? The Economic Policy Institute [reports](#) a projected shortfall of about 200,000 public school teachers by the 2025–26 school year. In addition, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) [reports](#) that, as a result of the pandemic, 20% of institutions reported an 11% or more decline in new undergraduate enrollment in teacher preparation programs in fall 2020 and fall 2021.

Recognizing the need for significant intervention, in January 2022, AACTE supported the application of the state of Tennessee and member institution Austin Peay State University (APSU) to create the first registered apprenticeship for aspiring educators. This program is a grow your own model based on a partnership between APSU and a school district that enables district personnel to earn a bachelor's degree and become fully licensed teachers at no cost and while they continue to earn their existing salary.

Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) hold the potential to increase the pipeline of teachers and make becoming a teacher more **accessible**, **affordable**, and **effective**.

Apprenticeships have a long history in the United States and help employers recruit and develop a highly skilled workforce; until recently, however, apprenticeships had not gained traction in K–12 education. Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) hold the potential to increase the pipeline of teachers and make becoming a teacher more **accessible**, **affordable**, and **effective**. To ensure teacher RAPs provide the professional preparation that enables apprentices to thrive in their careers, teacher RAPs must be grounded in best practices for effective educator preparation. The Pathways Alliance is partnering with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to make certain quality is not compromised through the forthcoming release of the *National Guidelines for Registered Apprenticeship Standards in K–12 Teaching* for use by programs, sponsors, and other partners.

Teacher RAPs have many common elements with [teacher residencies](#) and [grow your own](#) programs—all are designed to provide opportunities to learn integrated content with practice-based learning experiences and intentional and scaffolded mentoring support. Strong teacher RAPs can advance what teacher residency and grow your own programs are designed to do and offer states, districts, and educator preparation programs (EPPs) the opportunity to incentivize these models as the field works to strengthen, diversify, and stabilize the workforce.

## Leading the Way

EPPs have an opportunity to leverage and strengthen existing district partnerships to lead the way in co-designing teacher RAPs, including the launch, operation, and continuous improvement of programs. At the very minimum, EPPs should be at the table as states, districts, and other partners establish these mutually beneficial partnerships and subsequent teacher RAPs offering options and informing how the classroom training, related instruction, and hands-on experience can be fulfilled. See the text box titled Teacher Apprenticeship Program Exemplars for examples of teacher RAP programs that engaged EPPs while the programs were being established.

Engaging EPPs as co-creators of teacher RAPs offers the following benefits:

- **Increased Enrollment and Degree Completion**
  - Heightened interest in EPPs through increased exposure to the profession
  - Increased accessibility to a broader and more diverse pool of candidates by offsetting program costs and providing apprentices with income (see the text box titled teacher RAP Potential Funding Sources)
  - A clear pathway to teaching with full licensure
  - A degree that sets up apprentices for long-term career success and ongoing professional learning
- **Tailored Preparation of Teachers**
  - Districts' needs are used to design programs (e.g., student performance data, teacher vacancy and diversity trends, educator input)
  - Customized curriculum and learning experiences that are aligned between preservice and in-service
  - Immediate access to classrooms for candidates and apprentices with increased practice-based opportunities and on-the-job experience to learn, apply, and demonstrate a comprehensive set of standards-based competencies
  - Regular assessment of competencies that guide mentoring, with responsibilities scaffolded and increased over time
  - Real-time, regular feedback to candidates and apprentices

Because teacher RAPs are new, outcomes have not yet been extensively documented. However, a recent [brief](#) from Bank Street College of Education suggests that apprenticeships and residencies have a lot of similarities (e.g., extensive on-the-job training and aligned instruction, scaffolded learning experiences, mentoring supports) and, as such, similar outcomes may result.

- **Improved K–12 Outcomes**

- [Stable and predictable pipeline of new teachers with improved retention within schools and at the district level](#)
- [Gains in student achievement, reductions in absences and suspensions, and reduction of high school dropout and improvements in college enrollment](#) when teacher workforce matches student demographics

## **Moving Forward: Leading, Informing, and Positioning**

Teacher RAPs create a win–win scenario for EPPs, districts, and the community because such partnerships establish a mechanism for collaborative decision making, coordinated action, and ongoing communication, resulting in a diverse and effective pipeline of teachers who meet local needs and context. EPPs should consider the following recommendations:

1. **Explore and Strengthen Partnerships.** Partnerships are an integral component of successful and strategically sustainable apprenticeship programs and may include state agencies, local districts, workforce agencies, unions, and community colleges. Each organization in the partnership plays a specific role: serving as a sponsor, serving as the industry intermediary, providing the related technical instruction, or providing strong mentorship for candidates (see definitions of terms [here](#)). These partnerships may already exist, or establishing a teacher RAP may spark a first-time collaboration between entities focused on the same goal. For example, partnerships between EPPs and community colleges can offer a full range of academic preparation, with general academic coursework at the community college and educator-specific coursework and field experiences through the EPP. EPPs can connect with their state apprenticeship representative to learn more. Contact information is found on the States Offices page on the [Apprenticeship.gov website](#).
2. **Assess Readiness.** Teacher RAPs offer great flexibility, and there are various models and roles that partners can customize per readiness and local needs. To begin, partners should assess readiness so that they have a solid understanding of teacher workforce data and local and regional needs; statewide and local recruitment, preparation, and retention programs (e.g., grow your own, teacher residencies, mentoring and induction); and their own capacity. The Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) has a free [self-assessment](#) tool that partners can use to initiate discussions and planning.

3. **Gain Faculty Engagement and Buy-In.** If EPP faculty are not part of the design process, they may resist changes to long-standing schedules, curriculum, and the way the EPP offers classes and field experiences. Partners can advance buy-in and support by engaging faculty, being transparent and explicit about needed changes, and listening and responding to feedback. See the [CEEDAR Center Roadmap for Educator Preparation Reform](#) for strategies to generate faculty support and buy-in.
4. **Target and Prioritize Highest Needs.** The flexibility in teacher RAP models allows partners to tailor and target programs to address prioritized needs (e.g., special education, STEM teachers). EPPs can utilize the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders' (GTL Center's) [Insights on Diversifying the Educator Workforce Data Tool](#) to help review teacher workforce data and collaboratively design programs that meet district needs and ensure that the schools and students in most need are prioritized.
5. **Explore Blended and Braided Funding.** The U.S. DOL offers the promise of supplemental resources for teacher preparation through apprenticeship funds and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds. Moreover, partners can leverage and access multiple funding sources (e.g., federal Pell Grants, Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund, Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund) to support teacher RAPs (see the text box titled teacher RAP Potential Funding Sources). Gaining an understanding of the various funding sources can facilitate partners coming together to devise a financing plan that covers program costs and reduces or eliminates costs for candidates and apprentices.

## Conclusion

As interest in teacher RAPs grows, EPPs are in a unique and valuable position to facilitate partnerships and transform programs. EPPs can help states and districts respond to the growing need for K–12 teachers in priority regions, districts, schools, and licensure areas.

## Helpful Resources

- [AACC Virtual Apprenticeship Network Toolkit](#): This toolkit provides resources to assess the viability and demand for registered apprenticeships, assist in the establishment of RAPs, build strategies for implementation, and sustain and scale programs.
- [CCSSO Teacher Registered Apprenticeships: SEA Self-Assessment Tool](#): This playbook “looks at the key components of a teacher RAP and offers a self-assessment tool to guide SEAs through the decision-making process. The questions posed in this assessment can help an SEA decide whether an apprenticeship program is a good option to help expand its teacher pipeline and if so, help it build support, choose strong partners, and create a structure that will successfully address its current and future staffing needs.”
- [Apprenticeship.gov Education](#): Includes resources from the Department of Labor on Education Registered Apprenticeship Programs.

## Teacher Apprenticeship Program Exemplars

- **Tennessee: The APSU and Clarksville-Montgomery County School System program** is the first registered teacher apprenticeship program in the country. The success of this program can be attributed to existing relationships between the university and the district. The EPP and district already had an established grow your own and teacher residency program, which laid the foundation for success. APSU supports apprentices in earning their bachelor's degree through on-the-job training and classroom experiences.
- **New York: Classroom Academy** transformed a 2-year residency model into a teacher RAP in 2019. To do so, EPPs transformed the delivery system, requiring 2-year commitments from candidates, establishing a faculty team to support and design implementation, and integrating coursework into the residency model. Through collaboration with the New York State Department of Labor and New York State Education Department, Classroom Academy allows the district/employer to partner with multiple EPPs and offers students an annual stipend of \$22,000 plus \$5,000 per year in college tuition assistance, which often is the largest obstacle for students of color. EPPs are responsible for managing the candidate application process, offering the coursework hours, and providing clinical supervision.
- **Texas: Dallas College** initiated the state's first teacher RAP. Students earn \$30,000 a year working in classrooms 3 days a week, serving as a substitute teacher or tutor 1 day a week and taking coursework 1 day per week. This cohort model program serves 200 teacher candidates and is targeting the staffing needs of two local school districts. The EPP is working to scale the program.
- **Missouri: Missouri State University Pathways for Paraprofessionals** is a program that allows paraprofessionals working in schools to earn a teacher certification in K–12 Mild/Moderate Cross-Categorical Special Education. Funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the program is grounded in a partnership between Missouri State University and partner districts. Districts assemble cohorts of paraprofessionals, and about half the classwork is taught at the school district. By the partnership designating the program as a teacher RAP, more funding opportunities were available to remove financial barriers for candidates.
- **Indiana: Ball State University** offers a grow your own program for high school students. The program offers 2 years of dual enrollment while students work at a local Boys and Girls Club through high school. The apprentices then participate in a 3-year bachelor's degree program and clinical placement in a partner district. This grow your own program is designed to increase the pipeline of special education teachers and is grounded in strong partnerships.

See additional examples via Secretary Cardona's [Call to Action to Address the Teacher Shortage Fact Sheet](#)

## Teacher RAP Potential Funding Sources

See the following resources for eligibility requirements and information about obtaining grant funding and other forms of support from the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education:

[Prepared To Teach—Supporting Candidates’ Financial Needs](#)

[U.S. Department of Education—Dear Colleague Letter](#)

[U.S. Department of Education—\*Fact Sheet: Sustaining Investments in Teachers Beyond the American Rescue Plan\*](#)

[GTL Center—\*Investing in Talent Development: A Funding Guide for Supporting the Teacher Workforce with Federal, Private, and State Funds\*](#)

[National Center for Teacher Residencies—Teaching as an Apprenticiable Occupation Memo](#)

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