

GROWING SOLUTIONS

HOW TENNESSEE'S FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND
TEACHER APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM IS
ADDRESSING THE EDUCATOR SHORTAGE





SCHOOLS FACE A HISTORIC SHORTAGE OF PREPARED TEACHERS



In Tennessee, fewer educators are entering the workforce.

Enrollment and graduation rates for educator preparation providers continue to decline, while retirements and career departures continue.¹ Tennessee now has more than 1,000 vacant teaching positions.²



Teacher vacancies most seriously affect students with the greatest needs.

Vacancies are most prevalent in high-poverty and rural areas,³ and they are most challenging to fill in specific academic subjects:

- Special Education
- English as a Second Language
- Math
- Science⁴



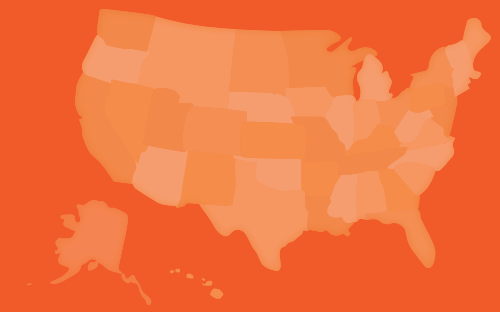
New teachers are often underprepared for the classroom.⁵

First-year teachers' relative inexperience and high turnover rate present immediate workforce challenges. This leaves some students without high-skilled teachers in their classrooms.



Meanwhile, Tennessee's teachers don't always reflect the communities they serve.

As of 2018, 37% of public school students in Tennessee were people of color, while only 13% of teachers were non-white.⁶



EDUCATORS IN DEMAND NATIONWIDE

- Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, school systems across the country faced a shortage of qualified teachers. Estimates place the national shortage of teachers at 100,000 at least.⁷
- Shortages could become even more severe, with 55% of teachers today considering leaving the profession earlier than planned.⁸
- Shortages raise the likelihood of teacher burnout and turnover, lead to classroom consolidation, and ultimately diminish the educational experience for students, especially those in rural and high-poverty areas.



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WHAT IS GROW YOUR OWN?

- Grow Your Own programs aim to recruit and develop community members to become teachers in local schools.
- Grow Your Own programs provide participants with high-quality preparation, financial support, career guidance, and the promise of a job in their district upon graduation.
- By training community members, Grow Your Own programs increase the likelihood that students are taught by teachers who have similar lived experiences.

GROW YOUR OWN: A TRIED-AND-TRUE MODEL



To address ongoing shortages, Tennessee leveraged new strategies to ensure Grow Your Own programs were strong and sustainable. Leaders pursued a long-term solution in the U.S. Department of Labor's registered apprenticeship program. Then they identified the partnership between Clarksville-Montgomery County School System and Austin Peay State University as an existing Grow Your Own program that could serve as the applicant to meet national apprenticeship standards.

HOW THEY DID IT:

- **Leaders contacted their state's representative at the U.S. Department of Labor to initiate the registration process.** Tennessee engaged early, knowing the review and approval process could take a significant amount of time.
- **The Tennessee Department of Education completed the federal application** provided by the state's U.S. Department of Labor representative to become an apprenticeship sponsor.
 - The department created a work process schedule, detailing the steps an apprentice would need to take to become a teacher.
 - State leaders established wage and benefit scales for prospective apprentices.
- **To align the Clarksville-Montgomery Grow Your Own program with the rigorous standards for a national apprenticeship, the Tennessee Department of Education established,** in collaboration with the Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development:
 - On-the-job training and instruction requirements that ensured the Clarksville-Montgomery program met apprenticeship standards for training hours and on-the-job learning.
 - Non-negotiable competencies and content that graduates will learn in the program, raising the bar for quality.
 - A standard program length and format to ensure effective delivery.
- **The Tennessee Department of Education monitored the application approval process closely** and submitted letters of support from state and national partners such as the governor's office and Chiefs for Change.



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“A lot of times when a person starts a job, they haven’t had the benefit of knowing what the profession is really like. The Grow Your Own program helps you gain skills and confidence by giving you that hands-on experience in the classroom.”

TEANNA TURNER

CANDIDATE, GROW YOUR OWN PROGRAM

DICKSON COUNTY SCHOOLS



APPROVAL SOLIDIFIES TENNESSEE'S GAME- CHANGING APPROACH



Tennessee's Grow Your Own program became the first in the nation to receive U.S. Department of Labor approval.

In January 2022, the U.S. Department of Labor approved Tennessee's application for the Grow Your Own partnership between the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System and Austin Peay State University. Now, as federally approved teacher apprentices, participants in the program will:

- Earn a free bachelor's degree in three years.
- Become certified to teach in grades K-5.
- Participate in a multi-year residency while being a full-time, paid paraprofessional, with benefits.
- Learn how to teach in the district where they want to work.
- Get a job in the district once they complete the program.



Approval as a registered apprenticeship granted the program access to future, sustainable state and federal funding.

Apprenticeship approval ensures both state and district-level programming can access ongoing workforce dollars, used for ongoing costs associated with apprentices' pay and education.



Approval also authorized the state to sponsor future Grow Your Own apprenticeship programs.

With national designation and federal approval, Tennessee operates as the program sponsor for future approvals and scale. More schools, communities, and aspiring educators across the state will benefit from additional teacher apprenticeships.



AS A REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP, TENNESSEE'S GROW YOUR OWN PROGRAM CAN:

- Access permanent, recurring funding through federal and state workforce funding streams.
- Maximize quality and rigor of existing Grow Your Own programs by following national registered apprenticeship standards.
- Fast track training so apprentices can complete their degree in three years rather than four by creating a unique year-round college coursework schedule for participants that allows aspiring teachers to get on-the-job training and earn a paycheck while they learn.
- Review and approve new, innovative models that address other educator shortages and school professionals.



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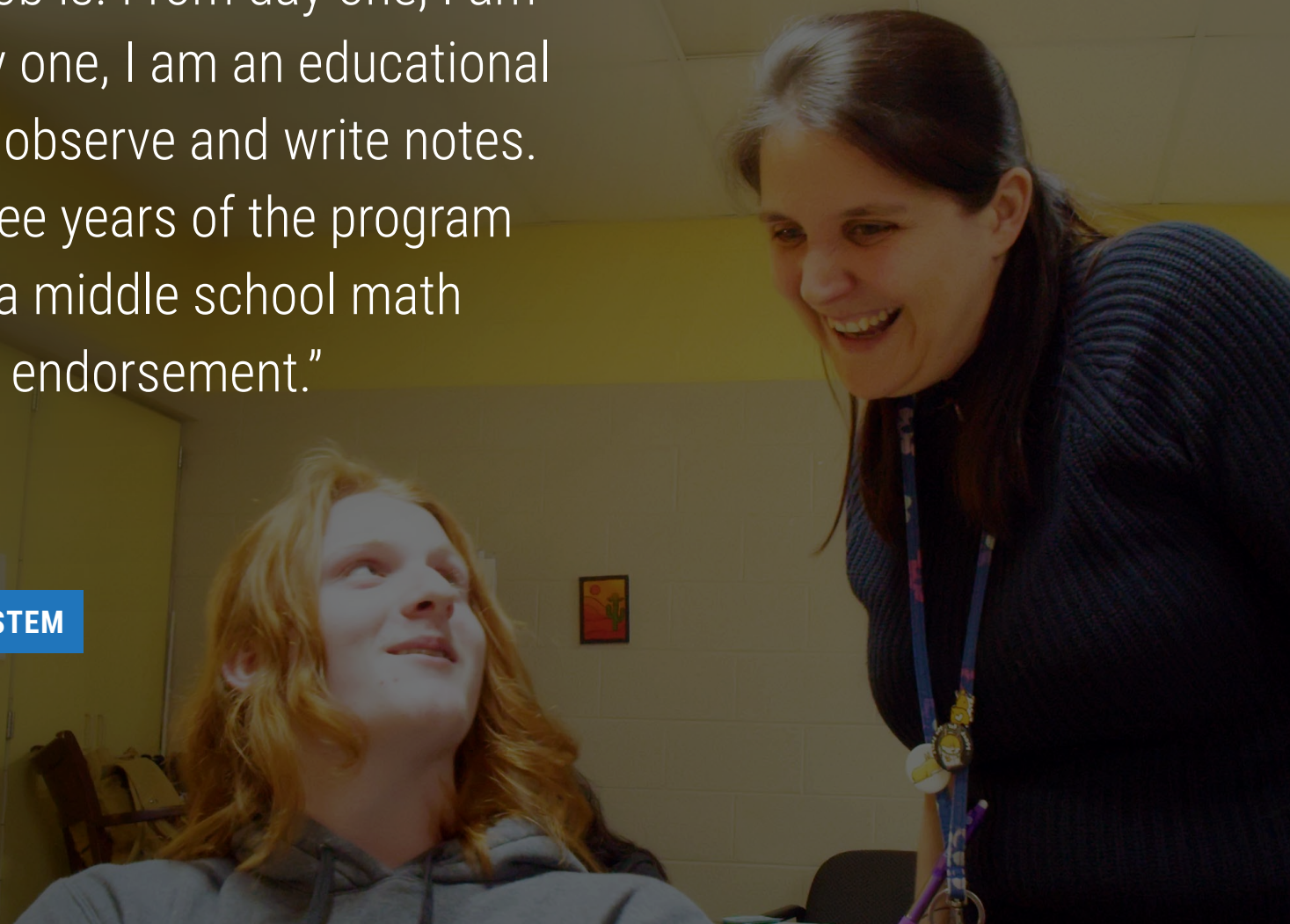
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“This program has definitely been a game-changer because I don’t have to worry about having thousands of dollars in student loans. Also, from the very beginning, I am in the classroom. I truly see what the job is. From day one, I am working with a mentor. From day one, I am an educational assistant. I don’t just come in to observe and write notes. I am a student teacher for all three years of the program and will graduate certified to be a middle school math teacher with a special education endorsement.”

MELANIE HAMMONS

CANDIDATE, GROW YOUR OWN PROGRAM

CLARKSVILLE-MONTGOMERY COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM





LESSONS LEARNED



Collaboration across state and local institutions is key, particularly with state workforce agency partners.

Tennessee’s effort required a strong partnership among the state Department of Education, the Department of Labor & Workforce Development, the governor’s office, the local district, and local educator preparation providers.



States should start with a strong local partner.

Program launch will take longer if teams are creating an entirely new Grow Your Own program. Having an existing partnership or program that closely mirrors the registered apprenticeship model will streamline and expedite the process.



Approval takes preparation and time.

New programs should anticipate that any state-based review and approval process will take time from start to finish.



Leadership from the state department of education is important.

State departments of education can play a critical role in sponsoring teacher occupation apprenticeships. Though districts and educator preparation providers have the opportunity in other states to build standalone programs, the state agency can ensure stronger programming, implementation, and evaluation across the board.



Tennessee’s approach offers a roadmap.

States looking to implement their own teacher apprenticeship model can simplify the process by replicating Tennessee’s approach.



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FACED WITH A COMPLEX CHALLENGE, TENNESSEE DEVELOPED A CREATIVE SOLUTION. YOU CAN TOO.

Learn more:

- ▶ Tennessee's Grow Your Own Teacher Apprenticeship Program Playbook
- ▶ Grow Your Own: Tennessee's Teacher Apprenticeship Program Workbook
- ▶ Tennessee's Grow Your Own Program Webpage

