

Charter Schools

Tennessee is the first state in the country to sponsor Teacher Occupation Apprenticeship programs between school districts and Educator Preparation Providers (EPPs). Tennessee's Teacher Apprenticeship model aligns leading practices in educator preparation and development with the rigors of the national registered apprenticeship process. The Tennessee Department of Education (the department) currently operates as the sponsor for a program's review and approval as a registered apprenticeship.

The vision and future scale of Tennessee's Teacher Apprenticeship model is designed to welcome collaboration from multiple partners and education stakeholders who identify educator workforce needs, develop and implement apprenticeship strategies, and enlist financial support for long-term sustainability. Within this ecosystem, school districts can design and register Tennessee Teacher Apprenticeship Programs with an EPP partner. Charter schools are public schools operated by independent, non-profit governing bodies, and in Tennessee, teachers in public charter schools are held to the same licensure and preparation standards as educators in other public schools.

Charter School Responsibilities

Tennessee Teacher Apprenticeship program partnerships are designed locally to accommodate and reflect the needs of each unique partnership. In the apprenticeship model, the charter's primary role is to employ teacher apprentice candidates to work and learn in the school setting where they will ultimately be hired. To build and launch lasting teacher apprenticeship programs, charter schools must:

- 1. Co-design high-quality programs with EPPs.** Reviewing student performance data, vacancy trends, sources of future teachers, and individual school needs, charter schools can design programs that directly support talent gaps.
- 2. Identify and recruit candidates.** Charter schools should leverage existing networks, communications or marketing personnel, and community connections to recruit candidates best suited for relevant classroom positions.
- 3. Train teachers that students most need.** Through on-the-job learning with classroom training hours, mentor feedback, and 1:1 coaching, charter schools can develop lasting talent in real time. Teachers learn the school's culture, priorities, and best practices from mentor teachers, training in the content and specialty areas most needed.
- 4. Pay teachers to earn and learn.** As candidates earn their degree and license, charter schools operate as the employer and pay teacher apprentices while they learn their trade. The progressive wages compensate a candidate's increasing ability, mirroring their growing responsibility and competency.
- 5. Manage administrative needs and reporting requirements.** As the department and the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD) require programmatic information on apprentice candidates, charter schools are responsible for completing all requirements and managing all aspects of the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP).

Charter Schools (cont.)



Process for Approval

The Tennessee Teacher Apprenticeship model is federally recognized, nationally approved, and state monitored. The Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD), a State Approving Agency (SAA), has been granted responsibility for approving registered apprentices in Tennessee. Both TDLWD and the department coordinate to approve apprenticeships, with the department serving as the sponsor. Therefore, all programs seeking to offer Tennessee Teacher Apprenticeship programs in the state must complete [this application](#) and receive approval from the department before the TDLWD will approve apprentices.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

- **Should the charter school or the charter management organization (CMO) apply for program recognition?** Charter schools should complete Section VII of [the application](#) to be approved as an employer in partnership with an approved EPP program. The department will accept Section VII of the program application from either an individual charter school or CMO.
- **What EPPs offer department-approved apprenticeship programs, and what are the models?** To date, 9 EPPs have been approved to offer registered teacher apprenticeship programs, ranging in length from 1-3 years offering master's, bachelor's, and licensure-only pathways. You can read more in the [November 2022 press release](#) or the Tennessee Teacher Apprenticeship Models Overview [here](#).
- **Can a charter school or charter management organization (CMO) have a partnership with multiple EPPs?** Charter schools –like districts— may establish multiple EPP partnerships to meet the needs of their local context and serve as many apprenticeship candidates as desired.
- **What funding opportunities are available to support sustainable, scalable programs?** Applying and becoming approved as a RAP does not guarantee funding. Instead, approval allows a program to apply for state, local, and sometimes, federal funding. Apprenticeship grant dollars can support tuition (Related Technical Instruction), pay, and/or administrative costs. The [Tennessee Grow Your Own Center](#), a \$20M investment in the University of Tennessee System by the Tennessee Department of Education, offers subgrant opportunities for EPPs approved to offer teacher apprenticeship programs.
- **How should CMOs work with a district?** While CMOs and districts are welcome to collaborate on program design, candidate placement, and EPP partners through a mutually agreed upon MOU, the CMO and district may have different needs or program characteristics. and therefore, may also work separately to establish different apprenticeship programs for teachers employed by the district versus teachers employed by the charter school.

Additional Resources

- Tennessee's Grow Your Own strategic initiative: tn.gov/education/grow-your-own
- Tennessee's Grow Your Own Center, offering technical assistance: growyourown.tennessee.edu/
- Charter Schools: tn.gov/education/school-options/charter-schools