



Tennessee's Teacher Apprenticeship



Job Embedded vs. Teacher Apprentice Pathways

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.

Tennessee's Teacher Occupation Apprenticeship was the first of its kind federally registered through the USDOL, meeting national quality standards that are hallmarks for both

employers and job seeking apprentices. Since approval in January 2022, Tennessee has launched models through nine approved EPPs, with programs spanning 1-3 years leading to various degrees and specialty areas.

While the federally registered teacher apprenticeship is an innovative solution that addresses the financial, representation, and preparation barriers historically faced by the educator profession, the model is one of many pathways into the educator profession. The Registered Teacher Apprenticeship prioritizes on-the-job learning, mentor supports, related technical instruction through an EPP, and progressive wage increases for each candidate to earn as they learn. Districts are encouraged to pursue a multi-faceted approach to teacher recruitment utilizing all pathways that best meet the needs of a variety of candidates.

Given the model's current framework, and the sponsor authority of the department, **job-embedded candidates are not recognized as registered teacher apprentices.**

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

- **What is a job-embedded program?** Job-embedded programs are available for individuals who are interested in becoming a teacher and have a bachelor's degree. These programs allow candidates to work—and get paid—as the teacher of record while completing the department's requirements for teacher licensure. Job-embedded programs allow an individual to serve as a teacher of record for the full school year in a Tennessee classroom while completing a required educator preparation program. You can read more from the [Tennessee Educator Preparation Policy 5.504](#).

Job Embedded vs. Teacher Apprentices Pathways (cont.)

- **What is a teacher apprenticeship program?** Tennessee Teacher Apprenticeship programs are available for individuals who are interested in becoming a teacher, and currently approved programs offer bachelor's, master's, and licensure-only options for interested candidates. Teacher apprentices are employed by the school district—typically in a paraprofessional or educational assistant role—while they progress in their competencies towards program completion. Apprentices are paired with a mentor teacher and learn through their on-the-job experiences. Teacher apprentices are not the teacher of record, and candidates earn a progressive wage while working in the district and taking related coursework through an EPP partner.
- **Can a candidate start an apprenticeship program and exit to become a job-embedded candidate?** No. Districts and EPPs should not encourage candidates to discontinue an apprenticeship program to become a job-embedded candidate. EPPs and districts should work together to ensure that they are clear and communicative about program benefits, match, and best opportunities for candidates to train and gain future employment.
- **Are job-embedded programs still a viable option for districts to leverage?** Yes. Though the state will prioritize Tennessee Teacher Apprenticeship programs for future funding, job-embedded programs are still a strong option for many future teacher candidates across the state.
- **How should I explain the difference between a job-embedded program and an apprenticeship program, and the benefits of each, to potential candidates?**
 - If a candidate has a degree with a major in the specialty area or qualifying scores on the required content area assessments, a job-embedded program would offer higher compensation, mentoring, and greater responsibility.
 - However, for candidates without a degree or a degree in an unrelated field who might need more training and classroom experience with a mentor prior to becoming the teacher of record, or those looking for no-cost degrees, and progressive wages, a teacher apprenticeship might be a better option.
 - Districts may leverage their Human Resources website to communicate the differences, share openings, and connect candidates to available program seats. See Hamilton County School's page [here as an example](#).

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/
- Tennessee's Educator Licensure & Preparation division: tn.gov/education/licensing