

Teacher Apprenticeship Arkansas



The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) approved the first nationally registered K-12 Teacher Apprenticeship Program in January 2022, opening the door to a rapidly growing pathway for prospective teachers. DOL approved Arkansas' registered teacher apprenticeship program in November 2022, and has now approved registered teacher apprenticeships in more than 30 states.

What Is Teacher Apprenticeship?

Teacher apprenticeship is an “earn and learn” pathway to a teaching credential that provides structured, paid, on-the-job learning experiences combined with job-related technical instruction and mentorship. Teacher candidates serving as apprentices are paid by their employer while they participate in the program, helping to make their pathway into the profession more affordable.

Arkansas Teacher Apprenticeship by the Numbers



10 local education agencies with active apprentices



4 education preparation providers

Creating New Pathways

The Arkansas Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Program is one pathway to becoming a teacher within the statewide Grow Your Own model. The Registered Apprenticeship designation, intended to provide paid work experience leading to a high-quality career pathway, allows the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) access to federal funding streams. In turn, this pathway provides money to candidates and mentor teachers serving as journey-level professionals guiding hands-on learning during the apprenticeship. Arkansas is minimizing the barriers blocking potential teachers from entering the job market, and recruiting apprentices from the communities that need qualified teachers the most.

How It Works

ADE sponsors the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship program statewide. The State reviews and approves applications for potential apprentices and districts and allocates funds to education service collaboratives (ESCs) to coordinate with districts and master teachers, record apprentice progress, and distribute funds to journey-level teachers and education preparation programs (EPPs). The university EPPs provide districts with the qualified student candidate applicants and align related technical instruction (RTI) to suit the needs of districts. Districts will hire apprentices starting at \$15 an hour, additionally providing benefits, the opportunity to accrue seniority, and a path to retirement.

Journey to Teacher Apprenticeship

Summer 2022
The Certified Teaching Assistant (CTA) pathway is redesigned to align with a degree in education and allow for aspiring educators to earn the industry recognized credential as early as high school through concurrent credit opportunities.

Fall 2022
30% enrollment increase in high school coursework leading to the CTA from the previous year.
Arkansas Registered Teacher Apprenticeship (ATRA) is approved by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL).

Fall 2023
7 Districts alongside 4 college partners launch ATRAs.
DESE builds capacity for program implementation by providing opportunities for journeymen to earn Lead and Master Professional Educator licensure designations and coaching training.

Spring 2024
3 additional districts launch ATRAs, bringing the total to 10 districts alongside 4 college partners.
24 total CTA credentials awarded.

“Retention is the new recruitment.”
Karli Saracini, Assistant Commissioner for ADE

Spring 2023
Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) and school districts begin developing the Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) necessary to implement ATRA.
Executive Order to Prioritize LEARNS requires DESE to ensure all educator preparation program completers in spring 2027 and beyond complete a one-year supervised residency alongside an experienced mentor teacher in a school setting.
CTA application launches in Arkansas Educator Licensure System (AELS) and the first industry recognized credential is awarded. Arkansas prioritizes CTAs for selection to participate in the ATRA.

Benefits for Teacher Apprentices

- No out-of-pocket costs
- College tuition
- Progressive wages
- On-the-job learning
- PRAXIS test fee waiver
- Free dual-credit courses in high school
- Mentor teacher stipends
- Earn retirement and seniority in the district
- Health care coverage

Give everyone a chance to be what they want to be

The Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program uses a Grow Your Own recruiting strategy, drawing future teachers from within the existing community.

“Oftentimes, hard-to-staff school districts are filled with paraprofessionals and other employees who wish to become teachers, but they feel their life circumstances, like raising a family and earning a living, would not allow them to complete the requirements necessary to fulfill their dream. These districts are also filled with students who have a passion for teaching but are not ready or able to move hours from home to pursue a traditional college experience.”

Jacob Oliva, Secretary, ADE

Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Candidate Pools in Arkansas

High School Students	
Challenges	Solutions
Cost of college	Tuition and certification costs are paid for by the program
Time it takes to finish a bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree can be completed in 3 years after high school
First years of teaching are often difficult to manage	5 years of authentic on-the-job experience and training alongside master teachers
EPP experience requires moving far from home	Apprenticeship is connected to and embedded in the apprentice's school district

Adults	
Challenges	Solutions
Providing for children or family members	Apprentice earns an income and retirement benefits, and can access health insurance coverage while employed by the district
Cannot be without an income	
Cannot be without health insurance coverage	Increasing education level and certification opens up new career pathways, opportunities for higher wages
Limited employment opportunities in community	

Hands-on from the very beginning

Apprentices do authentic, job-embedded learning from the start of the program, spending at least 10 hours per week working with students. The novice teachers refine their practice with the support of experienced mentor teachers and the EPP coursework. Training and stipends for mentor teachers are provided to support the quality of mentorship.

If you can grow your own, you're going to keep them

The financial supports and incentives open the door for a more diverse pool of candidates to become teachers. Similarly, they allow communities to support the development of teacher candidates who hail from and understand the area and people. At the conclusion of the program, the apprentice receives both a teaching license and nationally recognized apprenticeship certification.

Funding Teacher Apprenticeships in Arkansas



Registering the teacher apprenticeship program provided ADE access to new funding streams, particularly funds from the Arkansas Office of Workforce Development. School districts and the ADE can now braid funds to support tuition costs, salaries, stipends, and more. The registered apprenticeship also provides access to federal funding, as detailed in ADE's November 2022 announcement:

- “U.S. Department of Labor program approval allows the state to use **\$2.2 million** in federal apprenticeship dollars to cover tuition costs up to **\$12,000** per participant in Levels 3 and 4 (juniors and seniors) and to pay **\$2,500** per semester for master or lead designated teachers who will serve as journeymen and mentor the apprentices.” (ADE memo)
- The Office of Skills Development (OSD) and the Department of Education has established a funding partnership to support the Arkansas Registered Teacher Apprenticeship.

Lessons Learned

- Training everyone involved is crucial:** mentor teachers, district leadership, SEA employees—they all need to understand what the goals are and the processes for accomplishing them. The more frontloading, the better.
- Approach challenges creatively:** Find creative ways to approach challenges. For instance, districts approach the progressive wage requirements and wage parity through different means —some use a new line of the salary schedule, others assign a stipend for apprentices. Customizing solutions for individuals and communities allows for making progress.
- Start small, if you can:** Starting statewide meant a lot was happening all at once, and many unknowns had to be navigated concurrently. A pilot launch could help build capacity and scale for States looking to start an apprenticeship program.
- Plan ahead:** It is always easier to know what data is needed after a program has started. It is also important to determine and set up what data is needed and how it will be collected, tracked, and used. To learn more about Arkansas' tracking system, watch this 4-minute interview.

Legislation

The LEARNS Act executive order (2023) requires all teacher candidates to complete a 1-year residency supported by a skilled mentor by 2027.



Want to Learn More about Teacher Apprenticeships in Arkansas?

Watch the Arkansas Teacher Apprenticeship video series

Check out the Arkansas Department of Education website

Explore the Arkansas Teacher Residency Apprenticeship Guidebook