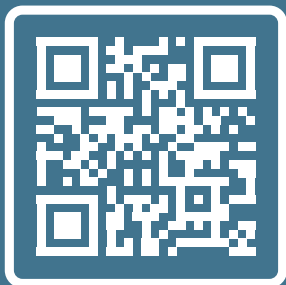




THE IMPACT OF GYO TEACHER APPRENTICESHIP ON RURAL COMMUNITIES



growyourown.tennessee.edu

A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN
THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE SYSTEM AND
TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

RURAL COMMUNITY IMPACT

The Tennessee Grow Your Own Center

The Tennessee Grow Your Own (GYO) Center exists to improve the educational experience of every K-12 learner by equipping their schools with an expanded pipeline of educators who are confident, highly-skilled and committed. The variable with the greatest impact on a child's achievement and ability to flourish in K-12 education is the effectiveness of their teachers. There are not enough teachers trained through traditional programs to meet the demands of schools. Programs for working learners have proliferated over the past twenty years, and studies have shown that many of these pathways are as effective as traditional programs.¹

The GYO Center's current priority is to expand access to educator preparation provider (EPP) programs into every county in the state. Regardless of where a K-12 learner lives, they need to be taught by an educator who has been thoroughly prepared, understands their community's culture and possesses the confidence to persist in their career as an educator.² K-12 learners are more successful when they experience educators who represent and understand the lived experiences of those in their communities.³ Representation can include demographic characteristics like race and ethnicity, and it can also include cultural aspects of the community (agriculture, military bases, traditions, etc.).⁴ Cost, location and candidate readiness can all act as barriers that prevent otherwise talented candidates from realizing their dreams of having careers as educators. Grow Your Own programs, including registered teacher apprenticeship and Teaching as a Profession (TAP), present opportunities for working learners to overcome these barriers.

A Learner Snapshot

A guidance counselor from a rural district recently shared a story about a young man who has experienced many traumas. His school has been his source of stability. He is currently employed, and much of his income provides for his mom who is unable to work. He has enjoyed assisting in the special education classes at the middle school for the past year but had no intentions of going to college. This month, his guidance counselor was able to share the good news that she could offer him a role as a teacher apprentice. He will gain full time employment within his support network, he can continue caring for his mom and he gains access to a college degree at no cost. Upon hearing the news, he broke down in tears and said, "I never even dreamed this could be possible."

Each of the numbers in the information below represents this kind of opportunity for someone. We hear impactful stories of changed lives every time we visit a GYO program site.

¹ Constantine, J., Player, D., Silva, T., Hallgren, K., Grider, M., & Deke, J. (2009). An Evaluation of Teachers Trained through Different Routes to Certification. Final Report. NCEE 2009-4043. *National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance*.

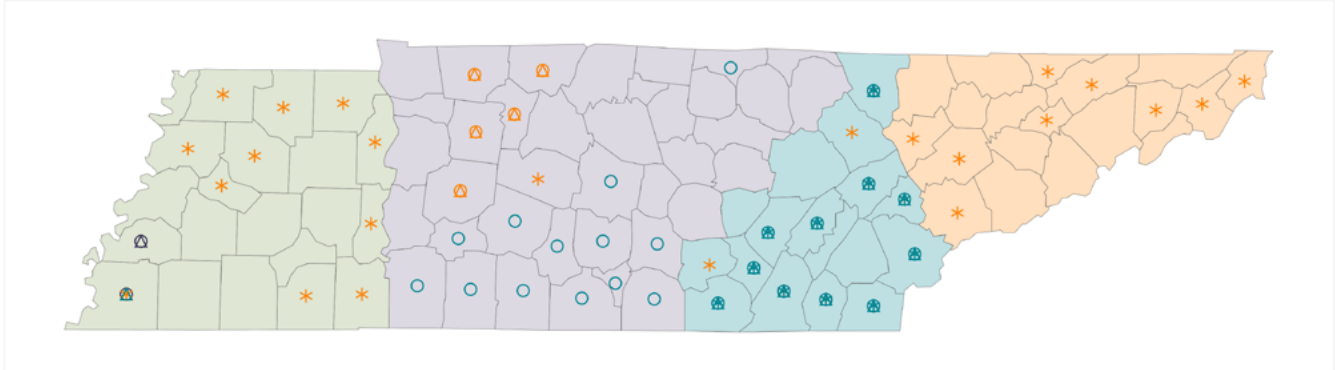
² Sass, Tim (2015), Licensure and Worker Quality: A Comparison of Alternative Routes to Teaching. www.journals.uchicago.edu/utk.idm.oclc.org

³ Campbell, A. M., & Yates, G. C. R. (2011). Want to be a country teacher? No, I am too metrocentric. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 26(4), 1-12. Retrieved from: <https://jrre.psu.edu/search-articles>

⁴ Boyd, D., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2005a). The draw of home: How teachers' preferences for proximity disadvantage urban schools. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 24(1), 113-132

On the map pictured below, the symbols indicate Tennessee-specific educator preparation pathways that are currently available to working learners ([interactive version available here](#)). One year ago, this map would have been mostly blank except for programs in Clarksville-Montgomery, Knox and Shelby counties. There is still work to be done, but tremendous progress has been made. The goal of the GYO Center is to see a circle, star and triangle image in every county indicating that no matter where a working learner is employed, they have access to the level of education they need (i.e. bachelors, licensure-only or post-baccalaureate pathway).

2024-2025 Tennessee Grow Your Own Pathways



One Year of Growth

From the fall semester of 2022 to the fall semester of 2023, the Tennessee Grow Your Own Center grew enrollment in rural communities from 49 apprentices to 169 apprentices. These 169 learners are gaining at least a full year of training and experience before licensure. They have no academic costs for their programs (no student loans) and they are being paid a full-time wage. The GYO Center has contributed over \$1 million so far to the academic costs for rural educators and will continue to fund their training through completion. Each of the following institutions is serving at least five rural learners and three more institutions will add learners in the 2024-25 school year:

- Austin Peay State University
- Lincoln Memorial University
- Lipscomb University
- University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
- University of Tennessee at Knoxville
- University of Tennessee at Martin
- University of Tennessee at Southern

Seventy-three (73) school districts from 59 counties in the state have partnered with the GYO Center to launch programs. This represents a 114% increase in the number of participating districts in just one year. Much of this growth has been in rural locales. Staff in the GYO Center have intentionally recruited districts from every county in the state and our regional managers collect contact information for aspiring apprentices and provide those names to school districts.

Mentoring Matters

Every registered teacher apprentice has a classroom mentor. Mentor teachers support the skill development of their assigned apprentices in addition to the faculty instruction the apprentice is receiving from the college/university. Mentors from rural communities made the following comments on surveys that were collected this year:

- It is a wonderful program and supports the mentors and students tremendously. So excited for my assistant to obtain her license! She works so hard and loves the students. She is a mother of 4 and needed this program to be able to complete her degree while still earning a salary during the process!
- Our district is very new in the apprenticeship program and just began our work with the Grow Your Own Center and the department of education. So far, the support has been great, but the contact has just begun. It seems that the support system is well established and so far, my emails are answered in a timely manner and very helpful.

Evidence of Success

There is strong initial evidence for the success of the model in Tennessee. Success indicators include:

- 91% of the candidates who have enrolled in GYO teacher apprenticeship have either completed or are still in progress.
- Teacher apprentices more adequately represent the racial and ethnic demographics of the communities in which they teach than the current educator population. The average age of rural apprentices is 28 years old.
- Recruitment efforts have been fruitful. The limiting factor is not the number of interested applicants but rather the amount of funding available and the availability of TN-based EPP coursework designed for working learners.
- Over 90 teacher apprentices have completed the program, and of that group, 72% expressed satisfaction with the experience, and 83% indicated that GYO was positively impactful on their ability to become a teacher.
- 704 teacher apprentices in the state have enrolled, completed or are on track to enroll from a community college pre-apprenticeship program. Tennessee leads the country with more registered teacher apprentices than any other state.
- Apprentices receive at least an entire year of on-the-job learning before they serve as a teacher of record. This is a key differentiator of GYO Teacher Apprenticeship and a [hallmark of quality](#).

The [GYO Center's 2023 annual report](#) is available on our website. The center has also developed and implemented the [GYO Teacher Apprenticeship quality rubric](#) ensuring that all programs meet the minimum standards.

On February 1st, the TN GYO Center issued a [press release](#) announcing a \$1.8M grant that the center has been awarded to address the needs of rural aspiring educators. The grant provides funding to develop a robust online curriculum to scale hybrid and blended preparation programs into rural communities. Any approved EPP in the state will have access to the curriculum and assessments. Tennessee's GYO Programs offer an incredible opportunity for rural schools to expand their pipeline of educators by recruiting from their home communities. Tennessee is on track to become the national leader in recruiting, equipping and retaining a highly skilled K-12 educator workforce.