



Wyoming Teacher Apprenticeship

an initiative of the Wyoming Department of Education and the Wyoming Professional Teaching Standards Board

FAQ School District

When will the Wyoming Teacher Apprenticeship be available in other school districts, besides the pilot school districts?

The Wyoming Department of Education intends to begin conversations with interested school districts in the fall of 2023. The soonest these school districts would be recruiting apprentices would be in the spring of 2024. The WDE and pilot school districts need time to begin and refine the apprenticeship program, now that it is approved by the U.S. Department of Labor.

Can school districts limit the number of candidates based on available funding? Is there a screening beyond meeting the requirements or qualifications?

- Open apprenticeship positions must be posted and advertised within the school district.
- School districts can have additional considerations for who they select as apprentices beyond the minimum qualifications identified by WDE and Professional Teaching Standards Board. Apprentice applicants will need a letter of recommendation from a building administrator, and participate in an interview about the apprenticeship. Some of the additional considerations may include: content area staffing needs and apprentice candidates wanting to become licensed in those areas; availability and number of mentors selected and their work load; eligibility of apprentice applicants to enroll in an educator preparation program; or any potential funding limitations.

Is the Wyoming Teacher Apprenticeship initiative creating an alternative pathway to licensure?

The Wyoming Teacher Apprenticeship does not create an alternative pathway to endorsement. The apprentice will need to complete the same education prep coursework as teachers going through a traditional route. In addition, the apprentice will spend three years in a classroom with an experienced teacher-mentor. They must also demonstrate a series of on-the-job competencies before exiting the apprenticeship.

Are mentors compensated for their role? If so, by whom are they compensated? Do mentor teachers go through any training?

Yes, they will be paid a stipend for mentoring an apprentice. The WDE has some funds set aside to assist the school district in covering these stipends while sustainable funding sources are achieved. The WDE and PTSB have resources available for training mentors, and the University of Wyoming launched a Mentor Cohort this past summer. It is a year-long training to build capacity and network of support for mentors.

Is the WTA for all content or teaching areas, or just those that are hard to fill?

- The Wyoming Teacher Apprenticeship Initiative is focused on supporting school districts with developing credentialed teachers to fill positions that will be needed in the future. Any content area or teaching position could be considered for application through the apprenticeship. A comprehensive needs assessment is critical to determine a school district's employment needs extending out one to five years. The program will take one to three years to address the current teacher shortage issues due to the time required for participants to complete the apprenticeship. School districts must also prioritize which areas will be supported by the sustained, long-term

effort of building a robust pipeline of teacher candidates.

- The following are key considerations when developing a needs assessment for the school district:
 - Are any schools/subject areas/grade levels experiencing historically higher turnover rates?
 - Are individuals currently teaching outside of their certification area? Are there any schools/subject areas/grade levels where this is more prevalent?
 - Are individuals currently teaching with emergency credentials? Are there any schools/subject areas/grade levels where this is more prevalent?
 - What is the experience level in years of service of the teaching corps? Are there any schools/subject areas/grade levels with more or less experienced teachers?
 - Are there any schools/subject areas/grade levels where there is an anticipated need for recruitment based on the trend in the tenure level of current teachers?
 - How does the teacher demographic profile compare to that of the students they teach? Where are there gaps?
 - How are highly effective teachers distributed across schools/subject areas/grade levels? Are there areas where they are more concentrated versus others? Are highly effective teachers available to mentor apprentices in apprenticeship focus areas?

Who will provide the coursework necessary for the apprenticeship program? Will it be through the apprenticeship program, University of Wyoming, the college of choice of the apprentice or school district? When the apprentice has completed the program do they have a bachelor's degree?

- The apprentice will enroll in a preparation program that leads to PTSB licensure and a bachelor's degree. The WDE and PTSB will verify the programs will meet the requirements before apprentices enroll. Preparation programs will complete an Institutional Recommendation form attesting that the apprentice has completed all program and licensure requirements.
- The University of Wyoming and Central Wyoming College have some programs that are available and accessible online for apprentices – Elementary Education/Special Education dual major, and Early Childhood Education/Early Childhood Special Education respectively. While not every content area aligned to a school district's need is currently available online at these two institutions, Wyoming's postsecondary institutions are investigating how to deliver additional educator preparation programs identified as needed by school districts to apprentices.
- School districts may also need to access additional educator preparation programs outside of Wyoming.
- On-the-job training will be provided by school district personnel.

What are the school district requirements to participate in the WTA?

- School districts must apply to the WDE, agreeing to all the requirements of the U.S. Department of Labor and the WDE.
- School districts will complete a participating employer agreement.

Who is the governing body of the program? Who is the primary contact for the application process at the state?

- The WDE is the program sponsor.
- Primary contact is Linda Finnerty, WDE Communications Director, at linda.finnerty@wyo.gov.

What happens if an apprentice drops out of the program?

- At any time the apprentice may withdraw from the apprenticeship program.
- The school district may release the apprentice based on school district employment policy.
- Equipment and materials provided to the apprentice must be returned to the school district (ie. Laptop, wifi hotspot, etc.).
- The school district may ask for reimbursement of costs if agreed upon in advance.
- The reimbursement of funding for coursework may be required depending on the funding source.

Will the wage being paid to apprentices be set by the school district or the state?

The state, as the sponsor, is required to set a baseline wage and step progressions. School districts are allowed to pay above the state wage progression.

Is it expected that there will be wage increases as years of experience in the program increases?

Wage increases will be based on completion of determined amounts of competencies and related technical instruction.

What are the benefits for the school district?

- Grow from within the school district.
- Grow from within the community.
- Access to financial resources and support.
- Access to WDE supports, resources, materials.
- Access to Department of Labor supports.
- Decreasing open positions that are hard to fill.
- Improved candidate pools, build pipeline.
- Streamline additional training.
- Improved/minimal onboarding costs, process.
- Shorten hiring processes, hire early, make decisions early, quicker.
- Build candidate connections to the community and school district.
- Post secondary transitions, if they stay in the community, better opportunity to retain these kids from the same school district.
- Improved teacher leaders.
- Retention within the mentor core, lattice of opportunities for current staff.
- Increased staff/educator engagement.
- Knowledge transfer from mentors to apprentices.