

TENNESSEE GROW YOUR OWN CENTER ANNUAL REPORT

2023



Disclaimer: The contents of these materials were developed under a grant from the Tennessee Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Tennessee Department of Education or the United States Department of Education.

LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

One year ago this week (December 11th-14th, 2022), the Tennessee Grow Your Own Center (TNGYOC) team was meeting for the very first time, spending a weekend away together in Pigeon Forge, TN sharing our goals, establishing team norms, and creating the structures that would serve us for our first year together. There were no hallmarks of high-quality teacher apprenticeship programs. There were no networks of intermediaries designed to support registered teacher apprenticeship work. There were no answers about how much funding would be available after ESSER funding ended. Yet the team was excited to roll up our sleeves, collect data, set goals, create plans, and most importantly, serve learners across the state.

A year later, our learning has included seasons of dissonance, but we have emerged from those seasons with increased clarity and confidence. The impact of the team's work is beyond what we could have imagined a year ago. Team members have successfully established relationships and structures that will serve district leaders and learners for many years to come. Over 60% of counties now offer at least one teacher apprenticeship program. Tennessee has enrolled an impressive 645 registered teacher apprentices while providing additional endorsements at no cost to over 600 other educators.

Evidence of our progress is most tangibly felt through a \$1.8M grant that was awarded to the GYO center from Ascendium Education Group. The rigorous grant application process required that the center provide emerging evidence and clear plans to scale the work for increased access to educator pathways in rural communities. Without the diligent efforts of every TNGYOC team member, EPP partners, and LEA partners, sufficient evidence to warrant grant funding would not have been available.

The longer I am immersed in this work, the more I believe in the approach. The center is at the very beginning of establishing an incredibly effective educator workforce development strategy to assist school districts with whatever vacancy situations they may encounter. There are certainly many ways that our team can improve in the year ahead, but this report bears witness to the kind of growth mindset, agility, and skill that the TNGYOC team regularly employs in pursuit of excellence for learners of all ages. We have the joy and privilege of building roads for hundreds of learners to follow on their individual journeys of goals met and hopes fulfilled.

We sincerely thank district and EPP partners, the University of Tennessee system, the Tennessee Department of Education, and legislators who advocate for funding from the governor's budget, and philanthropic organizations. After a comprehensive strategic planning effort this fall, the TNGYOC is well-positioned for a sustainable future with exciting new developments planned for 2024 and beyond.

Sincerely,



Erin A. Crisp, Ed.D.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from Our Executive Director	1
Introduction	4
Tennessee Grow Your Own Center	5
Year One Highlights	7
Goals and Progress	7
National Reach	7
District Recruitment.....	8
Year One Evolution.....	9
Tennessee Grow Your Own Projects.....	10
Expanding the Teacher Pipeline	10
Providing Technical Assistance.....	12
Improving Tennessee’s Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program	14
Partnered Education Program Providers	18
Partnered Local Education Agencies	20
Tennessee Grow Your Own Request for Proposals for 2024 – 2025	23
Tennessee Grow Your Own Metrics.....	24
Aspiring Apprentice Interest.....	24
Apprentice Enrollment, Completions, and Withdrawals.....	24
Apprentice Enrollment, Completions, and Withdrawals by Region	25
Apprentice Enrollment, Completions, and Withdrawals by EPP	25
Apprentice Enrollment, Completions, and Withdrawals by LEA.....	25
Demographics of Aspiring Apprentices and Currently Enrolled Apprentices	29
Gender.....	29
Race and Ethnicity	29
Prior Education Level.....	30
Age Range.....	30
Grade Level and Endorsement Areas of Interest.....	30
Apprentice Pathways.....	31
Undergraduate Apprentices	31
Licensure-Only Apprentices	31
Postbaccalaureate Apprentices.....	32
Evaluation Survey.....	34
Survey Distribution and Response Rates	34
Current Apprentices.....	34

Completing Apprentices	35
Mentor Teachers	35
LEA Contacts	35
Written Comments.....	35
Current & Completing Apprentices.....	35
LEA Contact.....	37
Mentor Teachers.....	38
Written Comments Summary	40
Key Findings and Next Steps	41
Areas of Success	41
Area of Growth and Improvement	42

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 – TN Grow Your Own Regions & UT Locations.....	6
Figure 2 - Number of LEAs Approved for Apprentices.....	8
Figure 3 – Approved EPP Locations and GYO Regions.....	19
Figure 4 – Approved LEA Locations and GYO Regions	22
Figure 5 - Counties with Undergraduate Apprentices	31
Figure 6 - Counties with Licensure-Only Apprentices	32
Figure 7 - Counties with Postbaccalaureate Apprentices	33

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 – TN Grow Your Own Center Team	5
Table 2 - TNGYOC High-Level Goals and Progress	7
Table 3 – List of Approved EPPs and Region	18
Table 4 – List of Approved LEAs and Region.....	20
Table 5 – Apprentice Enrollment by LEA.....	26
Table 6 - Survey Participant Distribution and Response Rates	34

INTRODUCTION

In January 2022, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) approved the State of Tennessee to establish a permanent teacher occupation registered apprenticeship program through the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) that could be scaled throughout the state. The Tennessee GYO Teacher Occupation Registered Apprenticeship Program (TNGYO) became the first program in the country that involved a DOL-registered apprenticeship with a state department of education as the sponsor. Through partnerships between TDOE, school districts—or Local Education Agencies (LEAs)—and Educator Preparation Providers (EPPs) at Tennessee’s colleges and universities, TNGYO aligns leading practices in teacher preparation and development with the rigors and funding of a nationally registered apprenticeship.¹

To implement this new program, TDOE partnered with the University of Tennessee System (UT System) to create the Tennessee Grow Your Own Center (TNGYOC) to serve as the technical support and resourcing hub for the new teacher registered apprenticeship program. The TNGYOC consists of staff at the UT System Office and four regional managers at the four UT System campuses across the state to serve as a resource for LEAs and EPPs.

Twice a year, TNGYOC submits a bi-annual report to TDOE. In compliance with the Tennessee Department of Education’s \$20 Million grant, the report consists of TNGYOC activities and projects, 2024-2025 funding decisions, metrics for aspiring apprentices and currently enrolled and completer apprentices, and satisfaction for Apprentices, EPPs, and LEAs with the program since the inception of the TNGYO.

¹ For more information, please contact the [Tennessee Department of Education](#).

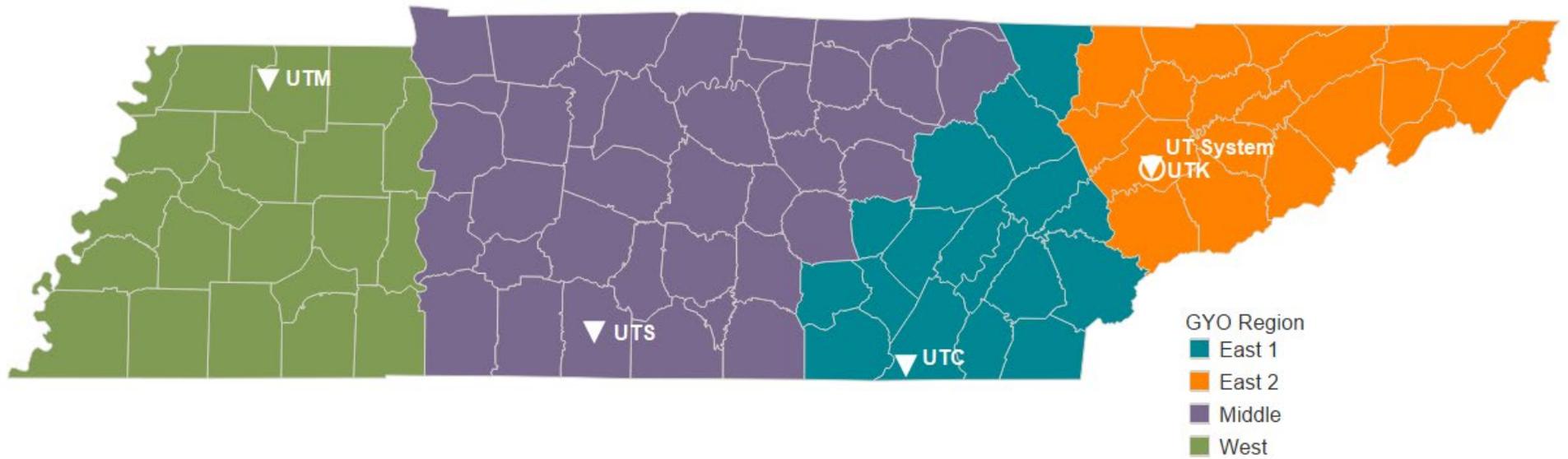
TENNESSEE GROW YOUR OWN CENTER

As the first year of operation ends, TNGYOC continues to change and lead in partnership with TDOE to improve the TNGYO program across the State of Tennessee. Three team members continue to work from the UT System office in Knoxville. Three regional managers remain near their EPPs although their areas of responsibility have shifted. Table 1 provides a list of the TNGYOC team and Figure 1 shows their locations and regions across the State of Tennessee. Table 1 reflects the changes at TNGYOC.

Table 1 – TN Grow Your Own Center Team

Name	Title	Location/ Partners
Erin Crisp	Executive Director	UT System office
Kate Hall	Associate Director & East 2	UT System office, UTK
Chris Davidson	Research & Evaluation Manager	UT System office
Bianca Pratt	Regional Manager, East 1 (UTC office)	UTC, UTM, LMU,
Charlene Russell	Regional Manager, Middle (UTS office)	UTS, APSU, MTSU, Lipscomb, Cumberland
Canidra McGuire	Regional Manager, West	U of Memphis, Arete
Vacant	Communications Manager	

Figure 1 – TN Grow Your Own Regions & UT Locations



Year One Highlights

Goals and Progress

The TNGYOC team remained active across the State of Tennessee over the last year. Table 2 shows the center's high-level goals and progress.

Table 2 - TNGYOC High-Level Goals and Progress

Goals	June 2023	November 2023
800 registered teacher apprentice enrollments	559	645 (Includes completers and withdrawals. Does not include community college.)
Launch a pre-apprenticeship pilot program in at least 1 high school in each region.	In process	Launched a 7-district pilot with all four regions represented.
Launch an instructional leadership pilot program (apprenticeship)	In process with Hamilton County	Paused by TDOE
Recruit and assist 50 school districts to offer registered teacher apprenticeships	61	73 school districts 59 counties
Strengthen transfer pathways through community college partnerships	In process	12 TBR institutions have formally confirmed interest in registering pathways
Acquire additional funding to support the development of high-quality, online, competency-based coursework for educators.	In process	\$1.8M was awarded to the center to improve access for rural teacher apprentices.

National Reach

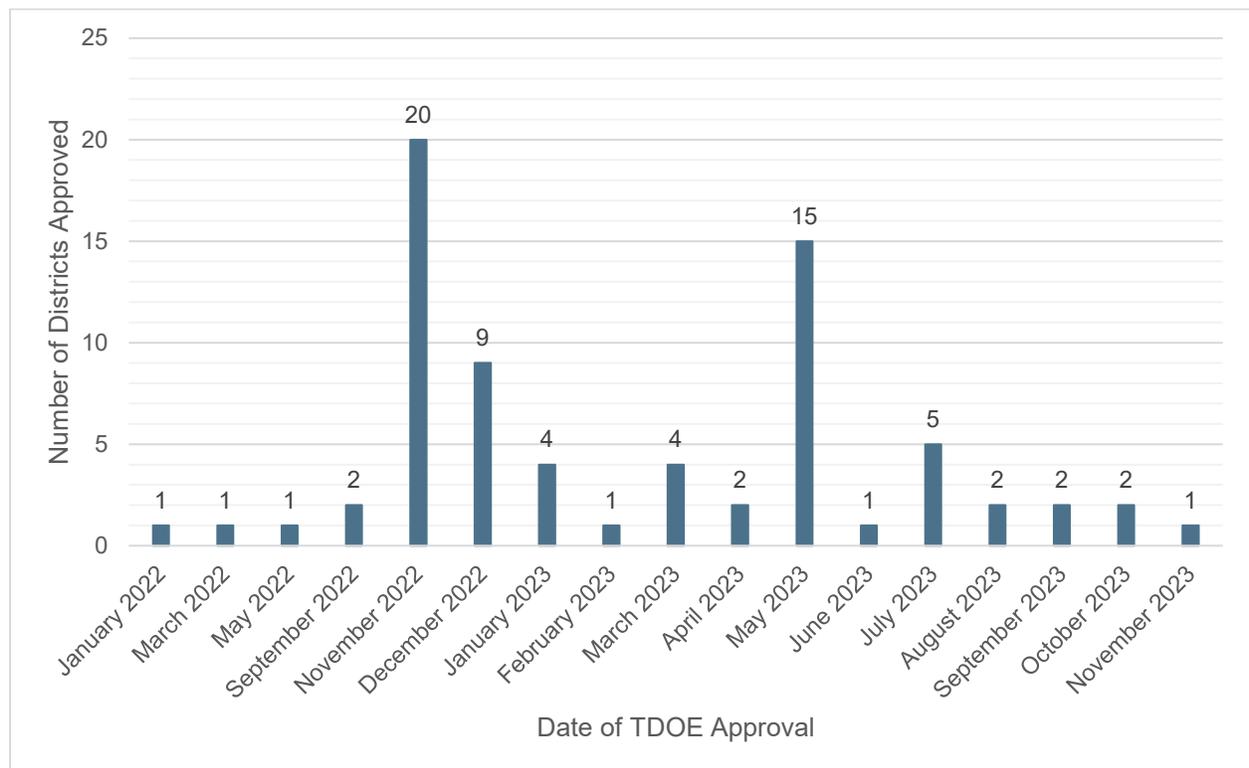
As of November 30, 2023, staff at the center engaged in 224 formal presentations about our work. TNGYOC staff members delivered presentations to large national audiences at the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, the U.S. Department of Labor, the National Comprehensive Center, regional convenings of the Department of Labor's Education and Training Administration, and many events across Tennessee. Staff met with like-minded individuals from agencies and EPP leaders in North Dakota, Illinois, Texas, Indiana, Michigan, and New York. Their primary interest was to learn more about how the program works in Tennessee and how the goal of sustainable funding is to be achieved.

District Recruitment

Regional Managers continued to engage with district partners and currently, 73 districts (49.3%), are approved by TDOE to employ apprentices out of 148 total districts. These 73 districts represent 59 of Tennessee’s 95 counties (62.1%) of counties. Because of the regional managers’ work to recruit and provide technical support, the number of district partnerships has more than doubled in one calendar year. Regional managers communicated with every LEA monthly, at a minimum, and much more if they were actively engaged in gaining approval or launching their program.

Figure 2 provides the number of districts approved since the inception of TNGYO by month.

Figure 2 - Number of LEAs Approved for Apprentices



In addition to those districts represented in the figure:

- in the East 1 region, three districts are in discussions or applying for approval;
- in the East 2 region, five districts are in discussions or applying for approval;
- in the Middle region, four districts are in discussions or applying for approval;
- and in the West region, four districts are in discussions or applying for approval.

Since January 2023, TDOE approved three additional EPPs to provide related instruction for teacher apprentices. The new EPPs are the University of Memphis in the West Region, and Cumberland University and Middle Tennessee State University in the Middle Region.

Year One Evolution

One component of the grant agreement was to “develop and recruit candidates for a Grow Your Own Apprenticeship model as a program administrator” (A.3.b). After the first six months of the center’s operation, it became clear that operating as a recruiter directly to aspiring apprentices caused undue confusion at the point of enrollment. The TNGYOC paused the center’s direct recruiting efforts between the spring and summer semesters of 2023 and established the LEA as the most effective point of entry for aspiring apprentices. The TNGYOC continued to collect names and emails of interested candidates and provided those contacts to LEAs. The center’s focus shifted to equipping LEAs and EPPs for effective recruiting.

A second area of learning for the TNGYOC from the first six months of operation was to fulfill the goal of “supporting greater statewide access and opportunity for future educators to pursue innovative workforce pathway opportunities at minimal or no cost to candidates” (A.3). The center would need additional funding to support EPP development of online curriculum. An online curriculum for educators would solve two challenges.

- First, 45% of aspiring apprentices who filled out the center’s interest forms could not be served by the GYO program in 2023 because the licensure area and/or degree level required for them was not available for their location from any approved EPP. For example, many aspiring apprentices in the Knoxville area need to finish a bachelor’s degree, but there was no approved EPP in that region to offer bachelor’s degree completion pathways.
- Second, a high-quality online curriculum can reduce programmatic costs while expanding access because coursework can be offered to individual learners in locations where there are not sufficient numbers of learners to form a cohort. Cohorts of online learners can be formed from geographically dispersed locations, keeping EPP costs low while increasing access.

In August of 2023, the TNGYOC wrote a \$1.8M grant which was awarded from Ascendium Education Group in October 2023. This two-year, grant-funded project aims to produce faculty-led development of an online curriculum that can be leveraged by any approved EPP in the

state to deliver high-quality, hybrid, or blended programs in every licensure area and at the baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate levels. It will also fund the creation of an ongoing faculty governance group that will research teacher education pathway efficacy and recommend curriculum updates to help the TN GYO Center maintain the curriculum.

More detail on the project work of staff members in the center is provided in the next section.

Tennessee Grow Your Own Projects

Along with continuing to build partnerships across the State of Tennessee, TNGYOC engaged in a series of projects aimed at expanding the teacher pipeline, providing technical assistance, improving the quality of Tennessee's registered teacher apprenticeship, and planning strategically for the future of TNGYOC.

Expanding the Teacher Pipeline

In the category of expanding the teacher pipeline, staff in the center led four key projects.

- 1) **Teaching as a profession** aimed to expand pre-apprenticeship programs that lead to apprenticeships.
- 2) **0-60** resulted in a one-pager we could use to explain the pathway for candidates with fewer than 60 credit hours.
- 3) **Apprentice Recruitment** was a project that shifted focus and will be reassigned.
- 4) **Instructional Leader** was a project largely managed through TDOE as the AAPN and DLN projects.

Additional information on each of these projects is provided below.

Teaching as a Profession – Ongoing

One of the projects undertaken by TNGYOC to expand the teacher pipeline in Tennessee was the expansion of the Teaching as a Profession (TAP) state-certified pre-apprenticeship program, which aims to equip aspiring educators with the tools, knowledge, and experience needed in their teaching careers. State-certified pre-apprenticeships are a long-term strategy for recruiting and training teachers from within communities. The program serves as a talent pipeline through partnerships between local high schools and community colleges to produce highly qualified teaching candidates. The seven districts selected to participate in the pilot program are Bradley County Schools, Bristol City Schools, Clarksville-Montgomery County

Schools, Kingsport City Schools, Lawrence County Schools, Lewis County Schools, and Memphis-Shelby County Schools.

0-60: Aspiring Apprentices with Fewer than 60 Credit Hours

The TNGYOC initiated a project in June 2023 to serve aspiring apprentices having fewer than 60 credit hours. The project aims to establish state-certified pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs in collaboration with community colleges in the Tennessee Board of Regents System. All TNGYOC staff members received Reconnect Navigator training and provided documentation for partners from the Navigators. The focus was on creating cost-effective pathways for aspiring educators to obtain Tennessee teaching licenses, leveraging TN Promise and TN Reconnect funding. Moving forward, TNGYOC plans to strengthen partnerships, refine support mechanisms, and enhance program awareness among community colleges, EPPs, school districts, and aspiring apprentices with fewer than 60 credit hours.

Apprentice Recruitment

From January through May, the TNGYOC used a learner intake form housed in the center to collect interest from aspiring apprentices. Regional managers were assigned the task of connecting with all districts in their regions to spread awareness and recruit interested districts to participate. The center created an automated workflow to divide aspiring apprentice applications into four categories – “Employed” or “Not Employed” with a school district, and for all Employed apprentices, “has a bachelor’s degree” or “does not have a degree.”

All apprentices who were not employed with a district received an email with an option to talk to a staff member in the center to learn more about gaining employment and the opportunity to become an apprentice. The Associate Director fielded these calls and matched interested individuals to school districts with needs.

If an aspiring apprentice was employed by a school district, the regional manager for that district provided follow-up communication to the aspiring apprentice to provide the next steps. By May, the center created customized automated email responses to be delivered to aspiring apprentices based on their profiles. For example, an aspiring apprentice who does not yet have 60 credit hours receives a different email than an aspiring apprentice with a bachelor’s degree. By October, the center had systems in place to send monthly reports to school districts with the names, emails, and number of credit hours earned for aspiring apprentices.

Outreach to unpartnered school districts continued via email and Listserv. Regional managers also shared at supervisor study council meetings whenever there was an opportunity. These meetings have consistently produced requests for follow-up meetings so that district leaders can learn more or expand their current work.

Instructional Leader

During a TDOE leadership transition in August, the TNGYOC Leadership Pilot was temporarily paused and considered for integration into the TDOE's existing Aspiring Leadership Program. The TNGYOC leadership pilot aimed to cultivate effective leaders within the organization over 12 months, focused on high-potential individuals while tailoring the program to meet the unique needs of districts partnered with TNGYOC. The approach involved a comprehensive review of state leadership preparation programs, drawing insights from models such as TNTP, New Leaders, CEL, and the recently approved North Dakota Principal Registered Apprenticeship program. The goal was for leaders to emerge with a strong foundation, and Hamilton County would serve as a pilot in the initial phase, with plans for expansion to other districts. The pilot also sought potential partnerships with external organizations and collaboration with EPPs to ensure alignment with broader educational objectives.

Providing Technical Assistance

In addition to providing one-on-one support for LEAs filling out applications and understanding the requirements of their MOUs with EPPs, the TNGYOC directed two statewide technical assistance projects:

- 1) **A digital platform to manage apprenticeships:** TNGYOC piloted two vendors and also attempted to build a solution. A decision will be made in year two.
 - a. From February-August 2023, the Office of Information Technology at the UT System, two staff members from the GYO team, and one representative from TDOE participated on a team to develop a custom software solution to collect the sensitive information that needs to be processed for every registered apprentice. A software development firm was chosen from the UT-approved vendors, the project was scoped, and work proceeded as expected with an anticipated April release date for the software. The team tested a working prototype and prepared for launch.

- b. Problems started when the software was moved off the development server and into the UT System information technology ecosystem. The vendor acknowledged that the requirements provided in the scoping phase had been explicit and clear, and they had failed during the development phase to adequately plan for launch in the live environment. The software would need to be entirely rewritten. The team provided the vendor with an extended timeline of three months to correct their error, and they were unable to meet the expectations within the timeline provided. The contract agreement was terminated with no compensation to the vendor.

2) **Study.com** is provided free of charge to all EPPs offering teacher apprenticeships.

BuildWithin and Craft Pilot Projects

TNGYOC has two ongoing pilots with two platforms, to track the proficiency of competencies for apprentices. The platforms are BuildWithin piloting with Hamilton County Schools and The Craft Education System with Maryville City Schools. Mentor teachers support apprentice's work toward proficiency in assigned On-the-Job Learning Competencies, and their work in the classroom is focused on those competencies. Mentor teachers, apprentices, and GYO administrators from the EPP and LEA have access to district-specific apprentice data to track the progress toward the competencies. Once a product is selected, district processes for reporting competency proficiency to TNGYOC and the U.S. Department of Labor will be greatly aided. As the pilot continues, TNGYOC staff are collecting feedback from LEAs and EPPs to inform the decision to select a product.

Study.com

The TNGYOC provides apprentices with access to the Study.com Praxis Study Guide Courses as they prepare for upcoming Praxis exams quickly and efficiently. The courses are aligned specifically with the content they are tested on and EPPs are supporting apprentices' usage to ensure they are completing the correct practices. Apprentices review the topics they need to know. Lessons are taught by subject matter experts who use an approachable and simplified teaching style. As we approach a full semester of usage, additional data will be collected to determine the rate of completion and success apprentices have with a correlation to their study participation in Study.com. Each week, TNGYO program coordinators are encouraged to share and highlight apprentice usage and improvements with Study.com.

Improving Tennessee's Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program

Early feedback from apprentices and mentors indicated that there was dissatisfaction with certain programmatic aspects of the teacher apprenticeship. In response, staff in the center launched several projects focused on improvement of programmatic aspects:

- 1) **Mentor Toolkit:** An initial starting place to help LEAs and EPPs select and train mentors for teacher apprentices.
- 2) **TN Persona Project:** A group of 40 institutional leaders from all EPPs met in small groups to discuss the needs of certain personas of learners who were not always served well by traditional programs.
- 3) **TN Hallmarks of High-Quality Teacher Apprenticeship:** The TNGYOC leveraged the work of the Pathways Alliance to build an RFP process around a rubric based on the quality hallmarks of the alliance.
- 4) **RTAPS and ICBTE:** The center wrote a grant to fund an extra project that would provide EPPs with a robust digital library of competency-based assessments with supporting instructional materials and mentor-teacher support resources included.

TNGYOC Mentor Toolkit

The TNGYOC Mentor Toolkit was designed to support the success of TNGYO mentor teachers and apprentices in Tennessee. Recognizing the importance of effective mentorship, the toolkit emphasized the need for training mentor teachers. Research has shown that mentorship training positively impacts mentorship skills, including communication, assessment, and fostering the mentee's development of independence. The Mentor Toolkit aimed to facilitate the training of excellent mentor teachers to enhance the overall effectiveness of the TNGYO apprenticeship program. It was created as an initial starting place to help LEAs and EPPs select and train mentors for teacher apprentices.

This toolkit provides resources for LEA and EPP leaders involved in TNGYO. The Mentor Training Guide included:

- 1) **Mentor Selection and Assignment:** Guidance on how to select and assign mentors to TNGYO apprentice teachers.
- 2) **Mentor Support Strategies:** Resources and strategies for supporting mentor teachers in guiding apprentices' development in areas such as professionalism, planning, and instruction.

- 3) Training Timelines and Formats: Information on timelines and formats for mentor training to ensure effective preparation of mentor teachers for their roles.
- 4) Potential Scenarios: Guidance on addressing potential scenarios mentors might encounter during the mentoring process.
- 5) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): Answers to commonly asked questions related to mentorship in GYO apprenticeship programs.

As the final deliverable, the TNGYOC Mentor Toolkit was a comprehensive resource designed to enhance the effectiveness of TNGYO mentor teachers in Tennessee. This toolkit, equipped with guidance, resources, and strategies, serves as a valuable tool for LEA and EPP leaders involved in TNGYO apprenticeship programs.

EPP and LEA leaders worked alongside mentor teachers to use the TNGYOC Mentor Toolkit. This toolkit provides support in areas such as Mentor Selection, Assignment Assistance, Training Format, and Timeline Strategies, as well as Handling Potential Scenarios. The TNGYOC regional managers provided a webinar overview of the toolkit and have used it in support of their work with specific school districts.

TN Persona Project

The TNGYOC established a working group that was tasked to develop learner profiles for aspiring apprentices based on a variety of background scenarios for use in various projects. Scenarios included those apprentices with some undergraduate credit but no bachelor's degree, those with an associate's degree, pre-apprenticeship program involvement, high school TAP dual enrollment credit, varied college timelines and GPAs, and PRAXIS scenarios. Through the working group and TNGYOC staff, created four personas. The personas were:

- **Callie**, a recent high school graduate, possesses 6 dual credits from high school and has never been employed. Despite being willing to work in any district close to home, she prefers to live at home while attending college. She enjoyed the cadet teaching program in high school and has a strong connection with the teachers and students at the local elementary school where she was a cadet teacher. Living in a rural community, she is very committed to achieving a debt-free postsecondary experience.

- **Bart** holds 12 college credit hours but has never attended college full-time. Currently employed as a remediation room supervisor in an LEA, he expresses a reluctance towards general education courses and experiences fatigue from emails, surveys, and administrative forms. Outside of work, he engages in coaching community sports and is highly recommended for his exceptional ability to build rapport with both students and parents.
- **Andi** possesses an Associate's Degree and is unable to leave home for college due to commitments. Employed full-time as a teaching assistant with an annual income of \$20,000, she harbors concerns about passing the Praxis exam. She perceives coursework as "busy-work" since she already possesses many teaching skills. Balancing a full-time job and family responsibilities, she requires courses with a predictable structure and clear relevance to her work life.
- **Dante** holds both a Bachelor's and Master's degree in English and has developed a passion for teaching. Currently employed as a part-time college Teaching Assistant, he has no interest in pursuing another degree. His priority is sharing his love for English and valuing the experience of building a community of learners more than financial gain. While he finds "book learning" easy, he seeks exposure to the art of fostering a collaborative learning environment.

The project team identified short and long-term adjustments to the GYO model's EPP pathways that could facilitate success for each of the personas. It became clear that robust assessments of competencies could produce efficiencies and reduce program costs for each of these learners.

Tennessee's Hallmarks of High-Quality Teacher Apprenticeship

In May 2023, TNGYOC initiated the development of definitions for the hallmarks of a high-quality teacher apprenticeship program. The team, comprised of educators, administrators, program evaluators, and educational consultants, drew insights from field observations, engaging with over 60 school districts and 250 teacher apprentices for five months. Combining survey data, expertise, and a shared commitment to fostering quality teacher education pathways, the team identified nine initial hallmarks through persona development, data review, and role-playing. Concurrently, the Pathways Alliance worked to define teacher residences and

set standards for teacher apprenticeships, releasing the National Definition of Teacher Residences in July 2023. Upon cross-walking their drafted hallmarks with the national definition, the TNGYOC team found clear alignment, leading to the launch of version 1.0 of Tennessee's Hallmarks of High-quality Teacher Apprenticeship, strategically aligning with the Pathways Alliance's efforts and contributing to a national framework.

Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program of Study (RTAPS) & Institute for Competency-based Teacher Education (ICBTE)

To address the information gathered from the TNGYOC Persona Project, TNGYOC submitted and won a \$1.8 Million grant from the Ascendium Education Group for a two-year project to create the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program of Study (RTAPS) and the Institute for Competency-based Teacher Education (ICBTE). Faculty from across Tennessee's EPPs will collaborate through ICBTE on the development of open-education resources (OER) for aspiring educators participating in teacher apprenticeships to create RTAPS. Sixteen (16) faculty fellows will be paid to develop virtual assessments and aligned instructional materials based on the InTASC standards. The resulting materials will be digitally available for EPPs to choose to adopt and implement in GYO and non-GYO programming across the state.

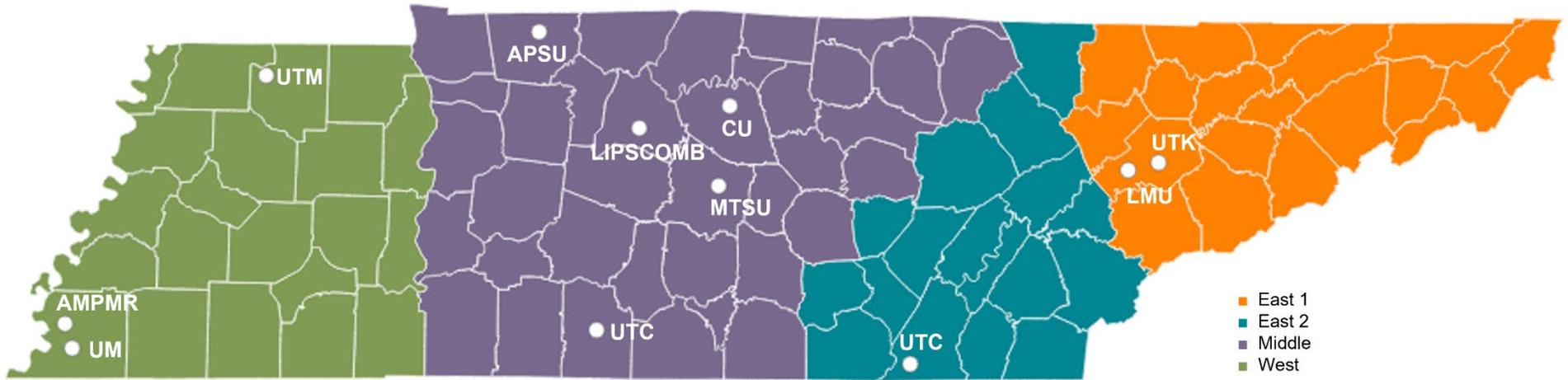
PARTNERED EDUCATION PROGRAM PROVIDERS

At the end of November 2023, there were 11 approved EPPs that LEAs can partner with to provide instruction for TNGYO apprentices statewide. Table 3 shows the list of EPPs and their TNGYO Region location. Figure 2 shows a map of each EPP location.

Table 3 – List of Approved EPPs and Region

EPP	Region
Arete Public Montessori Residency (AMPMR)	West
Austin Peay State University (APSU)	Middle
Cumberland University (CU)	Middle
Lincoln Memorial University (LMU)	East 2
Lipscomb University (LIPSCOMB)	Middle
Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU)	Middle
University of Memphis (UM)	West
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC)	East 1
University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK)	East 2
University of Tennessee at Martin (UTM)	West
University of Tennessee Southern (UTS)	Middle

Figure 3 – Approved EPP Locations and GYO Regions



PARTNERED LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES

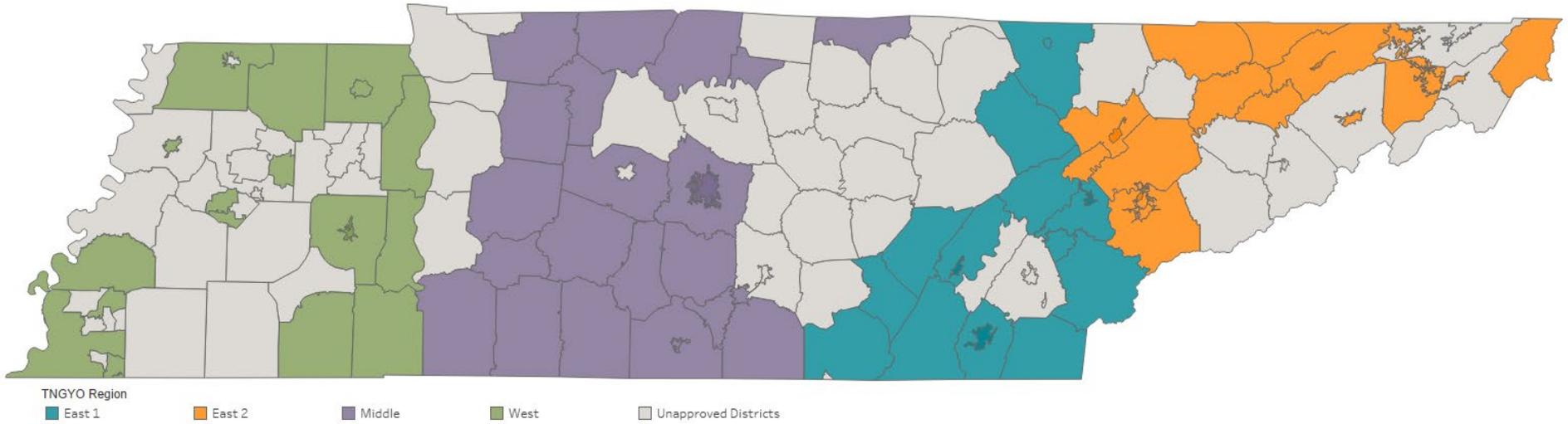
Beginning in January 2023, 34 out of 148 school districts, or 23.0%, were approved to employ TNGYO Apprentices. At the end of November 2023, 73 LEAs, or 49.3%, were approved to employ TNGYO Apprentices. Since January 2023, the GYO Center team has added 39 school districts or an increase of 26.3 percentage points. Table 3 shows the list of LEAs and their GYO Regional location. Figure 3 shows a map of each LEA location.

Table 4 – List of Approved LEAs and Region

Region	LEA
East 1	Bledsoe County School District
	Bradley County School District
	Cleveland City School District
	Dayton City School District (K-8)
	Hamilton County School District
	Loudon County School District
	Marion County School District
	Monroe County School District
	Morgan County School District
	Oneida Special School District
	Polk County School District
	Rhea County School District
	Roane County School District
	Scott County School District
	Sequatchie County School District
Sweetwater City School System	
East 2	Alcoa City School District
	Anderson County School District
	Blount County School District
	Claiborne County School District
	Clinton City School District
	Elizabethton City School District
	Grainger County School District
	Greeneville City School District
	Hamblen County School District
	Hancock County School District
	Hawkins County School District
	Johnson City School District
	Johnson County School District
	Kingsport City School District
	Knox County School District
Maryville City Schools	
Oak Ridge Schools	
Washington County School District	
Middle	Bedford County School District
	Cheatham County School District
	Clarksville-Montgomery County School System
	Clay County School District
	Dickson County School District
	Fayetteville City School District
Franklin County School District	

Region	LEA
	Giles County School District
	Hickman County School District
	Lawrence County School District
	Lewis County School District
	Lincoln County School District
	Marshall County School District
	Maury County School District
	Moore County School District
	Robertson County School District
	Rutherford County School District
	Sumner County School District
	Trousdale County School District
	Tullahoma City Schools
	Wayne County School District
West	Alamo City School District
	Bells City School District
	Benton County School District
	Collierville School District
	Decatur County School District
	Dyersburg City School District
	Hardin County School District
	Henderson County School District
	Henry County School District
	Libertas School of Memphis
	McNairy County School District
	Memphis - Shelby County Schools
	Milan Special School District
	Obion County School District
	Paris Special School District
	Tipton County School District
Weakley County School District	

Figure 4 – Approved LEA Locations and GYO Regions



TENNESSEE GROW YOUR OWN REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR 2024 – 2025

With the implementation of a sustainable funding model, TNGYOC created a request for proposals (RFP) process to solicit proposals for the allocation of funding in support of registered teacher apprenticeship programs from partnered EPPs. The process ran from September through December 2023. Of the 11 EPPs, eight submitted RFPs totaling \$3,087,500. The TNGYOC staff scored the RFPs using Tennessee’s Hallmarks of High-Quality Teacher Apprenticeship Rubric and awarded the eight EPPs a total of \$2,970,250 funding approximately 185 undergraduate apprentices and 495 postbaccalaureate and licensure-only apprentices.

TENNESSEE GROW YOUR OWN METRICS

The TNGYO Metrics section provides information related to the goals and outcomes of the program as well as the satisfaction for Apprentices, EPPs, and LEAs with the program for the period through November 31, 2023. Percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth, meaning some percentages may exceed 100%. Initial goals of the TNGYOC included collecting information on those aspiring to be apprentices, enrolling as apprentices, and the pathways of apprentices. The purpose of these goals was to help address the challenge that Tennessee faces with teacher shortages by strengthening access to the educator pipeline from within local communities. Research studies show that classrooms where the teacher's race and ethnicity match that of the students being taught have a positive impact on student achievement.

Aspiring Apprentice Interest

The TNGYOC team defined a process for responding to interest from aspiring apprentices, and automated emails that provide aspiring apprentices with specific next steps based on their current level of education, credential attainment, and whether they are currently employed with a school district. By the end of November 2023, there were a total of 1,867 learner intake forms completed through the TNGYOC. This is an increase of 704 profiles or a 60.5% increase from May 2023.

Apprentice Enrollment, Completions, and Withdrawals

As of December 1, 2023, 645 people enrolled in the TNGYO apprenticeship. Of those apprentices enrolled, 524 are still currently enrolled, 61 apprentices have completed the apprenticeship, and 60 apprentices have withdrawn from the program.

Apprentice Enrollment, Completions, and Withdrawals by Region

In East 1, all 83 students were currently enrolled, resulting in a 100.0% enrollment rate, with no completed or withdrawn cases. East 2 showed a slightly lower enrollment rate at 93.8%, with 90 students enrolled and 6 students having withdrawn, constituting a 6.3% withdrawal rate. The Middle region reported a total enrollment of 364, with a 74.7% enrollment rate and 16.8% completion rate, reflecting 61 completers, and 31 withdrawn cases. Lastly, in the West region, 85.9% of the 92 students were enrolled, with 14.1% having withdrawn (13 students).

Apprentice Enrollment, Completions, and Withdrawals by EPP

Based on the enrollment data, UTS had the highest percentage of currently enrolled apprentices at 97.8% while Lipscomb had the largest number of currently enrolled apprentices. APSU had the highest number of completers at 33.7% and Lipscomb had the highest percentage of withdrawn apprentices at 10.5%. It's important to note that each EPP may have unique factors impacting their enrollment and completion rates, so this table should be used as a starting point for further investigation into these factors.

Apprentice Enrollment, Completions, and Withdrawals by LEA

Based on the enrollment data, districts with a smaller number of apprentices maintain a 100% enrollment rate. The Clarksville-Montgomery County School System, as an original pilot district, had the highest total enrollment and exhibited a lower percentage of enrolled apprentices due to their completion rates. Withdrawal rates for districts should consider the total enrollment for a district as smaller districts are more heavily impacted when an apprentice withdraws from the program. These insights underscore the diverse dynamics and performance variations among school districts. It is important to note the number of districts with fewer than five apprentices. Academic programs need to be able to scale down to meet the needs of small numbers of learners just as easily as they scale up to meet the needs of large numbers of learners.

Table 5 – Apprentice Enrollment by LEA

LEA	Total Number Enrolled	Currently Enrolled	Percentage Enrolled	Completed	Percentage Completed	Withdrawn	Percentage Withdrawn
Alamo City	1	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Alcoa City	3	3	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Anderson County	7	6	85.7%	0	0.0%	2	28.6%
Bedford County	3	3	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Bells City	2	2	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Benton County	4	3	75.0%	0	0.0%	1	25.0%
Blount County	5	5	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Bradley County	1	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Cheatham County	17	15	88.2%	0	0.0%	2	11.8%
Clarksville-Montgomery County	224	155	69.2%	61	27.2%	8	3.6%
Clay County	2	2	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Clinton City	2	2	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Collierville	5	5	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Decatur County	1	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Dickson County	21	20	95.2%	0	0.0%	1	4.8%
Dyersburg City	8	6	75.0%	0	0.0%	2	25.0%
Fayetteville City	1	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Franklin County	6	6	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Giles County	2	2	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Grainger County	1	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Hamblen County	5	5	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Hamilton County	52	47	90.4%	0	0.0%	5	9.6%
Hancock County	4	4	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Hawkins County	2	2	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Henderson County	6	5	83.3%	0	0.0%	1	16.7%
Henry County	4	4	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

LEA	Total Number Enrolled	Currently Enrolled	Percentage Enrolled	Completed	Percentage Completed	Withdrawn	Percentage Withdrawn
Hickman County	2	2	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Johnson City	2	2	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Johnson County	1	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Knox County	45	41	91.1%	0	0.0%	4	8.9%
Lawrence County	11	11	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Lewis County	3	2	66.7%	0	0.0%	1	33.3%
Libertas School of Memphis	7	5	71.4%	0	0.0%	2	28.6%
Lincoln County	3	3	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Loudon County	2	2	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Marion County	4	4	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Marshall County	3	3	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Maryville City	11	11	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Maury County	6	6	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
McNairy County	1	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Memphis - Shelby County	36	32	88.9%	0	0.0%	4	11.1%
Milan Special	2	2	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Monroe County	2	2	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Moore County	1	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Morgan County	1	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Oak Ridge	7	6	85.7%	0	0.0%	1	14.3%
Obion County	4	4	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Paris Special	1	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Polk County	4	4	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Rhea County	10	9	90.0%	0	0.0%	1	10.0%
Roane County	2	1	50.0%	0	0.0%	1	50.0%
Robertson County	28	27	96.4%	0	0.0%	1	3.6%
Rutherford County	66	51	77.3%	0	0.0%	15	22.7%

LEA	Total Number Enrolled	Currently Enrolled	Percentage Enrolled	Completed	Percentage Completed	Withdrawn	Percentage Withdrawn
Scott County	4	4	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Sequatchie County	7	7	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Sumner County	39	37	94.9%	0	0.0%	2	5.1%
Sweetwater City	2	1	50.0%	0	0.0%	1	50.0%
Tullahoma City	1	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Washington County	1	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Wayne County	1	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Weakley County	10	7	70.0%	0	0.0%	3	30.0%
Williamson County	37	35	94.6%	0	0.0%	2	5.4%

Demographics of Aspiring Apprentices and Currently Enrolled Apprentices

Since one of the goals of TNGYO is to strengthen the educator pipeline while promoting representation from the local community the following section seeks to examine how the TNGYO aspiring apprentices and currently enrolled apprentices compare to the teacher workforce within the State of Tennessee.

Gender

The overwhelming majority of aspiring apprentices completing the aspiring apprentice profile form identify as female (81.3%) compared to males (17.1%). Similarly, of currently enrolled apprentices most identified as female (80.9%) while males made up a smaller proportion at 17.9%. Those individuals who chose not to identify their gender made up 1.2%.

Race and Ethnicity

Most aspiring apprentices completing the profile identify as White (78.1%) followed by Black or African American (13.3%), and Multiracial (2.8%). American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander each comprised less than 1% each. For currently enrolled apprentices 73.3% identified as White, while Black or African American individuals accounted for 18.5%. American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander communities constituted 1.0% and 1.3%, respectively. A minimal percentage of 0.4% identified as Asian. Notably, 5.5% of individuals chose not to self-identify their racial background.

Most aspiring apprentices completing the profile identified as Not Hispanic or Latino (77.0%). A majority, 86.5% of currently enrolled apprentices, identified as Not Hispanic or Latino, while 5.9% identified as Hispanic. A smaller proportion, comprising 7.6%, chose not to disclose their ethnic identity.

According to the Tennessee Educators of Color Alliance (TECA), students of color comprised 38.8% of the student population in Tennessee, and as of 2020, teachers of color only represented 13% of the educator population. Scholarly research consistently illustrates the myriad of benefits for students to see their own gender, race, ethnicity, and culture reflected in the adults who teach them. The racial and ethnic diversity of aspiring and enrolled apprentices

(20-25% diverse) is slightly more representative of the student population (40%) than the current educator workforce (13%), but the gap is still significant.

Prior Education Level

Of the aspiring apprentices who completed the profile, 41.8% had an associate degree or some college credit but no degree. Of those aspiring apprentices who completed the profile, 69.2% have less than 60 credit hours. Most of these aspiring apprentices could not be served in 2023 with teacher apprenticeship pathways because most of the RTAP-approved EPPs were either 1) offering post-baccalaureate options only or 2) their baccalaureate options were in-person only, limiting the geographic scope of availability.

Most currently enrolled apprentices (61.3%) held a Bachelor's degree before enrolling. Additionally, 28.7% completed some college or earned an Associate's degree before enrolling. Individuals with a Master's degree made up 6.3% of the population, and those with a Doctorate or Professional Degree accounted for 0.6%. Only a small percentage, 0.8%, are high school graduates with little or no college credit. There were no respondents categorized as non-high school graduates. Additionally, 2.3% of individuals chose not to identify their educational attainment.

Age Range

Aspiring Apprentices were not initially asked for their date of birth so many of these are missing and are therefore not reported. The largest proportion of current apprentices fell within the 25 to 34 age range, constituting 30.2% of the total. Following closely, the 35 to 44 age range accounted for 28.2%, and individuals aged 45 to 54 made up 23.9%. The 18 to 24 age group comprised 12.7% of the population, while those aged 55 to 64 represented 4.6%. There were no individuals aged 65 or older in this sample. A minimal percentage of 0.6% left the age category blank.

Grade Level and Endorsement Areas of Interest

The majority of aspiring apprentices indicated an interest in Elementary Education (including early childhood) (56.8%).²

² It is important to note that the question on the initial intake form did not separate grade level and endorsement area. In the future, this information will change with the implementation of the GYO Tool.

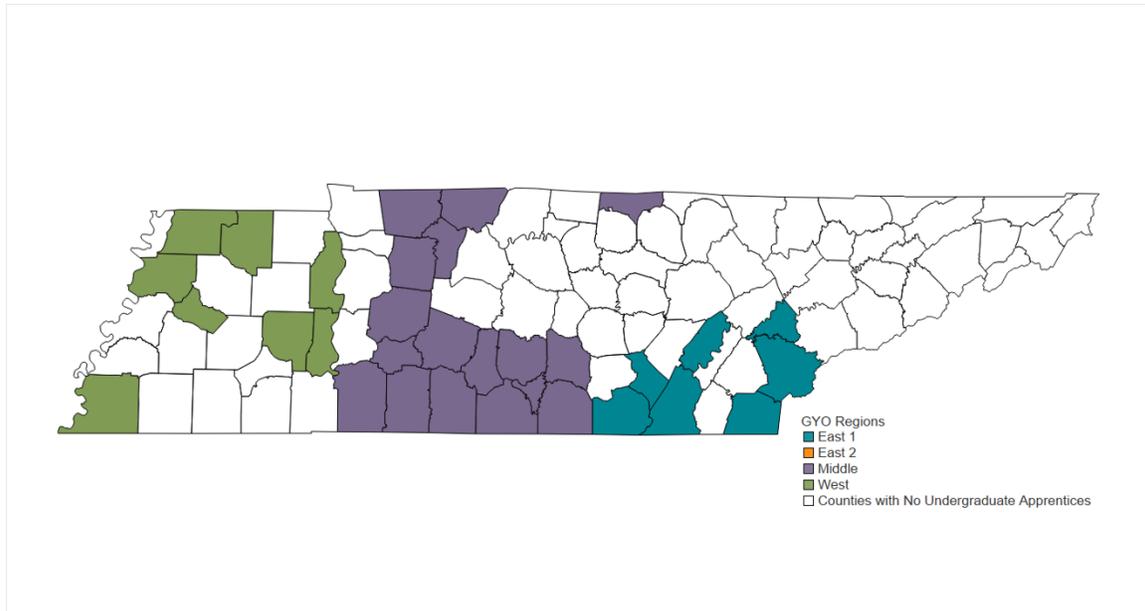
Apprentice Pathways

In 2023, apprentices had multiple pathways (degree or credential) and endorsement (licensure area) options based on the approved and available partnerships between LEAs and EPPs. The following maps show the counties with apprentices in undergraduate, licensure-only, and postbaccalaureate programs. The shading for the maps corresponds to the TNGYO Region.

Undergraduate Apprentices

Figure 5 shows counties with apprentices working toward bachelor's degrees during the 2023 calendar year. Many of the counties with no apprentices did have aspiring apprentices who needed bachelor's degrees, but there were no approved EPP programs available in those locations or online.

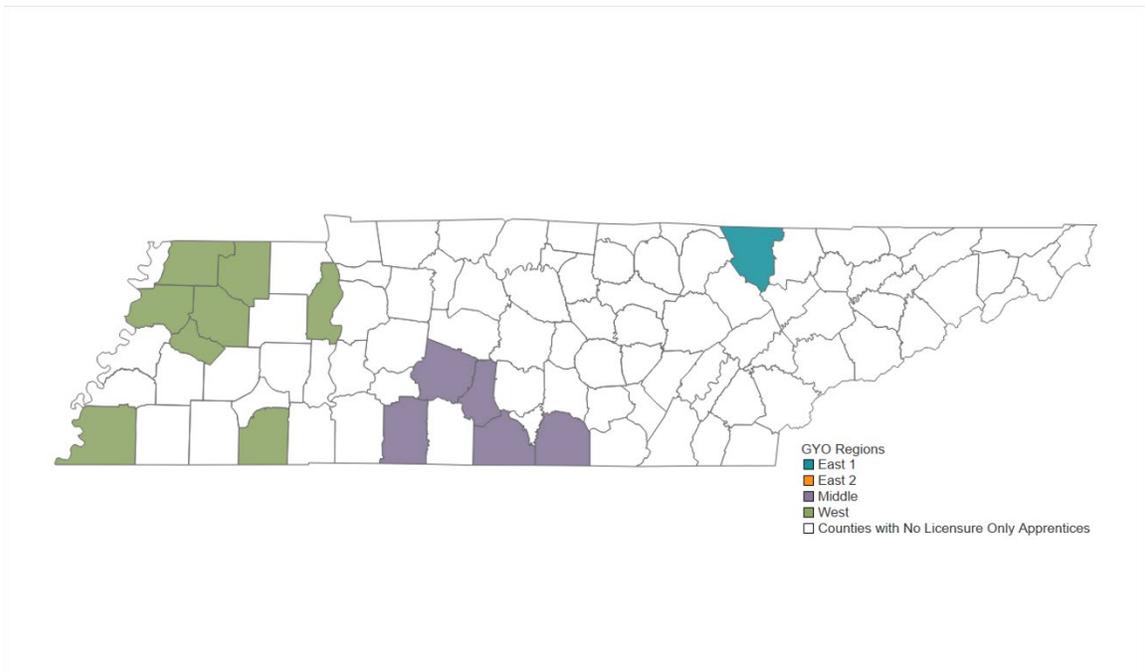
Figure 5 - Counties with Undergraduate Apprentices



Licensure-Only Apprentices

Candidates who already have a master's degree or who have no interest in a master's degree but already have a bachelor's degree are often interested in a 1-year, licensure-only pathway to a teaching license. In Figure 6, the shaded counties represent locations where 2023's apprentices were pursuing licensure-only programs. There was more interest in licensure-only programs than there were available EPP programs.

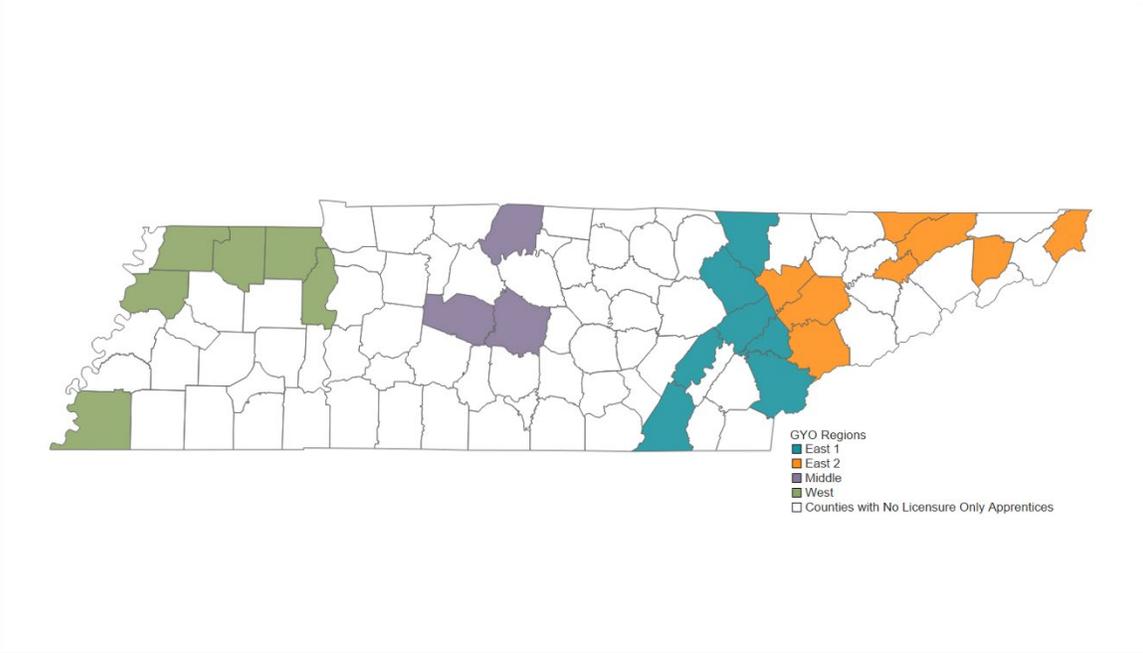
Figure 6 - Counties with Licensure-Only Apprentices



Postbaccalaureate Apprentices

Figure 7 shows counties with apprentices working towards a postbaccalaureate credential—master’s degree, education specialist degree, or a Montessori credential—during the 2023 calendar year. The postbaccalaureate pathways were the least requested pathway by aspiring apprentices; however, were the most offered by EPPs leading to the gap in available pathways.

Figure 7 - Counties with Postbaccalaureate Apprentices



EVALUATION SURVEY

Survey Distribution and Response Rates

A key component of the evaluation plan included the use of a comprehensive survey to gain insights into the experiences of apprentices, completing apprentices, LEA contacts, and apprentice mentors. The survey was sent to participants. Table 20 displays the participant distribution and response rates by participant type.

Table 6 - Survey Participant Distribution and Response Rates

Participants	Number of Email Invites	Percentage of Invited	Number of Surveys Finished	Survey Finish/Response Rate
Apprentices	597	51.0%	196	32.8%
LEA Contacts	94	8.0%	40	42.6%
Mentor Teachers	480	41.0%	107	22.3%
Total	1171	100.0%	343	29.3%

Participants received an individualized link to an electronic survey delivered to their EPP or LEA email addresses. The survey collected responses from November 6, 2023, to November 13, 2023.

A total of 1,171 participants responded to the survey leading to an overall 29.3% response rate. Of all participants, current apprentices had a 32.8% response rate, mentor teachers had a 24.8% response rate, and LEA primary points of contact had a 42.6% response rate.

Current Apprentices

The average number of years an apprentice worked before becoming an apprentice was 3.2 years (n=159). The range of years an apprentice worked before becoming an apprentice was zero (n=30) to 18 years (n=1). Most apprentices (66.4%) said that they learned about TNGYO from someone in their school or a district official.

Most current apprentices expressed satisfaction with their coursework and how it supported them as a working learner (77.1%), their school district (67.1%), their EPP (79.5%), and their mentor (84.5%). Over 85% found it easy to enroll at their EPP.

Completing Apprentices

Of those apprentices that complete their programs this semester, 68.4% felt the competencies they obtained through their apprenticeship left them extremely or well prepared to enter the classroom as the teacher of record. Over 72% expressed satisfaction with their experience as an apprenticeship and 83.3% indicated that the TNGYO was impactful to their ability to become a teacher.

Mentor Teachers

When mentor teachers were asked about their level of satisfaction with the level of support received from TNGYOC, their district, their EPP, or TDOE, they primarily responded as very satisfied or neutral on their level of satisfaction.

LEA Contacts

Most LEA Contacts expressed some level of satisfaction with TNGYOC (56.8%) and their EPP partner (70.4%).

Written Comments

Each group of participants could provide additional written comments. A summary of written comments is provided and divided by participant group.

Current & Completing Apprentices

The following themes emerged from current and completing apprentices.

Workload and Time Management

A predominant theme in participant feedback revolved around the challenge of managing a demanding workload while working full-time. Many expressed feeling overwhelmed by the combination of academic responsibilities and professional commitments, highlighting the need for a more balanced approach to workload distribution.

Communication Issues

Communication emerged as a significant issue, with participants expressing frustration over a lack of clear information, last-minute announcements, and difficulties in obtaining necessary details about the program. Effective and transparent communication was identified as a crucial area requiring improvement.

Support and Mentoring

While positive experiences with mentors were acknowledged, there were instances where participants felt that mentor teachers may not be fully utilizing their roles. The importance of effective mentorship in maximizing learning opportunities is emphasized, suggesting potential areas for enhancement.

Program Structure and Content

Feedback on the program's structure was mixed, with both positive remarks and expressions of dissatisfaction. Some participants appreciated the program's design, while others raised concerns about the inclusion of certain classes and the overall structure of requirements.

Career Transition and Experience

Participants transitioning to teaching from other careers noted challenges in adapting to the education field and expressed a need for more support, particularly in areas like lesson planning and subject-specific training.

Financial Matters

Gratitude was expressed for financial support; however, concerns were raised about unexpected deductions from financial aid, indicating a need for clearer communication regarding financial matters.

Suggestions for Improvement

A recurring theme was the participants' desire for program improvement. Suggestions ranged from clearer communication and better program planning to reconsideration of specific requirements, such as the EdTPA.

Positive Remarks

Amidst the challenges, positive remarks expressed gratitude for the opportunity and acknowledgment of the program's benefits. However, these positive sentiments are often accompanied by suggestions for improvement, indicating a nuanced perspective.

LEA Contact

The following themes emerged TNGYO LEA Contacts.

Program Intentions and Challenges

The overall intentions of the TNGYO program were recognized as well-intended, but participants raised concerns about the challenges in program implementation. Frustrations arose from changes in program structure, unclear communication, and deviations from the initially understood mission of selecting candidates with both the desire and aptitude to become teachers.

Recruitment and Eligibility

Challenges in recruiting candidates for the program were highlighted, particularly due to the requirement of a four-year degree. Changes in the program structure were identified as contributing to recruitment difficulties, causing a loss of confidence when announcements were made and then revised.

Timely Information and Transparency

Several participants expressed challenges related to the lack of timely information and quick responses to inquiries. Anxiety emerged from shifts in program timeframes, such as doubling the number of courses per semester, leading to concerns about transparency within the program.

University Interaction and Support

Participants reported mixed experiences with university interaction. While there are instances of supportive responses to specific issues raised by candidates and districts, concerns about the lack of communication and information flow from the university persisted.

Partnerships and Collaboration

Some participants appreciated the excellent communication and support received, indicating the importance of collaborative relationships in the program's success. Others indicated that they had to connect with multiple individuals to find answers to questions or to get issues resolved.

Impact and Opportunities

The TNGYO program was recognized as a game-changer, providing opportunities for individuals who, due to life circumstances, were unable to pursue traditional college education. Positive experiences and support during the initial semester are highlighted.

Challenges with Program Structure

Issues related to the program's structural changes were discussed, including difficulties faced by apprentices in managing coursework, full-time work, and family life. Frustrations were expressed by candidates and mentor teachers regarding program expectations and communication breakdowns.

Initial Stages and Evolution of the Program

Participants shared insights into the initial stages of their involvement, citing positive experiences during the first semester. The narrative also included historical context, such as the program's evolution from a three-year to a one-year format, contributing to challenges faced by candidates and mentor teachers.

Mentor Teachers

The following themes emerged from mentor teachers.

Communication Issues

Participants raised concerns about communication gaps within the TNGYO program. Mentors expressed frustration over the lack of clarity around expectations. There were instances of unfulfilled promises regarding support items, such as timelines and spreadsheets. Some mentors reported minimal interaction and inadequate responses to their inquiries, leading to a sense of disheartenment and a perception of neglect from the program organizers.

Organizational Challenges

Several mentors highlighted organizational challenges within the program. They cited difficulties navigating online platforms, expressing the need for clearer outlines, manuals, and structured plans. Mentors reported feeling confused and disoriented due to a lack of information, expressing a desire for more user-friendly systems and organized resources to enhance their engagement with the program.

Mentor Support

The need for additional training and resources for mentors emerged as a recurring theme. Mentors expressed uncertainty about their roles and responsibilities, emphasizing the importance of clear expectations and guidelines. Some mentors revealed a lack of direction and specific instructions beyond a couple of dates for observations, indicating a need for comprehensive mentor support to ensure they are fulfilling their responsibilities effectively.

Program Benefits

While there were challenges, many participants acknowledged the positive aspects of the TNGYO program. They praised the concept, especially for providing opportunities for working paraprofessionals to further their education. Success stories of hardworking apprentices and positive experiences with teacher residents were highlighted, contributing to the overall positive sentiment toward the program's goals and benefits.

Suggestions for Improvement

Several participants offered constructive suggestions for program improvement. These included better coordination between the program and school districts, more involvement of mentor teachers beyond the classroom, and the implementation of regular check-ins and mid-term evaluations. The desire for a more organized manual and structured plans was a common theme in these suggestions.

Concerns about Program Suitability

A notable concern expressed by mentors and participants was the perceived unsuitability of the TNGYO program for individuals simultaneously completing college-level courses and working full-time. Participants highlighted the heavy workload and busy work assignments as potential drawbacks, emphasizing the need for a more balanced and manageable approach.

Teacher Resident Experiences

Feedback regarding teacher residents' experiences revealed challenges, including a lack of communication and understanding of their roles. The importance of observing candidates in their work environment during the application process was emphasized, highlighting the need for a more comprehensive and informed selection process.

Desire for Greater Collaboration

Participants consistently expressed a desire for increased collaboration between the college, mentor teachers, and the Tennessee Department of Education. Mentors sought better communication and understanding of program dynamics to enhance their ability to support teacher residents effectively. Suggestions for mentor-teacher relationship improvements and more involvement in program decisions were common themes in this context.

Written Comments Summary

Themes across current and completing apprentices, LEA contacts, and mentor teachers revealed common challenges and opportunities within the TNGYO program. Workload and time management issues were prevalent, with participants expressing feelings of being overwhelmed due to the combination of academic responsibilities and full-time work. Communication emerged as a significant challenge, encompassing frustrations over unclear information, last-minute announcements, and difficulties obtaining necessary details. Support and mentoring exhibited a dual nature, with positive experiences acknowledged, yet concerns arose about the full utilization of mentor roles. Mixed feedback on the program's structure, recruitment challenges, and issues with timely information were recurrent themes. Financial matters, positive remarks, and a desire for program improvement were cross-cutting concerns. Mentor teachers echoed communication issues, organizational challenges, and the need for additional support and resources while highlighting program benefits and expressing concerns about its suitability for those simultaneously completing college-level courses and working full time. Overall, the desire for greater collaboration and more transparent communication emerged as a consistent thread, underlining the importance of addressing these issues for the program's success and participant satisfaction.

Key Findings and Next Steps

For Fall 2023, Apprentices, LEA Contacts, and Mentor Teachers identified both successes and areas of growth for the TNGYOC and the program.

Areas of Success

- **Awareness and Promotion:** The survey findings indicated that a significant majority of apprentices (64.2%) learned about Tennessee's GYO program through school district officials or individuals within their schools, underscoring the efficacy of promoting the program within the educational institutions and districts. To enhance recruitment and promotional strategies, it is recommended that TNGYOC and TDOE collaborate with LEAs, recognizing them as the primary point of contact to internally leverage TNGYO and cultivate talent from within the school, district, and local community. This approach aims to optimize the program's visibility and accessibility among those already engaged in the educational environment.
- **Support from Local Education Agency (LEA):** According to the survey, 63.6% of apprentices conveyed satisfaction with the support provided by their LEA. This satisfaction level suggests that some LEAs have effectively offered guidance and others will benefit from development in this area. To further elevate the preparedness of apprentices, it is recommended that TNGYOC supports LEAs to provide customized training aligning with the unique district culture, student demographics, and local requirements. This tailored approach aims to ensure success within the distinctive educational landscapes of each district, fostering a more targeted and impactful support system.
- **Support from Education Preparation Programs (EPP):** According to the survey, 75.3% of apprentices expressed satisfaction with the support provided by their EPP. This indicates the pivotal role that EPPs have played in training and preparing apprentices for their future careers as educators. To further improve apprentice preparation, EPPs should explore opportunities to broaden communication channels, ensuring clear and consistent dialogue between EPPs, apprentices, and stakeholders. This proactive approach to communication aims to enhance understanding and collaboration, contributing to a more effective and supportive learning experience for apprentices as they pursue their careers in education.

- **Mentorship:** The survey revealed that 80.0% of apprentices expressed high satisfaction with the support provided by their mentor teachers. This underscores the vital and positive influence of mentorship in guiding and nurturing apprentices, effectively assisting them in navigating the challenges inherent in their chosen profession.

The results indicate continued success in the Tennessee GYO program for apprentices, with noteworthy satisfaction levels observed in the support offered by LEAs, EPPs, and mentor teachers. These findings suggested that the program provides effective guidance, training, and mentorship, fostering a supportive and empowering environment that facilitates the growth and development of aspiring teachers within the program.

Area of Growth and Improvement

The key area of growth for the entire TNGYO program revolves around providing timely and clear communication. Apprentices, LEA contacts, and mentor teachers, all expressed that information was sometimes unclear, announcements were made without adequate notice, and they had difficulties obtaining necessary details. This theme underscores the importance of establishing effective and transparent communication channels to address concerns, provide timely information, and create a more supportive and informed environment for all stakeholders involved in the program.

As the TNGYOC continues to engage stakeholders and through strategic planning, the TNGYOC team will continue to work to address issues around communication by serving as an intermediary organization, or hub, for stakeholders. The center's team will continue to encourage clear and open communication through various channels by providing feedback from the evaluation survey to EPP partners specific to their EPP, outreach from the Regional Managers, and work to streamline processes that cause challenges for all stakeholders.

Overall, the TNGYOC team recognizes the incredible impact of the efforts made throughout the 2023 calendar year. School districts and EPP leaders from other states regularly contact the center for support and guidance, and team members have been invited to make presentations at many statewide and national convenings. Tennessee continues to serve educators well, and we are well on our way to being recognized as the national leader in teacher apprenticeship program research and implementation.