



TN Grow Your Own Center: Mentor Training Guide

A toolkit of resources to support the success
of GYO mentor teachers and apprentices



THE UNIVERSITY OF
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GROW YOUR OWN CENTER

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A toolkit of resources to support the success of GYO mentor teachers and apprentices

This GYO Mentor Teacher Training Guide is a collection of resources that offers guidance on mentor training and support to increase achievement for all students by supporting apprentice teachers in the [TN Grow Your Own](#) program. Audiences for this guide include LEA (district/school) and EPP (college/university) leaders of GYO Apprenticeship programs in Tennessee.

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. This toolkit contains representative examples from the field, not proven exemplars. EPPs and LEAs should adjust the resources to fit their individual needs. We invite your feedback on this guide, which will inform updates. Please complete our brief [Mentor Training Guide Feedback Survey](#) once you have reviewed the resources within.

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Strengthening the educator pipeline

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Overview

The state of Tennessee is the first in the country to sponsor a teacher occupation apprenticeship program – a community-based program to completely cover the cost of teacher licensure. In 2022, the Tennessee Department of Education launched the Tennessee Grow Your Own Center to support these programs. The GYO Center is a service of the University of Tennessee System, and the center provides connections between learners and coursework providers from several Tennessee colleges and universities.

This mentor training guide provides leaders with resources that are proven strategies to provide support and guidance for training the mentor teachers who are to be paired with GYO apprentice teachers. Within this training guide you will find items supporting the following topics:

- ▶ **Mentor Selection**: The process for selecting mentor teachers, and for partnering them with GYO apprentice teachers
- ▶ **Mentor Support**: Strategies and resources to consider as mentor teachers are trained
- ▶ **Timelines and Formats**: Training options and formats to consider
- ▶ **Scenarios**: Potential scenarios you may want to consider in supporting your mentor teachers and their apprentice teachers
- ▶ **FAQs for LEAs**
- ▶ **FAQs for EPPs**
- ▶ **Resources**: All resources found within the Training Guide in one section
- ▶ **Research on Mentor Teachers**: Research supporting the value of the role of the mentor



Mentor Selection

There is a significant body of research that reports the positive benefits of a teacher having the support of a mentor teacher. Some key findings include improved outcomes in the areas of teacher retention, teacher practice, student outcomes, and teacher collaboration. The selection process for mentor teachers is important, and the resources below will add support in selecting high-quality mentor teachers. Consider the LRA's Mentor Selection Process outlined in Section VII of their approved Teacher Apprenticeship Application. Also reference the [Grow Your Own Teacher Apprenticeship Playbook](#) (pages 36-37) for detailed support and information.

Consider TDOE policy [5.504](#) on mentor selection:

- (a) Clinical mentors shall 1. Hold an active Tennessee license with an endorsement in the area or a closely related area where they will be supervising the candidate; 2. Have a level of overall effectiveness of above expectations or significantly above expectations for the prior school year; and 3. Have a minimum of three (3) years of experience as a teacher, school services personnel, or instructional leader as applicable.
- (b) Clinical mentors shall be selected jointly by the EPP and the partner LEA.
- (c) Clinical mentors shall, in cooperation with the EPP clinical supervisor, direct the activities of the candidate in the classroom.
- (d) EPPs shall coordinate with LEAs to ensure clinical mentors are provided release time for counseling, observation, evaluation, or other activities related to the clinical practice that occur during the school day.

Consider the following dispositional characteristics:

- ▶ Mentor's comfort level with competencies
- ▶ Mentor's understanding of their role and responsibilities
- ▶ Growth mindset of the mentor teacher
- ▶ Mentor's openness to feedback from mentee/LEA leadership

Consider the following points of clarification to offer to mentors when they are invited to participate:

- ▶ How often does the mentor report (and to whom) on the competencies being demonstrated by apprentices?
- ▶ What is the required reporting (each semester) and recommended reporting (more often)?
- ▶ What aspects of that process are the same regardless of EPP/LEA?
- ▶ Processes for mentor teacher reporting competencies to LEA/EPP
- ▶ Is there additional compensation provided to the mentor?
- ▶ The mentor to apprentice relationship is a one-to-one relationship. The mentor cannot be the designated mentor for more than one apprentice at a time.

Resource: [Sample: GYO Mentor Teacher Position Description](#)



Mentor Support

Training is crucial for effective mentorship. To be effective mentors, the teachers selected for this role need to be trained in mentorship. Research shows that mentor training can help mentors develop the skills they need to support new teachers effectively. Training for mentors should be provided by both the EPP and the LEA. While EPPs and LEAs have their own in-house resources, the tools below are resources that are currently being implemented around the state and can provide additional value. Through the EPP/LEA partnership, it is imperative that mentors receive training on the following:

- ▶ [GYO Mentor Teacher One-Pager](#)
- ▶ [GYO Mentor Training PPT¹](#)
- ▶ [GYO Competency Reflection Template](#)
- ▶ [GYO Apprentice/Student Teaching: Compare & Contrast](#)
- ▶ Sample Resource: [Ongoing Apprentice Expectations²](#)
- ▶ LEA mentor support – providing feedback from mentee/LEA leadership
- ▶ Resource for supporting diverse learners: [Building a More Ethn racially Diverse Teaching Force](#)
- ▶ [Developing a Growth Mindset in Teachers and Staff](#)
- ▶ Mentors serve in the same space as instructional coaches, supporting teachers as a partner to support their success. See coaching resources:
 - ◆ [From Sage on the Stage to Guide on the Side](#)
 - ◆ [What is an Instructional Coach?](#)

**See Acknowledgements Section*

Timelines and Formats

TN GYO apprentices follow a “learn and earn” model of workforce development. They acquire job skills through a blend of coursework and practical experience under the guidance of a mentor. Throughout the apprenticeship, they receive an hourly wage that increases as they acquire new skills. Additionally, successful apprentices earn a recognized credential, which can be either a degree or licensure, further enhancing their professional qualifications.

Mentor teachers are supporting this valuable on-the-job learning over the course of 2-3 years. When deciding on mentor training delivery, think about the timelines and formats below:

- ▶ Consider the timeline sample below for delivery (orientation early and competency training follow-up), apprentices on a fast track or almost finished with coursework (orientation and competency training together)

September – Orientation in person	October date
November – Follow up date	December – Semester reporting due date
January – Orientation in person	February date
March date	April date

- ▶ Consider delivery formats for training: in person, online, recorded videos
- ▶ [Sample: Grow Your Own \(GYO\) Information Session³](#)
- ▶ [Sample: Grow Your Own Mentor Orientation⁴](#)
- ▶ [Sample: Outline of GYO Mentor Orientation⁴](#)
- ▶ Example Timeline – Competencies by Semester: [LEA-EPP Consolidated Competencies⁵](#)
- ▶ Example Timeline – [Required Mentor Duties by Due Date²](#)
- ▶ Example Timeline – [Mentor Items to Complete with GYO Apprentice⁴](#)
- ▶ Example Timeline – [1st Semester Mentor/Apprentice Meeting Schedule⁴](#)

**See Acknowledgements Section*

Scenarios

Below are some potential scenarios you may want to consider in supporting your mentor teachers and their apprentice teachers. Also refer to LEA specific policies.



Creative scheduling to ensure apprentice can meet required classroom hours and meet competencies

- ▶ Refer to [GYO Apprentice/Student Teaching: Compare & Contrast](#).
- ▶ Collaborate with LEA leadership to create an appropriate schedule for the apprentice, considering flexibility for apprentices in time in the classroom and approach to meeting competencies.



Conflict between mentor and apprentice

- ▶ Reference resources:
 - ◆ [Sample: GYO Mentor Teacher Position Description](#)
 - ◆ [Ongoing Apprentice Expectations⁵](#)
 - ◆ [GYO Apprentice/Student Teaching: Compare & Contrast](#)
 - ◆ [From Sage on the Stage to Guide on the Side](#)
- ▶ Collaborate with LEA leadership and EPP contact if needed to mediate.



Difference in background and experience between mentor and apprentice

- ▶ Reference supporting diverse learners resource: [Building a More Ethn racially Diverse Teaching Force](#).



Apprentice indicates they need academic support

- ▶ Refer apprentice to the EPP contact for support.



Apprentice needs non-academic support

- ▶ Collaborate with LEA leadership (school principal) and EPP contact for wrap-around services.
- ▶ Consider chain of command – LEA leadership, then EPP contact.

**See Acknowledgements Section*



Resources

Refer to the resources below, which are outlined throughout the GYO Toolkit:

Mentor Selection

- ▶ [Mentor Teacher Position Description](#)

Mentor Support

- ▶ [GYO Mentor Teacher One-Pager](#)
- ▶ [GYO Mentor Training PPT¹](#)
- ▶ [GYO Competency Reflection Template](#)
- ▶ [GYO Apprentice/Student Teaching: Compare & Contrast](#)
- ▶ [Ongoing Apprentice Expectations²](#)
- ▶ [Building a More Ethn racially Diverse Teaching Force](#)
- ▶ [Developing a Growth Mindset in Teachers and Staff](#)
- ▶ [From Sage on the Stage to Guide on the Side](#)
- ▶ [What is an Instructional Coach?](#)

Timelines & Formats

- ▶ [Sample: Grow Your Own \(GYO\) Information Session³](#)
- ▶ [Sample: Grow Your Own Mentor Orientation⁴](#)
 - ◆ [Sample: Outline of GYO Mentor Orientation⁴](#)
- ▶ Example Timeline – Competencies by Semester: [LEA-EPP Consolidated Competencies⁵](#)
- ▶ Example Timeline – [Required Mentor Duties by Due Date²](#)
- ▶ Example Timeline – [Mentor Items to Complete with GYO Apprentice⁴](#)
- ▶ [1st Semester Mentor/Apprentice Meeting Schedule⁴](#)

We encourage LEAs and EPPs to adjust the resources to fit their individual needs. Go to File, then Download, to save these resources for use.

**See Acknowledgements Section*



FAQs for LEAs



How do I select Mentor Teachers?

Mentor selection is a key factor in teacher apprentice success. See the [Mentor Selection](#) section for selecting a strong mentor.



How is GYO apprenticeship different from student teaching?

It is important for all stakeholders and everyone supporting GYO teacher apprentices to understand the differences between teacher apprentices and the traditional teacher clinical experience. See the [GYO Apprentice/Student Teaching: Compare & Contrast](#) resource for more detailed information.



Who do I go to for support for mentor apprentice challenges?

It is important for mentors to know who to turn to with any questions or concerns. Issues can be academic or non-academic in nature. When approaching a needed academic support, mentor teachers can refer the apprentice to the EPP contact for support. If the apprentice needs non-academic support, mentors can collaborate with the LEA leadership and EPP contact for wrap-around services. Also, consider the chain of command – LEA leadership, then EPP contact.



What does a great training experience look like for mentors?

An effective training program includes several elements across the mentoring experience. It would begin with an orientation to the role. Mentors would also need sophisticated training on the expected competencies – how to model them, and how to provide feedback on them, and the LEA’s expected timeline for completion. See the [Mentor Support](#) section for resources to support these components.

While common practice is that EPP partners provide the majority of the mentor training, LEAs will need to attend appropriate trainings in order to provide adequate support to the apprentice. Coordination between the EPP and LEA is essential for consistent expectations and support for both mentor teachers and apprentices.



Who is evaluating the competencies?

The mentor teacher will be directly responsible for evaluating the competencies. The partnering EPP will provide support by completing frequent observations. The EPP will also provide oversight in ensuring completion of competencies.



Why is this model a value-add for our LEA?

The apprentice model provides a variety of benefits for LEAs, including but not limited to the following:

- a pipeline of quality teachers
- leadership opportunity for highly effective teacher leaders
- a pipeline of trained teacher assistants
- a structured process for EPP/LEA collaboration and partnership





FAQs for EPPs

Q

How is GYO apprenticeship different from student teaching?

It is important for all stakeholders for everyone supporting GYO teacher apprentices to understand the differences between teacher apprentices and the traditional teacher clinical experience. See the [GYO Apprentice/Student Teaching: Compare & Contrast](#) resource for more detailed information.

Q

What is the process for resolving mentor apprentice challenges?

It is important for mentors to know who to turn to with any questions or concerns. Issues can be academic or non-academic in nature. When approaching a needed academic support, mentor teachers can refer the apprentice to the EPP contact for support. If the apprentice needs non-academic support, mentors can collaborate with the LEA leadership and EPP contact for wrap-around services. Also, consider the chain of command – LEA leadership, then EPP contact.

Q What does a great training experience look like for mentors?

An effective training program includes several elements across the mentoring experience. It would begin with an orientation to the role. Mentors would also need sophisticated training on the expected competencies – how to model them, how to provide feedback on them, and the LEA’s expected timeline for completion. See the [Mentor Support](#) section for resources to support these components.

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Q Who is evaluating the competencies?

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Q Why is this model a value-add for our EPP?

The apprentice model provides a variety of benefits for universities, including but not limited to the following:

- increased enrollment
- opportunities for innovative instruction
- a structured process for EPP/LEA collaboration and partnership
- collaborative opportunities with TDOE

Research on Mentor Teachers

There is a significant body of research that supports the idea of teacher mentor training. Some key findings include the following benefits:

Effective mentorship can improve teacher retention. Studies have found that new teachers who have access to a mentor are more likely to stay in the profession. Mentorship can provide new teachers with the support they need to succeed in their roles and can help them navigate the challenges that come with the job.¹

Mentorship can improve teacher practice: Research shows that effective mentorship can help new teachers improve their instructional practices. Effective clinical mentors provide more and better coaching and feedback to teacher candidates.² Mentors can help new teachers develop new teaching strategies, provide feedback on their teaching, and help them reflect on their practice.

Mentorship can improve student outcomes: Studies have found that when new teachers receive effective mentorship, their students are more likely to achieve positive outcomes. Teachers mentored by more effective clinical mentors are themselves more instructionally effective in their early careers.³ This is because new teachers who have access to a mentor are better equipped to meet the needs of their students.



Mentorship can improve teacher collaboration: Effective mentorship can also foster collaboration among teachers. Pre and post observation conferences with a mentor promote teacher learning when they are focused on co-constructing the problem, co-constructing potential action, and target setting.⁴ When teachers work together, they can share ideas and strategies, which can lead to improved student outcomes.

Mentor training is crucial for effective mentorship: To be effective mentors, teachers need to be trained in mentorship. When teachers receive coaching targeted toward a limited area of improvement, they improve instructional practice and perceive themselves to be better prepared.⁵ Mentor training can help mentors develop the skills they need to support new teachers effectively.

Key findings strongly support the idea that teacher mentor training is essential for improving teacher retention, teacher practice, student outcomes, and teacher collaboration.

Notes

¹ Sheryn Waterman & Ye He (2011); Effects of Mentoring Programs on New Teacher Retention: A Literature Review, *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 19:2, 139-156, DOI: [10.1080/13611267.2011.564348](https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2011.564348)

² Ronfeldt, Goldhaber, Cowan, Bardelli, Johnson, & Tien (under review);

³ Ronfeldt, Brockman, Campbell, (2018); Goldhaber & Ronfeldt (forthcoming); Ronfeldt, Matsko, Greene Nolan, & Reininger, M. (2018); <https://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/us/2018/07/16/mentors-matter-good-teaching-really-can-be-passed-down-to-student-teachers-new-research-finds/>

⁴ Alexander & Murphy (1998); Reiman & Thies-Sprinthall (1998); McQueen (2015)

⁵ Allen, Pianta, Gregory, Mikami, & Lun (2011); Grossman (2015); Kretlow, Wood, and Cooke (2011)

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¹ This document was created by the GYO Center in collaboration with the UT Campuses.

² This document was created by UTK and UTC in collaboration with their LEA partners. This is one example of the approach to competencies. EPPs/LEAs should adjust the model to fit their individual needs.

³ This document was created by Hamilton County and is one example of the approach to GYO support. EPPs/LEAs should adjust the approach to fit their individual needs.

⁴ This document was created by UTC in collaboration with their LEA partners. This is one example of the approach to competencies. EPPs/LEAs should adjust the model to fit their individual needs.

⁵ This document was created by UTK in collaboration with their LEA partners. This is one example of the approach to competencies. EPPs/LEAs should adjust the model to fit their individual needs.

