



Strategic Overview



Addressing Challenges to the Educator Profession

An essential goal of the Tennessee Department of Education's (TDOE) Best for All strategic plan is to provide all Tennessee students with access to a high-quality education and an effective teacher to support learning in every classroom. Educators statewide work hard to advance students' academic outcomes and ensure future readiness, inspiring their growth and achievement.

Tennessee's Grow Your Own (GYO) strategic initiative is designed to tackle the state's teacher recruitment and retention challenges head on. GYO is an educator preparation strategy focused on developing and employing teachers from the local community. Tennessee will continue to strengthen new professional pathways so that educators can become and remain teachers and leaders in Tennessee for all students.

Persistent barriers have faced the teaching profession, and as a result, not every student has access to an excellent educator in every class in every subject, every day. Tennessee's teacher workforce reflects three primary challenges to fully staffing districts with high-quality, well-trained professionals that students most need:

Financial

Cost barriers discourage prospective teachers from entering the field



Educator expenses quickly add up, including degree tuition, testing fees, and certification costs. Further, required clinical experiences often require participants to work without pay to complete their necessary hours, deterring candidates from starting or completing programs.

Recruitment

The workforce does not always reflect the population of students it serves



Growing discrepancies between changing student bodies and current educators makes it challenging for students to see themselves reflected in their teachers. Yet, research indicates that a diverse educator workforce has positive impacts on all students, including academic achievement, engagement, and social development.

Preparation

New teachers are often unprepared to succeed in their first years



As teachers gain experience, their students perform better across various measures of success. Yet, districts may struggle to identify first-year or early career teachers able to effectively advance students' academic achievement given educator inexperience and high turnover.