



TO, THROUGH AND TEACHING

A TOOLKIT FOR CREATING HIGH-QUALITY
EDUCATOR PATHWAYS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS



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INTRODUCTION

Across the United States, public K12 school districts continually face the challenge of recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers, particularly in schools that serve students experiencing poverty and students of color. According to the 2022 School Pulse Panel Survey, 53 percent of all public schools were understaffed entering the 2022-23 school year.¹ By the end of the 2021-2022 school year, teacher turnover had risen to 10 percent from six percent nationally with turnover being the highest in urban districts (14 percent) and high-poverty districts (12 percent).²

Meanwhile, the pipeline of future educators is dwindling as well. Recent data show a steady decline in teacher preparation program completion rates over the last decade, with college enrollment down by about 1.1 million students overall compared to pre-pandemic enrollment.^{3,4} This decline is also not equally distributed, teacher pipeline challenges are more pronounced in urban and rural districts, where the need for Special Education and STEM teachers is high. Coupled with results from a PDK poll indicating 62 percent of parents would not like their children to become teachers,⁵ these data suggest districts will continue struggling to staff classrooms unless these trends are reversed or new sources of teacher candidates are found.

But the teacher shortage is not simply about filling vacancies. Research consistently underscores the importance of providing students with highly qualified teachers who reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. There is a growing body of research that suggests teacher diversity and same-race matching between teachers and students can lead to positive academic outcomes like increased attendance, academic achievement and the likelihood of pursuing postsecondary education.⁶



¹ Institute of Education Sciences. (2022). [School Pulse Panel Survey](#).

² Diliberti, M. & Schwartz, H. L. (2023). [Educator Turnover Has Markedly Increased, but Districts Have Taken Actions to Boost Teacher Ranks](#).

³ National Education Association. (2022). [2022 Title II Report](#).

⁴ National Student Clearinghouse. (2023). [Current Term Enrollment Estimates: Fall 2022](#).

⁵ PDK International. (2022). [PDK Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools](#).

⁶ Holt, S. B. & Gershenson, S. (2015). [The Impact of Teacher Demographic Representation on Student Attendance and Suspensions](#).

Yet nationally, approximately 54 percent of public K12 students are Black, Indigenous or People of Color (BIPOC),⁷ compared to just 20 percent of public K12 teachers.⁸ And, although teachers without adequate credentials only account for approximately five percent of teaching positions nationwide,⁹ students of color and students experiencing poverty are more likely than their peers to attend schools with greater numbers of inexperienced teachers.¹⁰ These patterns combined perpetuate long-standing inequities in the K12 education system and contribute to persistent racial/ethnic and income gaps in academic achievement and other indicators of well-being.

Given these trends, states and districts are increasingly investing in strategies to recruit members of their local communities into the education profession with the expectation that these candidates will be more reflective of the local student population and more likely to stay in the classroom long-term. These include a rising number of efforts to engage middle and high school students as future educators. ***At their best, these high school to teaching pathways offer students the opportunity to complete an undergraduate college degree and enter a career in education. These programs have potential to increase school districts' pool of prospective educators who have strong ties to the local community and its students.***

Supportive pathways to and through higher education, regardless of subject area, also drive economic mobility for individual students and their families. In 2018, the median earnings of bachelor's degree recipients with no advanced degree working full time were \$24,900 higher than those of high school graduates.¹¹ Strategies to guide students to and through college and into a career can be particularly powerful for students experiencing poverty and students of color, who enroll in and complete postsecondary credentials at lower rates than their peers.¹²

Although some form of programming for high school students interested in education exists in nearly every state and across thousands of school districts,¹³ ***often these programs stop at generating interest without offering a clear, affordable, supported pathway for students to follow through on their interest by completing a college degree, earning a teaching credential and attaining a teaching position.***

⁷ National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). [Racial/Ethnic Enrollment in Public Schools](#).

⁸ National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). [Characteristics of 2020-21 Public and Private K-12 School Teachers in the United States](#).

⁹ Nguyen, T. D., Lam, C. B., and Bruno, P.. (2022). [Is there a national teacher shortage? A systematic examination of reports of teacher shortages in the United States](#). (EdWorkingPaper: 22-631).

¹⁰ Education Trust. (2021). [Getting Black Students Better Access to Non-Novice Teachers](#).

¹¹ Ma, J., Pender, M., Welch, M. (2019). [The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society](#).

¹² National Center for Education Statistics. (2021). [2021 Condition of Education Report](#).

¹³ New America. (2022). [Grow Your Own Educators: A Toolkit for Program Design and Development](#).

This toolkit documents the process of creating *high-quality educator pathways for high school students*. New America identifies five essential elements that set high-quality pathways apart from other programs:¹⁴

1. Strong partnerships across school districts, educator preparation providers and community organizations
2. Community-based recruitment that aims to increase the ethnic, linguistic and racial diversity of the teacher workforce
3. Wraparound supports through the recruitment, preparation and induction years
4. Paid work-based experience under the guidance of an effective mentor teacher that aligns with educator preparation coursework
5. Structured pathways for teacher candidates to earn required credentials and certification

While there will be some variation based on local context, this toolkit will focus on these five core elements that will be integral to any program regardless of context. For the purposes of this resource we define high-quality educator pathways as programs that have demonstrated success executing and sustaining one or more of the five essential elements in developing and executing their high school to teaching pathway.

We acknowledge other organizations have published excellent resources related to “grow your own” educator initiatives, many of which are cited throughout this publication. ***We seek to build on this foundation by focusing on educator pathways for high school students with an emphasis on high-quality programs that offer a complete pathway from high school through higher education and into the profession.*** We interviewed practitioners and policymakers to surface practical wisdom for designing and implementing these programs and help translate theory into practice. We also share a number of sample tools that can be adapted to establish or enhance other programs.

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

Education First is a national, mission-driven strategy and policy consulting firm with deep expertise in education improvement. Our team of former education practitioners has worked with districts, teacher preparation programs, states, funders and others across the country to improve the pipeline of teacher candidates, especially candidates of color. In 2018, we published our [*Partnering on Prep toolkit*](#) to foster productive partnerships focused on teacher preparation. Now, we offer this toolkit to build on and share what we’ve learned from our work in supporting design and implementation of high school to teaching pathways initiatives in several communities, including Chicago, Indianapolis, Minneapolis, Rochester (NY) and St. Paul.

¹⁴ New America. (2022). [Essential Elements for High-Quality Grow Your Own Educator Programs](#).

This toolkit is intended for leaders of K12 districts and educator preparation programs who are looking to build robust pathways into the teaching profession, especially by forging partnerships so cohorts of students may complete their teacher credentialing program and return to their home districts to teach. The guide will also be useful for education leaders who are involved in an existing program for high school students aspiring to become educators and want to expand or improve it. Finally, we offer this toolkit as a resource to state policymakers, funders and others who are interested in supporting the ecosystem of cultivating diverse, highly qualified K12 teachers.

Like our [*companion toolkit on teacher preparation partnerships*](#), this resource outlines three stages for creating high-quality educator pathways for high school students: Initiation, Design and Implementation. Within each stage, we share key steps and offer practical tools for completing the associated major tasks.

Building a high-quality educator pathway for high school students is complex work that requires deep collaboration and a steady investment of time and resources. We hope this toolkit contributes to a stronger, more diverse educator workforce and, ultimately, better outcomes for students.



TO, THROUGH AND TEACHING

TOOLKIT ROADMAP



INITIATION STAGE

- Gather and analyze data
- Set a vision for the high school to teaching pathway
- Gather partners to form a design team
- Organize the team



DESIGN STAGE

- Build the program core
- Attend to transition points
- Prepare for recruitment
- Design a program budget and funding strategy
- Plan for evaluation



IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

- Build and sustain interest in the program
- Maintain a healthy partnership
- Stay invested for the long haul



INITIATION STAGE

INITIATION STAGE

During the Initiation Stage, a founding partner—often a school district or educator preparation program—lays the foundation for the high school to teaching pathway. In this stage, the founding partner: 1) gathers and analyzes data to check assumptions about workforce needs and deepen understanding of the students to be served; 2) begins to develop a vision for a high-quality pathway for high school students; 3) invites partners to form a design team; and 4) establishes structures to guide the team’s work.

GATHER AND ANALYZE DATA

Because designing a high-quality educator pathway requires intensive time and effort across multiple partners, it’s important to begin by confirming whether there is evidence that a pathway for high school students is both needed and feasible given the local context. Student aspirations, interests and needs are critical to understand from the beginning, as well. Prospective program designers should consider the questions in this section before beginning to create the program.

Is a new pathway needed?

Although there is evidence districts across the United States are experiencing teacher shortages, it’s important to understand whether there is a shortage in the local region where the proposed high school to teaching pathway would operate, and what the specific unfilled needs are, as these can vary by community. Keep in mind that, as noted earlier, the goal is not only to staff classrooms at an appropriate student:teacher ratio, but to staff classrooms with well-prepared candidates who reflect the identities of the students they serve. Questions to consider include:

- **Are local educator preparation programs producing an adequate supply of candidates?**
 - ▶ How is enrollment for local educator preparation programs trending over time?
 - ▶ How does the demographic composition of teacher candidates in local preparation programs compare to the local K12 student population?
 - ▶ What percentage of candidates are drawn from the local community?
 - ▶ What percentage of program completers continue on to teach in districts with high needs for qualified teachers?
 - ▶ Are graduates of these programs entering the classroom well-prepared?
- **Does the local teacher workforce currently meet students’ needs?**
 - ▶ What evidence do you have of teacher impact on student achievement across the district?
 - ▶ What is the demographic composition of the local teacher workforce, and how does it compare to that of students?
 - ▶ Are there specific student populations that need to be better represented in the teacher workforce (e.g., students of color, bilingual students, students experiencing poverty or students who live in a specific geographic area)?
 - ▶ Are there hard-to-fill vacancies in specific grades, subject areas or schools?
 - ▶ What is the retention rate for novice teachers?

- **What existing programs or initiatives are already in place to expand, strengthen and diversify the teacher workforce?**

- ▶ Are there existing articulation agreements between districts and Institution of Higher Education partners (2-year and 4-year) to support college coursework credits in high school?
- ▶ What has been the impact of these efforts to date, and where is further work needed?

Data from the state department of education, state or local workforce board, local educator preparation providers and district HR data can inform these questions. Conversations with district and higher education staff familiar with the existing efforts to recruit teachers can be helpful, as well. These leaders can provide insight on what initiatives are currently in place, what's working well and where they'd like to see improvement. This information, considered alongside the educator workforce data described above, can inform decisions about whether the time is right for a new or improved educator pathway for high school students.

Is a high school to teaching pathway feasible?

Confirming the need for a stronger teaching pipeline is just one step of the decisionmaking process. It's also important to determine whether a high school to teaching program, specifically, is an appropriate and workable strategy to meet that need. Questions to consider include:

- **Is there a population of students who would potentially participate in the pathway?**
 - ▶ If the district offers Career and Technical Education (CTE) or dual credit coursework in education, how many students are enrolled in these courses?
 - ▶ If the district offers a future educators club, how many students participate?
 - ▶ Are there other data indicating there is a pool of students who may have aptitude for and interest in a career in education?
- **Are there teachers in the district who might serve as champions for students who are interested in careers as educators?**
- **What dual credit courses in education might be available from educator preparation providers?**

Are there high school teachers who are qualified to teach these courses, or who are interested in becoming qualified? What are the requirements for students to enroll in and receive credit for these courses?
- **Are the leaders of local districts and educator preparation programs open to the idea of creating a high school to teaching pathway?**

These questions can be answered by examining district data regarding the experience, credentials and performance of current teachers, analyzing student enrollment data, speaking with middle and high school principals and teachers, and initiating exploratory conversations with superintendents and higher

education leaders. The answers to these initial questions can indicate whether there is a foundational level of interest in and support for a high-quality educator pathway for high school students.

How might a high school to teaching pathway be designed to best serve students?

Any pathway created for students should offer a clear benefit to students who are both participating and students who are receiving support from their peers via the pathway, not just to educator preparation programs and districts. A careful look at both qualitative and quantitative data on prospective participants' strengths, needs and aspirations should inform decisions about how to design an educator pathway for high school students. Questions to consider include:

- **What percentage of local students are designated as “college ready” when they graduate from high school?**
 - ▶ What percentage enroll in and attend an institution of higher education after completing high school?
 - ▶ What percentage complete a credential?
 - ▶ How do these outcomes vary by race/ethnicity, gender and income?
- **How do students describe their career aspirations as they move through middle and high school?**
 - ▶ What do they know about attending college, and what do they want to know?
 - ▶ How do they perceive the teaching profession?
- **For district alumni who have successfully completed an educator preparation program**—what supports and experiences have been most valuable to them as they have transitioned into higher education and begun preparing for their career?
 - ▶ What supports and experiences do they wish they'd had?

State education agencies and districts should be able to provide data on students' college readiness, enrollment, persistence and completion; some districts partner with the National Student Clearinghouse through the [***StudentTracker program***](#) for an even more granular understanding of their students' postsecondary pathways. These data inform an understanding of what supports prospective program participants may need in order to successfully complete the full pathway to and through college and into the classroom. Empathy interviews, focus groups and surveys can help program designers surface the student perspectives described above, which can inform later decisions about what experiences and supports to build into the program, as well as marketing and recruitment strategy.

By investing in robust data collection and analysis at the outset, founding partners can build a strong case for creating a high-quality educator pathway for high school students and begin to develop a clear vision for the program that is responsive to students' own experiences and desires.



TOOLS FOR GATHERING AND ANALYZING DATA:

- [*North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Educator Preparation Program Dashboard*](#)
- [*Louisiana Department of Education Educator Workforce Snapshots*](#)
- [*Chicago Public Schools Educator Pipeline Data Visualizations*](#)
- [*Illinois State Board of Education Educator Preparation Profile*](#)
- [*Indianapolis Public Schools Educator Preparation Program Reports*](#)
- [*Education First High School Student Focus Group Protocol*](#)

SET A VISION FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL TO TEACHING PATHWAY

If the data indicate a high school teaching pathway would strengthen the local teaching workforce and provide a needed opportunity for students, the founding partner can begin to articulate a compelling case for investing time, effort and resources in such a program.

Many districts adopt grow your own programs to bring their teaching workforce closer to reflecting the demographics of their student body with the intention of leveraging the knowledge, skills and experiences of teachers who share core identities with their students.¹⁵ Taylor Williams, Director of Talent at New Schools for New Orleans, shared, “What excites me most about [our] program is the pipeline of local and diverse teachers. I understand the importance of the city’s culture and what it means to love this city. No one knows that better than folks that are from this city.”

Although educator pathways for high school students offer the promise of recruiting local graduates back into the educator workforce, the time horizon for this intervention to meaningfully affect the supply of available teachers is relatively long, and the percentage of program participants who actually complete an education degree and return to work in the local community will likely be low relative to grow your own strategies that target older adults whose career aspirations are more stabilized.¹⁶

EQUITABLE DESIGN FOR EDUCATOR PATHWAYS

Our recommendations throughout this section are informed in part by the principles of equitable design, which call us to be mindful of context and history and to center people proximate to the problem we’re trying to solve throughout the research, design and implementation of programs and policies. To learn more about equitable design, visit equitymeetsdesign.com.

¹⁵ Gist, C. D., Bianco, M., & Lynn, M. (2019). Examining Grow Your Own Programs Across the Teacher Development Continuum: Mining Research on Teachers of Color and Nontraditional Educator Pipelines. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 70(1), 13–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487118787504>

¹⁶ For example, the Teaching and Learning Institute (TLI), a respected and long-standing high-quality educator pathway for high school students, [reported in 2013](#) that of 250 students who had completed the program since 1995, 15 were currently employed in the Rochester City School District.

Thus, it's best to consider a high school pathway as one strand of a larger strategy for recruiting and retaining teachers and providing opportunities to high school students.

It's also important to recognize that a high-quality educator program for high school students can have many positive impacts beyond expanding and diversifying a district's pool of candidates:

- **A strong high school to teaching program in one district can spur energy around the teaching profession across the broader region.** Program success is not limited to the number of students who return to teach in the district. There are many ways to define program impact, including broadening access to the teacher pipeline generally. For example, Texas A&M University launched the Brazos Valley Teach (BVTeach) program at school sites within three districts; within a year of inception, three additional districts contacted the program directors because they had heard about the opportunity and were eager to participate. Additionally, one district in BVTeach's initial cohort started a Texas chapter of the Association of Future Educators.¹⁷
- **High-quality educator pathways programs can teach students transferable skills that will be useful in a range of contexts beyond teaching.** Teacher academies must consider ways to prepare high school students for the workforce generally and not just the education field, acknowledging that high-quality work-based learning offers a wide variety of benefits to students and their communities. At Skyline High School in Arizona, for example, administrators began to rethink the primary purpose of their teacher academy when they realized the majority of students enrolled in the program did not plan to pursue education as a career. They restructured the program to focus on research-based reading instruction to: 1) improve participants' personal reading skills; 2) provide them an opportunity for service learning; and 3) offer support for local K6 students. Program participants now work as "community educators," providing reading tutoring at a local elementary school two to four days per week. Skyline is also exploring options to allow the dual credit courses participants complete to transfer and apply to degrees outside of education.¹⁸
- **Any supported pathway into higher education, including a high-quality educator pathway, can contribute to college access and completion, leading to upward social mobility for students and their families.** Increased rates of matriculation into institutions of higher education and completion of college degrees in any field can be markers of a successful high school to teaching pathway. As Albert Chen, Acting Chief Executive Officer for PDK International, explained, "There is an opportunity for social change here where we see all these kids who didn't have a path, but who are now seeing that this is not just a path for them, but for their families. This is an opportunity for them to provide for their families multi-generationally and a source of pride."

¹⁷ Education First interview with Amy Jurica and Janice Meyer, Brazos Valley Teach Co-Executive Directors, May 2023.

¹⁸ Lennon Audrain, R. & Mendez, G. (2023). Teacher academies that make a difference NOW. Kappan Online. <https://kappanonline.org/teacher-academies-value-now-audrain/>

- **High-quality educator pathways can provide valuable earn-and-learn opportunities for students.**

These programs allow participating students to receive the benefit of paid work experience while learning the education field. BVTeach students, for example, complete paid externships working with students at a local nonprofit organization. “Our ultimate success will be in four to six years when we see how many people graduated college and have gone back to teach ... but getting them in the pipeline, getting them exposed early, giving them those opportunities to have an externship in the summer where they’re making some money doing something that they like—those are all big, key factors,” said Janice Meyer, Co-Executive Director for BVTeach.

These benefits can make high school to teaching programs attractive to and beneficial for a wide range of students, in addition to providing districts with an additional mechanism for ensuring the educator workforce is reflective of the community served.



TOOLS FOR VISION SETTING:

- [*Sample High-Level Vision for a high-quality educator pathway for high school students*](#)
- [*Teach Chicago Tomorrow Mission and Vision Statements*](#)

GATHER PARTNERS TO FORM A DESIGN TEAM

Once the founding district or educator preparation program has a sense of the purpose a high school to teaching pathway would fulfill, it’s time to begin socializing the idea with potential partners and identifying those who are willing to join in co-creating the pathway. Amy Jurica, Co-Executive Director of BVTeach at Texas A&M University, explained, “I would meet with a superintendent or a principal and say, ‘What does your district need?’ And without fail the answer would be, ‘We need some of your good [Texas A&M] Aggie teachers.’ ... [And I would say,] ‘Send me some of your students who are sitting in your high schools right now and then we can have Aggie teachers!’”

This is also an important time to focus on building trusting relationships with potential partners.

“Being able to have personal connections and one-on-one visits ... was probably one of the singular most important pieces to begin this work,” shared Edie Stewart, Director of Educator Preparation for the Arkansas Department of Education. “You have to have those relationships with your ed prep providers or it’s just not going to work.”

Districts and educator preparation programs that are physically proximate and have already established a strong working relationship are ideal candidates to develop a high-quality educator pathway together. New partnerships can be created to do this work, as well. Either way, the work

of designing, implementing and sustaining the pathway requires intensive collaboration and a deep commitment to student success on all sides. Whether the relationship is decades old or brand new, Education First's [*Partnering on Prep*](#) guide offers tools for building stronger partnerships.

Once the founding partner has a clear idea of which organizations are ready to commit to the work, the next step is to begin formalizing the partnership. As previously noted, a high-quality educator pathway for high school students includes several components:

- ▶ *An articulated sequence of coursework that culminates in a credential*
- ▶ *Coordinated wraparound supports to increase the likelihood students will complete their coursework and transition successfully to an institution of higher education*
- ▶ *Financial support to lower the cost of completing a teaching credential*
- ▶ *Work-based learning experiences*
- ▶ *Well-designed recruitment strategies to reach students who might not otherwise participate*

Each of these components requires planning and coordination across multiple organizations, so developing this type of program requires ample time for thoughtful design led by a formal committee or team.

At a minimum, these design teams typically include representatives of at least one district and one educator preparation program. Members may include:

- **For districts**, representatives from talent/human resources, advanced academics and communications/marketing. In smaller districts, the superintendent or chief academic officer may participate; in larger districts, senior leadership may not be directly involved as members of the committee, but there should be a plan to build their buy-in, keep them updated and secure their approval as needed. Other key players may include high school principals, high school counselors or teachers currently involved with programming for aspiring educators. Additionally, including student advocates on the team can help ensure the program design is responsive to students' priorities.
- **For educator preparation programs**, the dean or executive leader for the program, lecturers or instructors affiliated with courses high school participants may take as dual credit, a community partnerships liaison and representatives from the admissions/recruitment department. Again, consider including student advocates who can share their perspectives and experiences to inform program design.

As the work begins to take shape, additional organizations can be invited into the committee, including:

- ▶ *Wraparound support providers who can contribute to the quality and sustainability of the program*
- ▶ *A local community college, which may be able to offer relevant coursework in conjunction with the educator preparation program*
- ▶ *A regional workforce board, which can provide data on the local labor market and access to applicable workforce funding streams*
- ▶ *A community foundation or other local funder*
- ▶ *Local organizations that offer programming for youth and young adults (e.g., public library, children’s museum, out of school learning providers, early childhood education programs), which may provide work-based learning experiences for program participants*

Given the complexity of the work, most partnerships benefit from a designated full-time staff member to coordinate and oversee development of the program and/or technical assistance and project management support from a third party provider. For example, [Education First](#) has facilitated the design process for high school to teaching programs such as Teach Chicago Tomorrow, the [Arkansas Department of Education](#) provides technical assistance to organizations establishing Arkansas Teacher Residencies, and [New Schools for New Orleans](#) brokers partnerships between districts, charters and educator preparation providers. ***The capacity of a full-time staff member or third-party organization to focus their undivided attention on the success of the work can make the difference between a good idea and a good program.***



TOOLS FOR GATHERING PARTNERS FOR A DESIGN TEAM:

- [Early College Teacher Partner RFP Template](#)
- [Early College Teacher Partner Selection Rubric](#)



Latinx Education Collaborative champions students traditionally excluded from the teacher pipeline

The Latinx Education Collaborative (LEC) is a community-based organization in Kansas City, MO that recruits and supports Latinx educators across the region at all points in the teacher pipeline. A key goal for the organization is to certify and place 50 new Latinx educators in Kansas City schools by 2027. This work begins in local high schools, where they serve as an essential partner for future educator programs. LEC staff engage with students to encourage them to consider teaching careers, advise them on postsecondary plans, and offer coaching and sustained connections with these students as they make their way through educator preparation programs. LEC also offers a future educator program that exposes high school students to a variety of teaching experiences over the course of a week so they gain understanding of the daily work of teaching and see Latinx educators in action.

For LEC, creating a sense of “home” for Latinx educators—spaces where they are valued and loved—is key. “The first thing we got good at was building community and being really community-driven in what we are offering. [Kansas City is] not a diverse teacher workforce so a lot of our students don’t believe teaching is for them,” said Susana Elizarraraz, Deputy Director.

The LEC team also recognizes that barriers to entry for Latinx students arise long before it’s time for them to complete certification and apply for teaching jobs. According to Elizarraraz, future educator programs that offer college coursework to high school students are relatively new to the community; many Latinx students are not yet aware of the opportunities available at their school and aren’t proactively referred to them. Even students who participate and excel in these programs face a significant affordability gap as they contemplate higher education. And of those who do enroll in college following high school, 50 percent leave after their first year. LEC works to support students at each of these critical points by recruiting them into programs for future educators, helping them navigate financial aid challenges and serving as coaches and champions for them as they make their way through college.

Although LEC is a relatively new organization, their relentless advocacy for Latinx students and educators is beginning to pay off. Elizarraraz shared, “We are really close to seeing kids who did this be ready to come back [as teachers].”

ORGANIZE THE TEAM

Structure and routine are essential for organizing and sustaining multi-institution partnerships to design complex programs. Many partnerships benefit from executing a high-level memorandum of understanding (MOU) early on to formalize each institution’s commitment to co-designing the program. This document identifies the partners, articulates the goals for the program, and outlines the major roles, responsibilities and financial commitments of each partner in the design process. It can be supplemented by a more detailed MOU later on, after the full details of the program have been fleshed out.

Other key structures to guide the design team include a purpose statement to explain the group’s charge; a scope and sequence for the work they will undertake together; a set of norms to which group members will commit; and an equity framework outlining the principles and activities to which the team will commit to ensure the design process centers the experiences and needs of stakeholders who have traditionally been marginalized. The team should agree on logistical considerations, as well, including:

- ▶ *Who will be responsible for calling and scheduling meetings?*
- ▶ *Where will shared documents be saved?*
- ▶ *How will a record of the group’s discussions and decisions be kept and shared?*
- ▶ *What will be the process for ensuring group members follow up on assigned tasks?*

It may be helpful to form small working groups that meet regularly to focus on specific workstreams, with the larger design committee meeting to coordinate across workstreams and provide general oversight and feedback on the work.

Partners may feel tempted to bypass this step in the excitement to begin the work, but here, as is often the case with complex, adaptive tasks, **the team must go slow to go fast**. Taking the time to establish structures and routines will ensure partners can efficiently and effectively achieve the program’s goals.



TOOLS FOR ESTABLISHING DESIGN TEAM STRUCTURES:

- [*University of St. Thomas—Saint Paul Public Schools High School to Teaching Steering Committee Overview*](#)
- [*Memorandum of Understanding Template—District/Educator Preparation Program Partnership*](#)
- [*Memorandum of Understanding Template— School/Community-Based Organization Partnership*](#)
- [*University of St. Thomas—Saint Paul Public Schools Design Principles and Agreements*](#)
- [*Sample Equity Framework—Teacher Preparation Strategy Development*](#)



Brazos Valley Teach leverages community partnerships to grow rural educators

The Brazos Valley in East Central Texas may not have the same resources as more urban areas of the state, but that hasn't stopped local education leaders from building a high-quality educator pathway for the region's students. Texas A&M University partnered with Blinn College and Bryan, Caldwell and Hearne Independent School Districts to create ***Brazos Valley Teach*** (BVTeach), which provides opportunities for students to learn about careers in education beginning in seventh grade, complete college-level coursework, gain paid work-based learning experiences in the field and receive support to enter and complete an educator preparation program.

A key to the program's success has been leaders' willingness to pitch a big tent for partners across sectors and communities to participate in the work. BVTeach collaborates closely with district superintendents to select coursework and work-based learning appropriate to their unique context. "I compare it to my teaching days," said Amy Jurica, Co-Executive Director for the program. "You're tasked with meeting the student's needs, and that's exactly what is happening with school districts. They're all in different places, and we are just meeting their needs where they are." Blinn College, the region's community college, plays a critical role in this work as well, offering flexible dual credit options for students and working to ensure coursework will apply to education degrees at both Blinn and Texas A&M.

Additional partners currently include a local Boys & Girls Club, where participants engage in paid externships, and the local workforce board, which helps fund those externships. Start-up funds for the program were provided by Greater Texas Foundation, a statewide funder based in the community and focused on postsecondary access and success. The initiative is informed and supported by an advisory board that includes representatives from Texas A&M, Blinn, each participating school district, school counselors, teachers and a representative of the regional education service center.

Together, this broad array of local organizations has joined to create an incredible opportunity for students that no one partner could have provided on their own.



DESIGN STAGE



DESIGN STAGE

By the end of the Initiation Stage, a coalition of partners has formed a commitment to create a high-quality educator pathway together. Members have a shared understanding of the purpose and vision for the program, and they have established structures for collaboration, including a memorandum of understanding and a cadence for routine communication.

During the Design Stage, the team builds the essential elements of the pathway: 1) core coursework and work-based learning; 2) supports for students at each point along the pathway; 3) a multi-pronged recruitment plan tailored to the interests and needs of the target population; 4) an evaluation plan to inform continuous improvement and gauge the impacts of the program; and 5) a strategy for sustainably funding the program.

BUILD THE PROGRAM CORE

At the heart of a high-quality educator pathway is an articulated sequence of education courses that culminates in, or sets students on the path to completing, a degree and a teaching credential. Additionally, New America names “paid work-based experience under the guidance of an effective mentor teacher that aligns with educator preparation coursework” as one of the five core components of a high-quality grow your own educator pathway.¹⁹ These experiences allow students to become oriented to the work of educators, build foundational skills for teaching children and earn while they learn. ***Since coursework and work-based learning form the core of the model, designers should focus on developing them early on in the planning process.***

Coursework and instruction

Often partners find they can build on an existing foundation of career and technical education (CTE) or dual enrollment courses that are already offered on a high school campus. In these cases, the task is to determine equivalent courses the partner institution can provide, identify any additional courses that can be offered and ensure courses students complete in high school can be transferred and applied to an education degree at the partner institution of higher education. If the district does not already offer CTE or dual credit courses in the field of education, it may be helpful to start by introducing one course at a time and building from there.

When determining which courses to offer and where, it is important to consult state policy as well as the partner institution to understand what qualifications course instructors need to ensure the district can provide enough qualified instructors to offer the courses. In some contexts, it may also be possible for students to complete their coursework on campus at the partner institution, with college faculty providing the instruction.

¹⁹ New America. (2022). Essential Elements for High-Quality Grow Your Own Educator Programs. https://d1y8sb8igg2f8e.cloudfront.net/documents/Essential_Elements_for_High-Quality_Grow_Your_Own_Educator_Programs.pdf

Work-based learning

Once the core coursework for the pathway has been determined, program designers should take stock of available opportunities for participants to engage with children in conjunction with their coursework. These could include tutoring and assisting in local elementary and middle schools; working in community-based organizations such as children’s museums or libraries; and serving in out-of-school programs and camps.

High school educator programs across the country have found creative ways to offer these experiences with pay:

- Cherry Creek School District’s Future Educator Pathway in Colorado is a youth apprenticeship program that allows high school juniors and seniors to work in the district as paraprofessionals, earning a salary and retirement benefits while earning credit toward a teaching degree at the University of Colorado-Denver.²⁰
- Brazos Valley Teach uses a combination of Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds and private donations to compensate students to work after school at a local Boys & Girls Club.²¹
- The Teaching and Learning Institute in Rochester, NY allows students to participate in field observations in elementary schools beginning as freshmen, with increasing responsibility every year. During their senior year, participants complete 80-hour paid internships as teachers’ assistants.²²

Although the core of a high-quality educator pathway for high school students always includes credit-bearing coursework that applies to an education credential and meaningful, paid work-based learning, the methods for building the core vary widely. ***Establishing these pathways offers partners the opportunity to co-design a truly unique experience that leverages community assets for the benefit of students.***



TOOLS FOR BUILDING THE PROGRAM CORE:

- [Brazos Valley Teach Program of Study](#)
- [Rochester Teaching & Learning Institute Course Overview](#)
- [Teach Chicago Tomorrow Program Models](#)
- [Arkansas Pre-Educator Pathway Program Overview](#)

²⁰ Osborne, N. (2021). [Diversifying the Teacher Workforce Through Early Pathways](#). Education Strategy Group.

For additional coverage of Cherry Creek’s youth apprenticeship program for aspiring educators, see Lehrer-Small, A. (2021) [Colorado District Uses High School Apprentices to Grow Its Own More Diverse Teacher Workforce](#). The74.

²¹ Interview with Education First, March 21, 2023.

²² Friends of the Teaching and Learning Institute. 2015. The Teaching and Learning Institute. <http://www.friendsoftli.org/theinstitute>



Teach Chicago Tomorrow's design supports future educators at each step of their journey into the classroom

As a large urban district, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has historically experienced teacher shortages and an educator workforce of which does not mirror the race and ethnicity of Chicago students. Recognizing that these challenges were negatively impacting student achievement, CPS developed a portfolio of pathways, known as [Teach Chicago](#), for local community members and CPS employees to enter the teaching profession. In 2020, CPS expanded access to high school students with the launch of [Teach Chicago Tomorrow](#) (TCT).

TCT provides high school students with free wraparound academic, social and financial supports while they complete introductory and educator preparation coursework at a local two-year institution. Upon completion of the program, participants can transfer to other area colleges to earn their bachelor's degrees and become licensed classroom teachers.

The program places students in cohorts with their peers and provides them with opportunities to build relationships with each other so they feel a sense of belonging in the program and the profession. Students also are matched with mentor teachers to guide them throughout the program. Participants receive a curriculum map that outlines the courses they will need to take to complete their degree and access to an academic advisor at City Colleges to ensure they complete a prescribed pathway as part of the program. CPS also offers financial support to assist with a range of expenses, including textbooks, laptops, school supplies, as well as an emergency aid program to ensure unexpected expenses don't derail students as they pursue their degree.

Felicia Butts, Director of Teacher Pathways for CPS, says the structure of the design team has been critical to the program's success, noting the team includes committees focused on logistics and planning, recruitment and admissions, data and legal, student support and retention. The recruitment and admissions committee has been particularly integral to ensuring students have positive experiences with the program, as they are the first point of contact with the student.

A learning Butts shares is, "Before you recruit, the thing should be ready to recruit them into. You have to have the overarching structure in place before students are enrolled." She recommends using data-informed strategies for reaching students and "build[ing] a curriculum map and articulation agreement before you start" to ensure smooth transitions and a positive student experience.

ATTEND TO TRANSITION POINTS

Offering high school students college-level coursework and work-based learning is a strong start, but for students to fully complete the pathway to and through college and into the teaching profession, they will need continued guidance at each point along that path.

During the high school portion of the program, academic support is crucial. Offering a comprehensive orientation to the dual credit experience, timely formative feedback, tutoring, college advising and exam preparation support can build students' capacity and confidence to take on college-level coursework. If the school district already offers these supports, the design committee's task is to engage counselors and other key staff when developing the educator pathway to coordinate services for program participants, including strong advising on financial aid to ensure students can complete their education degrees affordably. It is important to identify student needs early on and incorporate them into the fundraising plan for the program.

Even after students complete high school, their journey to becoming teachers is far from over. According to a study by the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University, anywhere from 10 to 40 percent of high school students intend to enroll in college but fail to do so in the fall after graduation; these rates of "summer melt" tend to be higher for students from low- and moderate-income families.²³ Among students who do enroll in college full time, about 13 percent are no longer enrolled at any institution of higher education by the end of their second year, and within six years, 25 percent have left college without completing a credential.²⁴

Sustained academic, social and financial supports throughout the postsecondary experience are critical to keep students connected. Felicia Butts of Chicago Public Schools said in addition to maintaining low out-of-pocket costs for participants, a key goal of Teach Chicago Tomorrow (TCT) is to ensure students feel communal support through their cohort-style model: "One of the things that we found really common is that students who are coming into the program sometimes feel isolated as a future teacher. They start experiencing that isolation early because they may be one of the only students, or may be the only student coming from their school, who's going into a teacher preparation program. And so it helps them to feel connected."

²³ Castleman, B., Page, L. and Snowdon, A. (n.d.) Summer Melt Handbook: A Guide to Investigating and Responding to Summer Melt. Center for Education Policy Research, Harvard University. <https://sdp.cepr.harvard.edu/summer-melt-tools>.

²⁴ National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2023). Yearly Success and Progress Rates: Fall 2016 Beginning Cohort. <https://nscresearchcenter.org/yearly-success-and-progress-rates/>.

The transition from college to the educator labor market is critical, as well. Although publicly available data on this portion of the pipeline is limited, anecdotal evidence suggests some pre-service teachers complete their education degrees but decide not to seek employment as teachers. And, of those who do, the percentage who switch schools, leave the profession or exit the workforce entirely from year to year is significant, particularly in districts that serve high numbers of students of color and students experiencing poverty.²⁵

Leaders designing high-quality pathways for high school students to become educators should consider the following:

- ▶ *What academic supports will be provided to help students complete their coursework and other program requirements successfully?*
- ▶ *How will students be supported in applying for and enrolling in institutions of higher education?*
- ▶ *How will students be supported in navigating the financial aid process and securing the resources they need to complete college?*
- ▶ *How will partners collaborate to guard against summer melt?*
- ▶ *What social, academic and professional networks and supports will students be welcomed into when they arrive on campus?*
- ▶ *How will students be encouraged and incentivized to teach in their home district throughout the program?*
- ▶ *How will the district's recruitment and hiring process for program participants work?*
- ▶ *How will program alumni continue to be supported as they become classroom teachers of record?*



TOOLS FOR SUPPORTING STUDENTS THROUGH KEY TRANSITIONS:

- *Teach Chicago Tomorrow Benefits and Supports*
- *Teach Chicago Tomorrow Student Support Calendar*

PREPARE FOR RECRUITMENT

When building a pathway to and through higher education for high school students, it's not enough to simply offer the pathway. **Program designers must ensure the pathway is attractive and accessible to a wide range of students by developing a strong recruitment plan that centers around a clear value proposition for students and starts in middle school.**

²⁵ For example, a recent analysis of Washington teacher workforce data indicates attrition and mobility combined contributed to a statewide turnover rate of 14.5% after the 2019-20 school year. The campus-level turnover rate ranged from approximately 5% to 70%, with 15% of the variation in these rates explained by the urbanicity of the school, the percent of students in the school receiving free or reduced price lunch and the percent of underrepresented minority students. See, e.g., Aldeman, C., Goldhaber, D., Theobald, R. (2021). Examining the Dimensions of Teacher Turnover. (CALDER Flash Brief No. 24-0421). National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED615032.pdf>.

Keep in mind that ***although the purpose and benefits of the program may seem obvious to those who are designing it, students and families may not see it the same way.*** They may be skeptical about whether teaching is a profession worth entering or completing an education credential is realistic and affordable for them. Program designers must take the time to get to know target audiences, understand their perceptions and co-develop messaging they will find effective. For example, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education conducted in-depth focus groups and surveys on Indianans' perceptions of higher education and learned messages that emphasize many paths, individualism and choice are more effective than those that focus strictly on the importance of college completion.²⁶

In many communities, students and families begin making decisions about their high school, college and career journey in grades 7–8, and their choices about coursework in early high school affect what options will be available to them later. Student organizations that offer middle school students the opportunity to explore teaching as a career, such as ***Educators Rising*** and the ***Texas Association of Future Educators***, are one valuable tool to increase the likelihood that students will include a high school to teaching pathway in their plans.

It's also critical for school counselors to be informed about the educator pathway—its existence, its structure, its requirements and its benefits—so they can encourage students to seek out this opportunity and prepare themselves for it. Counselor engagement has been key to recruitment for Brazos Valley Teach. “One key thing we discovered early on is we really have to make sure we have the counselors as a very important part of working with the high school students because they have to know this programming before they can offer it to students,” shared Amy Jurica, Outreach Manager for the Texas A&M College of Education and Human Development, which leads the program. “So [we invest time in] educating the counselors on it and creating buy-in [so they understand that our program] isn't just a little bitty line in the CTE catalog!”

The recruitment plan for the program should include multiple avenues for reaching potential participants (e.g., flyers, social media, email blasts) and offer clear, consistent messaging about the program, along with a website and a single point of contact where interested students can find more information.²⁷ The recruiting strategy for the program also should acknowledge and honor the diverse identities and experiences prospective candidates bring with them. For example, NYC Men Teach program leaders host community-building events such as poetry slams, open mic nights and film screenings to build relationships with students and encourage them to consider entering the education profession.²⁸

²⁶ Indiana Commission for Higher Education. (2022). Indiana's Education Value Movement: Research Findings and Messaging Strategy. <https://www.in.gov/che/files/2022-Indiana-Ed-Value-Message-Briefing.pdf>.

²⁷ Entrekin, K. (2022). Candidate Recruitment and Retention Strategies for Grow Your Own Educator Programs. New America. <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/grow-your-own-toolkit/candidates>.

²⁸ Klein, A. and Walsh, M. (2023). Want to Recruit Male Teachers of Color? Look to This New York City Leader. EdWeek. February 6. <https://www.edweek.org/leaders/2023/want-to-recruit-male-teachers-of-color-look-to-this-new-york-city-leader>.



No matter what the recruitment plan entails, it should include intentional structures for ensuring students receive personalized encouragement and guidance from key influencers. For example, future educator Torrey McClain was motivated to enter her local high school to teaching pathway, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District and Chadron State College Academic Loan Forgiveness Program for Aspiring Teachers, by her mother, who encouraged her to consider teaching and to take advantage of leadership development opportunities that came her way; her high school principal, who expressed support for her and provided her with release time to participate in external events for future educators; her Educators Rising teacher, who told her about an information session for the program and encouraged her to attend; and the dean of the college of education where she will complete her degree, who reached out to her personally to persuade her to join. Program designers should plan to engage stakeholders like these in recruitment because they can have a powerful, positive influence on students' decisions to enter the profession.



TOOLS FOR RECRUITMENT:

- [*Teach Chicago Tomorrow Recruitment Plan*](#)
- [*Brazos Valley Teach Website*](#)
- [*Teach Chicago Tomorrow Informational Deck*](#)

DESIGN A PROGRAM BUDGET AND FUNDING STRATEGY

Once the essential components of the program are clear, the design committee can create a full program budget and identify funding sources to fill gaps not covered with existing resources.

In addition to the costs of delivering dual credit, wraparound supports and work-based learning during the high school years, ***program designers must consider the out-of-pocket expenses students and their families may incur when pursuing a four-year education degree after high school.*** Just 24 percent of public four-year colleges are affordable for the average Pell Grant recipient, with students facing an average of \$2,627 in unmet financial need each year.²⁹ This need compounds over time: in 2020–21, 51 percent of bachelor’s degree completers who attended public four-year institutions graduated with federal student loan debt averaging \$21,400 per borrower.³⁰ These costs can pose a profound barrier to students from low- to moderate-income families at every point along the pipeline: they may deter some students from ever pursuing a degree, cause others to drop out partway through college, or opt out of the education profession due to concerns about managing student debt on a teacher’s salary.

High-quality educator pathways reduce the affordability gap to make education careers accessible for a greater range of students. For example, future educator Torrey McClain decided to join the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District and Chadron State College Academic Loan Forgiveness Program for Aspiring Teachers because it provides an affordable pathway to an education degree and a guaranteed teaching job in her home district: “I’m basically setting myself up ... for the next ten years. And just to have that security blanket is amazing.”

These programs tackle affordability using a range of strategies. Many allow students to complete a significant number of college credits in high school at low or no cost.³¹ Offering scholarships and paid work-based learning experiences throughout the pathway can alleviate students’ out-of-pocket expenses, as well.³² And some districts commit to repaying students’ college costs if they return to teach full-time.³³

Each of these affordability strategies carries a cost for the partners implementing the program. Sustainable educator pathways draw their funding from a combination of sources.³⁴

²⁹ National College Attainment Network. (2022). The Growing Gap: Public Higher Education’s Declining Affordability for Pell Grant Recipients. <https://www.ncan.org/page/Affordability>.

³⁰ College Board. (2022). Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid 2022. <https://research.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/trends-in-college-pricing-student-aid-2022.pdf>.

³¹ See, e.g., CAST Teach High School in San Antonio, which offers students the opportunity to complete dual enrollment courses that are transferable to The University of Texas at San Antonio and earn industry-recognized certificates that qualify them to work as early childhood caregivers and aides.

³² See, e.g., Oklahoma’s Inspired to Teach scholarship program: <https://www.okhighered.org/news-center/teacher-ed-pipeline.shtml>.

³³ See, e.g., Matanuska Susitna School District’s teacher loan forgiveness program: https://www.frontiersman.com/news/mat-su-schools-take-on-teacher-shortage-let-s-grow-our-own-superintendent-says/article_720093c4-19dc-11ed-adbc-5bef9b5cc680.html.

³⁴ Educators Rising. (2023). Grow Your Own: Sustainable Funding for Educator Pathways; Garcia, A. & Silva, E. (2022) [Using Federal Funds for Grow Your Own Educator Programs](#). New America.

Annual budgeting

In addition to re-allocating funds from unfilled vacancies to compensate aspiring teachers as residents, tutors, paraprofessionals or substitutes, K12 districts may elect to use discretionary funds in, e.g., Education & Talent and Human Resources to support the program. Smaller districts with limited funding might consider forming a coalition with neighboring districts to co-fund an initiative. Funding for these pathways can also be included in bond initiatives.

Federal programs

Federal funding streams that can be leveraged to support high-quality educator pathways include:

- ▶ *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), particularly **Title IIA**, which provides formula funding distributed through states to improve teaching quality, and **Title III**, which can be used to support preparation for bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) educators*
- ▶ *Higher Education Authorization Act, which includes under Title II the **Teacher Quality Partnership Grant Program** to improve teacher preparation and professional development*
- ▶ ***Perkins V funds**, which are administered by states to support the completion of credentials with labor market value*
- ▶ *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), particularly **Youth Program funds**, which are distributed through local workforce boards and can be used to provide paid work-based learning experiences to students experiencing poverty*
- ▶ *If the program is structured as a registered apprenticeship, grant funding opportunities from the **US Department of Labor***

Keep in mind that individual participants may be eligible for Federal Student Aid and Public Service Loan Forgiveness, as well. The advising plan for the pathway should ensure students are informed of and assisted in applying for these opportunities to minimize their out-of-pocket costs.

Additional federal programs serve districts and educator preparation providers looking to recruit teachers to serve specific populations (e.g., Indigenous teachers, special education teachers).³⁵

State funding

Some states offer competitive grants to support educator pathways for high school students. These opportunities typically can be found on the website for the state's department of education.³⁶ States also typically provide funding for Career and Technical Education, adult education, workforce development and higher education. Each of these streams will likely include grant and formula funding

³⁵ Garcia, A. & Silva, E. (2022). Using Federal Funds for Grow Your Own Educator Programs. New America; US Department of Education. (2022). Fact Sheet: Sustaining Investments in Teachers Beyond the American Rescue Plan.

³⁶ See also New America's 50-state database of grow your own educator policies and programs: <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/grow-your-own-teachers/a-look-at-the-data/>.

that can be leveraged in support of high school to teaching pathways. Finally, 32 states offer some form of free tuition support, often targeted for low- to moderate-income families, and more than 350 local promise programs offer similar support for students from specific communities.³⁷

Philanthropy and other local stakeholders

Depending on the location of the program, it may be possible to secure grants from community, regional or statewide funders with an interest in strengthening the teacher workforce or improving college access and success. Program designers can also call on their own networks, their boards of trustees, and businesses and other organizations with a large footprint in the local community to provide support.



TOOLS FOR BUDGETING AND SUSTAINABILITY:

- [Arkansas Pre-Educator Pathway Funding Flowchart](#)
- [Teach Chicago Tomorrow Overview of Student Costs](#)



³⁷ Educators Rising. (2023). [Grow Your Own: Sustainable Funding for Educator Pathways](#).



Arkansas invests in high-quality educator pathways for high school students

State legislatures and departments of education can play a powerful role in incenting the growth of high-quality educator pathways for high school students by providing funding, vision and coordination for these efforts. Examples of state-level policies and strategies that support high school to teaching pathways include:

- Dedicated scholarship funding for aspiring teachers
- Coordination of a statewide sequence of stackable credentials, beginning with a certified teaching assistant licensure, culminating in teacher licensure
- Development of robust data systems that allow districts and educator preparation programs to track the movement of students through educator pathways and into the teacher workforce
- Coordination and funding for a pre-educator pathway that utilizes the apprenticeship program
- Easing policy barriers that can make it difficult for students to access dual credit

Arkansas provides a strong example of a coordinated statewide strategy to increase the number of high-quality educator pathways for high school students. The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) offers several alternative routes to licensure for prospective teachers of all backgrounds, including the Arkansas Pre-Educator Pathway. The pathway is a grow your own initiative targeted to current high school students and paraprofessionals. In this model, districts, in partnership with local institutions of higher education, develop a pre-educator program and establish an Educators Rising chapter for aspiring teachers. Participating students engage in a curriculum developed collaboratively between the district and institution of higher education and complete field experiences in education settings and receive concurrent credit that counts toward a degree in education.

ADE recently awarded Certified Teacher Assistant (CTA) credentials to 23 program participants and celebrated its first two CTA high school graduates, both of whom plan to continue pursuing education degrees while working as substitute teachers in their home district. “This program creates opportunities not only for the students who get to jumpstart their pathway to licensure, but also for districts who can use the pre-educator program of study as a long term, sustainable solution to teacher shortages,” said Karli Saracini, Assistant Commissioner for ADE’s Office of Educator Effectiveness and Licensure.

ADE has leveraged both internal and external partnerships to increase access and affordability for students to participate in the pathway, particularly in rural areas of the state, where teacher shortages are most acute. For example, the state’s educator preparation team partnered with their colleagues in the career and technical education division to use federal funding to establish the

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pathway for high school students. This collaboration resulted not only in increased funding for the program, but an agreement to allow flexibility in the program eligibility requirements (e.g., waiving the ACT requirement, utilizing teacher or guidance counselor recommendations)—a shift which more than tripled the number of students participating in the program. Additionally, ADE led a coordinated effort to bring local institutions of higher education into the program. Because of this effort, participating students may be eligible for a state grant to major in education at both two- and four- year institutions. The Arkansas Pre-Educator Pathway recently received approval from the U.S. Department of Labor to utilize a registered apprenticeship model, which allows the state to access federal funding to cover the final two years of tuition for participants and compensate the teachers who serve as their mentors.

The Arkansas Pre-Educator Pathway is stronger because of the time and effort ADE invested in these partnerships. As Edie Stewart, Director of Educator Preparation, advised, “There is no reason not to implement [a high school to teaching pathway] if there is a teacher shortage. Start and start early!” Corraling partners can be difficult, but building relationships is key for a strong pathway.



PLAN FOR EVALUATION

The design process for a high-quality educator pathway for high school students includes development of an evaluation plan that will provide formative feedback to improve the program as well as data on the long-term impacts of the program. During the Initiation Stage, program designers gathered data on the local educator pipeline and established a purpose for a pathway into teaching for high school students. These form the foundation of the evaluation plan, which specifies what data will be collected, by whom, when and for what purposes and audiences.³⁸

It is important to track the program's impact on the home district's teaching workforce, but there are additional short-term and long-term indicators worth measuring, as well.

Data gathered through the evaluation process may include:

- ▶ *Number of high school students who apply to, enroll in and complete the educator pathway*
- ▶ *Number of dual credit hours completed*
- ▶ *Percentage of participants who enroll in, attend and complete a credential from a postsecondary institution*
- ▶ *Percentage of participants who earn a teaching license*
- ▶ *Percentage of participants who enter the field of education—particularly by returning to teach in their home district*

It is important to disaggregate these data by student race/ethnicity, income and other indicators of interest to gauge whether the program is advancing equity.

HOW FUNDERS CAN HELP

Although high-quality grow your own educator programs for high school students must be sustained in the long term through a combination of public funding streams, private funders can play a pivotal role in getting these initiatives up and running. Philanthropic dollars can be used to:

- Fund the research and design phase of a new program
- Help cover start-up costs until the program's long-term funding is in place
- Support a rigorous program evaluation
- Fill gaps left by public funding streams
- Help establish an endowment to support the program

For example, [The Joyce Foundation](#) and [Crown Family Philanthropies](#) provided initial funding to launch Teach Chicago Tomorrow, and [Greater Texas Foundation](#) supported the design and early implementation of Brazos Valley Teach.

Funders can also help connect districts and educator preparation programs with learning networks and technical assistance providers that can offer capacity and expertise in designing and implementing high school to teaching pathways.

³⁸ Motamedi, J.G. (2022). Evaluating Grow Your Own Educator Programs. <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/grow-your-own-toolkit/data-and-evaluation/>

No matter how thoughtfully designed it is, any new program will likely have some wrinkles that need to be ironed out. **An evaluation plan should include not only mechanisms for tracking outcomes, but for monitoring program implementation so leaders can make mid-course corrections in real time.**

Questions that may be particularly important to answer in the early days of the program include:

- ▶ *Is the program attracting students from the target population in sufficient numbers?*
- ▶ *How are students doing academically? How are they experiencing the program overall? Are there any pain points that need to be addressed?*
- ▶ *Are work-based learning experiences providing students with meaningful opportunities to apply learning from their coursework and develop an understanding of the day-to-day work of teaching?*
- ▶ *Do teachers, counselors and other key personnel feel informed, engaged and supported so they can play their respective roles in the program?*

Partners should plan to review this formative feedback routinely so they can adjust program design and delivery as needed.



TOOLS FOR EVALUATION:

- [Sample Evaluation Plan](#) or Program Report





IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

At the conclusion of the Design Stage, all the elements for a high-quality high school to teaching pathway are in place: a structured partnership, a coherent sequence of coursework and work-based learning, and robust supports for students throughout their time in the program. Program designers also have developed plans for recruiting students, sustaining funding and evaluating the program.

During the Implementation Stage, partners execute the plans they have made and the pathway program begins in earnest. The work doesn't end when the first students enroll in coursework, though. To keep the program growing and thriving for the long term, program leaders must: 1) build and sustain interest in the program; 2) monitor and make mid-course corrections; 3) maintain healthy partnerships; and 4) stay invested for the long haul.

BUILD AND SUSTAIN INTEREST IN THE PROGRAM

Although the design work may begin with a small set of core partners, ***a strong educator pathway will engage a wide variety of stakeholders.*** These include board members and senior leaders for the school district and educator preparation provider, whose continued support is needed to sustain resources for the program; younger students who may one day participate in the program, along with their families; principals, counselors and teachers who work directly with program participants; local organizations that may provide participants with work-based learning experiences, mentoring, or financial support; funders and business leaders who may have an interest in supporting the program; and, in time, alumni who can represent and advocate for the program.

Program leaders might mark the launch of the new educator pathway with a press release or signing ceremony to generate awareness of the program. Interest and support can be sustained through a regular cadence of earned media, social media, email marketing, presentations, events and one-on-one conversations with key stakeholders.



TOOLS FOR BUILDING AND SUSTAINING INTEREST:

- [Bank Street Guide to Teacher Pathway Communications](#)
- [New America Guide to Candidate Recruitment Strategies](#)
- [Local Media Coverage of Teach Chicago Tomorrow Program Launch \(WTTW\)](#)
- [Teach Chicago Tomorrow Student Spotlight Video](#)



New Schools for New Orleans helps high school to teaching partnerships thrive

New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO) has a simple mission: to deliver on the promise of excellent public schools for every child in New Orleans. Their work spans several priorities, including diversifying and strengthening the local teacher pipeline. NSNO currently supports three high schools participating in Louisiana's [*Pre-Educator Pathway Initiative*](#), with a goal of producing at least 351 aspiring teachers by 2025.

NSNO offers a prime example of the value a third party can bring to partnerships between school districts and institutions of higher education. The organization serves as a liaison between high school program directors, instructors and their educator preparation partners, including taking the lead on developing memoranda of understanding with higher education partners to ensure the coursework high school students take will be applied to a degree in the future. NSNO provides on-the-ground support for school leaders and instructors to ensure they have capacity to implement pre-service educator coursework and experiences with fidelity. And they champion high school students by helping schools recruit them into pre-educator programs, raising funds to provide paid work-based learning and other opportunities, and mentoring participants to and through college.

“Our goal is to lengthen and widen the runway into this profession as much as possible,” said Taylor Williams, Director of Talent for NSNO. “There are many barriers that may convince someone to not enter into this profession. We want to knock as many of these barriers down for our students and staff, so they can focus on what’s most important.”

MAINTAIN A HEALTHY PARTNERSHIP

Although the labor-intensive Design Stage has concluded, maintaining strong relationships with program partners will require time and effort. As time goes on, turnover will occur, competing priorities will appear and the community context will change. It’s important for partners to continue meeting routinely to reflect on program data, troubleshoot challenges, learn together and set new goals for the future. See our Partnering on Prep toolkit for more recommendations for maintaining healthy partnerships.

STAY INVESTED FOR THE LONG HAUL

It takes time to build a high-quality educator pathway for high school students—and even once the program is built, the time horizon for students to earn their teaching credentials and enter the

workforce will be several years more. Program leaders can collect data on and celebrate near-term impacts along the way to keep interest and investment high among partners, senior leadership, funders, families and students.

“It teaches us patience, understanding and to put a good mindset behind everything. It pushes you to know you’re about to go to the real world and get into your real career, and it gives you a look into our future and adulthood.”

—Destinee Jolly, Warren Easton Charter High School

“People are searching high and low for jobs that don’t have anything to do with their degree, but I have a job in something I want to do: going back to New Orleans and becoming a teacher.”

—Kierra Daniels, KIPP Alumni Teaching Force

Although it takes several years for participants to complete the journey from high school student to teacher, the impacts of high-quality educator pathways on the students who participate in them—and the young people whose lives they will touch—are worth the wait.





Starting Small

This toolkit offers a process for designing a high-quality program that offers a complete pathway for high school students to earn a teaching degree and license, then enter the profession. This is complex work that takes time. If the prospect of designing a full pathway feels out of reach right now, consider these strategies for starting small.

- Start a local chapter for an aspiring educators affinity group. For example, the minimum requirement for an ***Educators Rising*** chapter is one teacher to sponsor the club, one student and \$10 in annual dues. Membership in Educators Rising gives students access to a network of other aspiring educators at the middle school, high school and collegiate levels and can open the door to a range of professional learning opportunities.
- Make a purposeful, coordinated effort to identify students with strong potential and encourage them to consider becoming teachers. For example, ***Haines City High School principal Adam Lane*** offers his students experience as aides while they're in high school, recruits them to serve as paid substitutes while they pursue college and gives them top priority when hiring for full-time positions.
- ***Take advantage of what's available on campus*** to provide students with exposure to the teaching profession. For example, can students with an interest in teaching join in some of the professional learning sessions offered to current teachers? Can they shadow teachers? Are there passionate teachers on campus who can serve as mentors or teach an introductory education course?

These no- and low-cost strategies can generate momentum and buy-in to develop a more robust educator pathway later on.

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Organization	Name	Title
Arkansas Department of Education	Edie Stewart	Director of Teacher Preparation Programs
Arkansas Department of Education	Karli Saracini	Assistant Commissioner, Office of Educator Effectiveness and Licensure
Chicago Public Schools	Felicia Butts	Director of Teacher Pathways
Educators Rising	Torrey McClain	National Student President
Latinx Educator Collaborative	Susana Elizarraraz	Deputy Director
New Schools for New Orleans	Alex Jarrell Taylor Williams	Chief Innovation Officer Director of Talent
PDK International	Albert Chen	Acting CEO
Texas A&M University	Amy Jurica & Janice Meyer	Co-Executive Directors, Brazos Valley Teach

TO, THROUGH AND TEACHING TOOLBOX

INITIATION STAGE	
Gather and analyze data	
Sample educator pipeline reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Carolina Department of Public Instruction <i>Educator Preparation Program Dashboard</i> • Louisiana Department of Education <i>Educator Workforce Snapshots</i> • Chicago Public Schools <i>educator pipeline data visualizations</i> • Indianapolis Public Schools <i>educator preparation program reports</i>
High school student focus group protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education First <i>High School Student Focus Group on Pre-Educator Pathways</i>
Set a vision for the high school to teaching pathway	
Sample vision and mission statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sample high-level vision</i> for a high-quality educator pathway for high school students • Teach Chicago Tomorrow <i>mission and vision statements</i>
Gather partners to form a design team	
Educator preparation partner selection tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Early College Teacher Partner Selection Rubric</i>
Organize the team	
Sample design team structure and process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPP-District High School to Teaching <i>steering committee overview</i>
MOU templates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Memorandum of Understanding Template</i>—District/Educator Preparation Program Partnership • <i>Memorandum of Understanding Template</i>—District/Educator Preparation Program Partnership for Early College Pathway • <i>Memorandum of Understanding Template</i>—School/Community-Based Organization Partnership
Tools for centering equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of St. Thomas—Saint Paul Public Schools <i>design principles and agreements</i> • <i>Sample Equity Framework</i>—Teacher Preparation Strategy Development

DESIGN STAGE

Build the program core

Sample course sequences and program models

- Brazos Valley Teach [program of study](#)
- Rochester Teaching & Learning Institute [course overview](#)
- Teach Chicago Tomorrow [program models](#)
- Arkansas Pre-Educator Pathway [program overview](#)

Attend to transition points

Sample student support plan

- Teach Chicago Tomorrow [benefits and supports](#)
- Teach Chicago Tomorrow [student support calendar](#)

Prepare for recruitment

Sample recruitment plan

- Teach Chicago Tomorrow [recruitment plan](#)

Sample recruiting materials

- Brazos Valley Teach [website](#)
- Teach Chicago Tomorrow [informational deck](#)

Design a program budget and funding strategy

Sample funding plans

- Arkansas Pre-Educator Pathway [funding flowchart](#)
- Teach Chicago Tomorrow [overview of student costs](#)

Plan for evaluation

Sample evaluation plan

- US PREP [Sample Evaluation Plan](#) with Framework

IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

Build and sustain interest in the program

Marketing and communications guides

- [Bank Street guide to teacher pathway communications](#)
- [New America guide to candidate recruitment strategies](#)

Sample program publicity

- [Local media coverage](#) of Teach Chicago Tomorrow program launch (WTTW)
- Teach Chicago Tomorrow [student spotlight video](#)

Maintain a healthy partnership

Partnership guide

- [Education First toolkit for educator preparation partnerships](#)

Stay invested for the long haul