

# Teacher Apprenticeship in North Carolina

Exploring In-Classroom Preparation for the Next Generation of Teachers

A Policy Brief by BEST NC



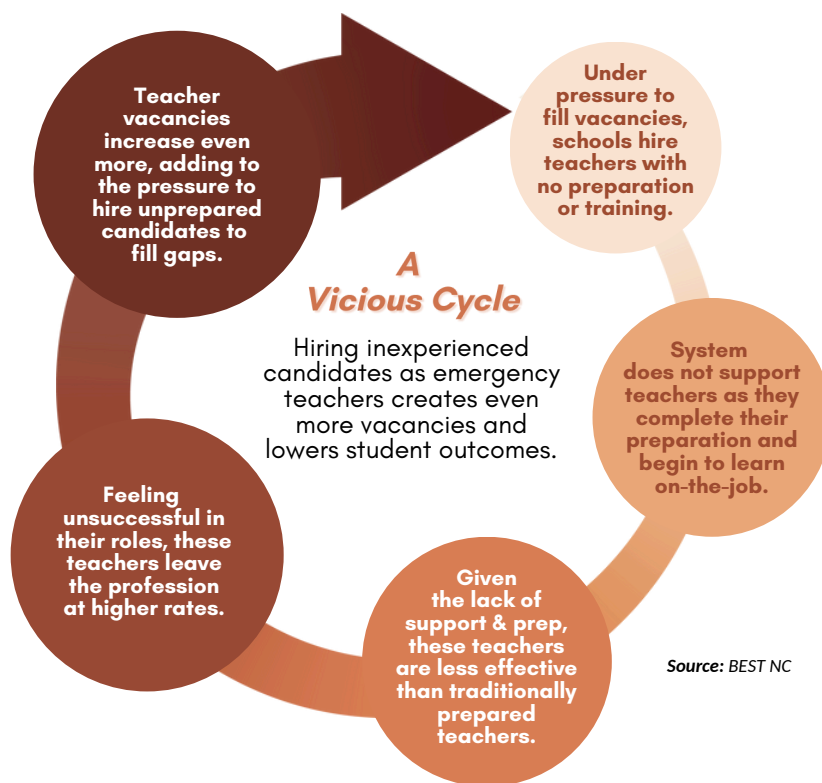
## Executive Summary

North Carolina's ability to provide high-quality education hinges on a teacher pipeline that recruits and retains high-quality teacher candidates. Unfortunately, the state faces several teacher workforce challenges making it difficult to develop and support a sustainable teacher pipeline. Teacher attrition and persistent vacancies contribute to a "vicious cycle," where underprepared teachers are hired to fill vacancies, and when they leave, unprepared teachers are hired as replacements, leaving students without consistent, high-quality educators (see page 1 of full report).

### The Issue

North Carolina's teacher pipeline faces serious challenges, with higher-than-normal levels of teacher attrition and persistent teacher vacancies. These challenges include:

- **High Attrition:** Teacher turnover reached 14.4% in 2023-24, with 26% of starting teachers leaving after their first year (see page 1 of full report).
- **Persistent Vacancies:** 6,000+ vacancies in 2022-23, particularly in hard-to-staff subjects like math and special education, disproportionately affect low-wealth districts (see page 1 of full report).
- **Underprepared Teachers:** 41% of new teachers in 2022-23 had no formal training or classroom experience before starting, leading to higher turnover and lower student achievement (see page 2 of full report).



## Developing a Statewide Teacher Apprenticeship Program in North Carolina

Teacher apprenticeship programs offer a sustainable solution to address teacher shortages, improve preparation, and enhance retention. A registered teacher apprenticeship pilot program with a plan to scale statewide will enable North Carolina to support aspiring teachers through a structured pathway that provides hands-on training and mentorship to gain real-world experience ensuring they are well-prepared for the challenges of the classroom (see page 17 of full report).

With a goal to establish 5,000+ positions in the next ten years, North Carolina's teacher apprenticeship model is unique from other states (see page 11 of full report). In addition to its statewide scale, it is designed to strategically align Teacher Apprenticeship with a sustainable and rewarding career pathway for all teachers.

In 2022-23

# 41%

of new North Carolina teachers had no formal teacher preparation or in-class experience before entering the classroom as the teacher of record.

Source: NC DPI (Data Request)

## Investing in teacher apprenticeships strengthens the overall education system by fostering a dedicated and skilled teacher workforce committed to long-term student success.

### Recruiting High-Potential Candidates

Teacher apprenticeship should target **three** primary candidate groups (see page 11 of full report):

- **College graduates** entering the profession without preparation or experience (Permit-to-Teach, Emergency, and Residency license candidates);
- **Teacher assistants and classified staff** seeking affordable pathways to licensure; and
- Traditional teacher candidates requiring **paid, extended student teaching**.

### Key Components of Teacher Apprenticeship

There are **seven** components of a successful teacher apprenticeship program including (see page 5 of full report for full list):

- **Paid apprenticeships:** Base salaries supplemented by progressive pay as apprentices demonstrate competency.
- **Mentorship:** Apprentices work under highly effective mentor teachers who receive training and stipends for their role.
- **Integrated education:** Coursework aligned with apprentices' job responsibilities, reducing costs and barriers to licensure.

### Expected Impact of Teacher Apprenticeship

Based on research of best practices, an investment in a statewide teacher apprenticeship program would result in (see pages 1-4 of full report):

- **A reduced reliance on unprepared candidates** to fill vacancies as the teacher of record, which currently results in underprepared teachers filling vacancies for 41% of all new teaching positions;
- **Improved teacher retention** by providing comprehensive training and support, creating a more sustainable workforce with better student outcomes; and
- **An increased number of well-prepared, diverse teachers** in high-need subjects and schools.

## Recommendations *(See Pages 13-21 in Full Report)*



### Phase I: Competitive Pilots



1. Establish a Competitive Grants Pilot Program that awards grants to school districts to launch Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Programs.
2. NC DPI should act as the Sponsor and Technical Assistance Provider.
3. School districts, selected through a Competitive Grants Process, should act as Registered Apprenticeship Program Employers.

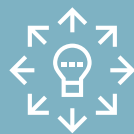


4. Require a rigorous independent evaluation of the Apprenticeship Pilots.
5. Prioritize Teacher Assistant and alternative entry teacher candidates for Teacher Apprentice positions.
6. Give priority to districts implementing Advanced Teaching Roles.



7. Identify strategies to ensure district Human Resource Directors place alternative entry candidates into Teacher Apprentice positions Instead of Emergency License and Permit to Teach roles.
8. Provide school districts with technical assistance to braid state and federal funding streams.
9. Incentivize EPPs to design programs that support teacher apprenticeship and remove policy barriers.

### Phase II: Statewide Implementation



North Carolina should utilize learnings from the teacher apprenticeship pilot program to inform how to scale the program statewide. As with any innovation, expansion will require patience, persistence, and a thoughtful initiative to ensure all students and teachers can benefit.

Scan  
QR Code  
for Access  
to Full Brief

