

A Paid Pathway to Prepared Teachers

TeachReadyNC addresses the challenges created by the growing pipeline of alternatively licensed teachers: college-educated professionals who are interested in becoming a teacher but have no required traditional teacher preparation or classroom experience. It is designed to disrupt the costly cycle of teacher turnover, while giving students access to more experienced, more effective teachers.

The Problem

- In 2025, 44% of new teachers entered through alternative licensure (emergency or permit-to-teach), doubling the rate from just ten years prior.
- Alternatively licensed candidates enter classrooms as teachers of record without any required training, classroom experience, or enrollment in an Educator Preparation Program (EPP).
- Furthermore, 47% of alternatively licensed teachers never earn full licensure, leaving students with teachers who were never fully ready to teach before they ultimately left the profession.
- Research shows that two consecutive years of exposure to unprepared instruction can have near-irreversible consequences for a child's academic future.

Who Is Eligible?

TeachReadyNC creates an apprenticeship pathway for college-educated professionals who are eager to enter the teaching profession but do not have adequate formal training or experience, as an alternative to Permit-to-Teach or Emergency Licenses.

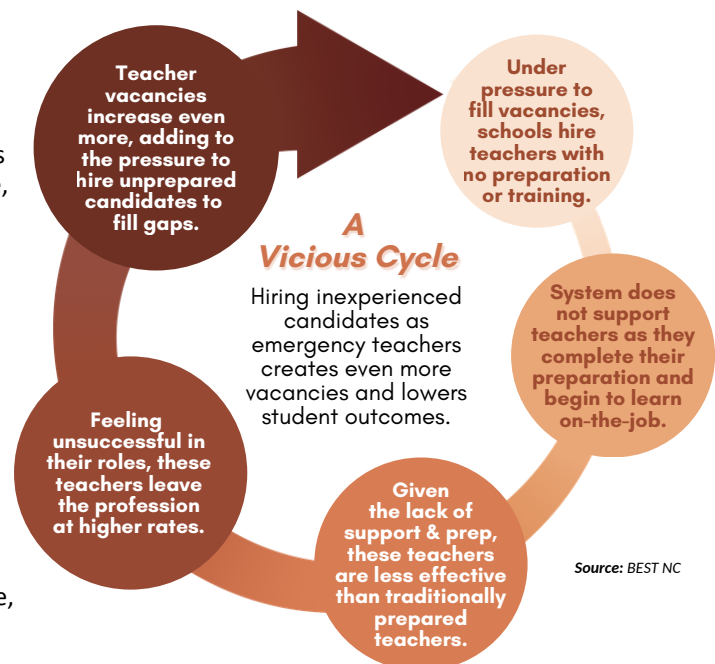
These candidates are ready and willing to teach, and they represent North Carolina's largest immediate source of new educators. But readiness to serve is not the same as readiness to teach. Without a paid apprenticeship option, these candidates enter classrooms unsupported, and students shoulder the resulting academic consequences.

What Is the Goal?

The goal of TeachReadyNC is to improve student outcomes by ensuring all students — especially in low-wealth or hard-to-staff districts — have access to effective, well-prepared teachers by:

- Reducing reliance on underprepared candidates;
- Offering affordable, accessible licensure pathways for teacher candidates;
- Improving teacher retention through mentorship and progressive pay;
- Enhancing teacher preparedness with job-embedded training;
- Using evidence-based tools to identify core qualities and skills that are needed for teaching;
- Establishing a select corps of well-supported mentor teachers; and
- Empowering HR/personnel administrators with tools and skills to staff strategically.

Every time a school starts over with a new teacher, the instruction students receive becomes less effective.



In 2024-25,
44%

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)



Theory of Change

Redirect permit-to-teach and emergency-licensed teachers into structured apprenticeships on ATR teams, to improve practice and reduce turnover (estimated 2,000 per year at scale).

How Does It Work?

- **Paid, Progressive Apprenticeship:** Apprentices are full-time paid employees, earning a teacher assistant salary with up to \$7,500 in additional supplements as competencies are mastered through a defined wage progression.
- **High-Quality Mentorship:** Each apprentice is paired with a mentor teacher on an Advanced Teaching Roles (ATR) team. Mentors receive training and support from ApprenticeshipNC/NCDPI and are compensated \$5,000. Teachers who accept a small number of additional students to support the model receive \$3,000.
- **Integrated Educator Preparation:** Apprentices are enrolled in a recognized Educator Preparation Program (EPP). Up to \$5,000 per year may be applied toward tuition after other scholarships and grants have been used.
- **Clear Pathway to Licensure:** Apprentices may participate for up to three years, progressively building competencies, earning credits and completing requirements that lead to a full professional license.
- **Designed So Students Benefit Immediately:** Qualified teachers can temporarily teach more students for a significant paid stipend, temporarily reducing the need to place unprepared teachers in classrooms.

Better. Faster. Less Expensive.

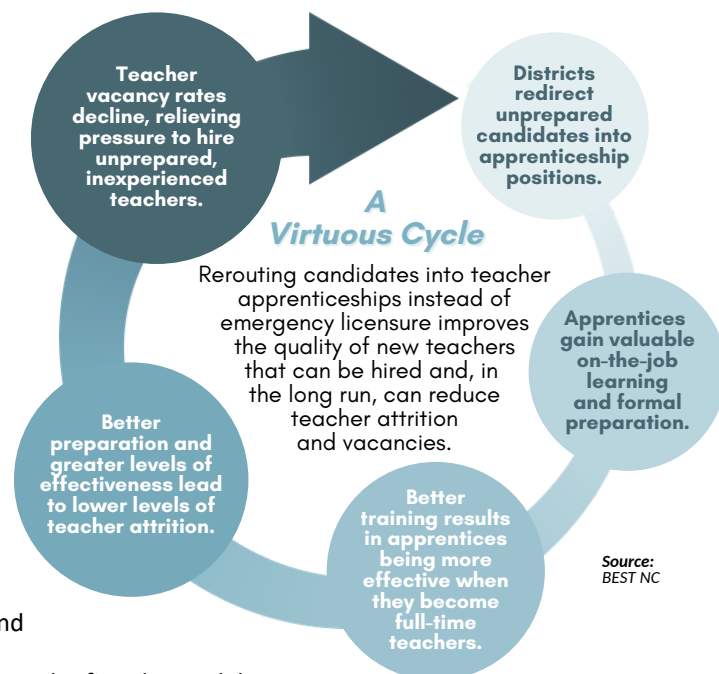
- At scale, programs would be able to produce thousands of apprentices per year, not hundreds.
- Apprentices are ready to teach, typically in one year.
- Three different layers of support: mentor teacher, ATR team, and EPP training.
- Students are not subjected to unqualified teachers.

Philanthropy & Legislative Support

TeachReadyNC is poised for pilot deployment. Funding is included in both the proposed House and Senate budgets, but additional philanthropic investment is needed to support startup activities and ensure successful pilot implementation.

Why Philanthropy?

- Accelerates launch of TeachReadyNC as a model for other states facing the same crisis.
- Funds competency and quality research, standards, mentorship qualifications, EPP course redesign, HR tools, and pilot development.
- Enables a more robust set of pilots to identify best practices and refine the model.



BEST NC's Recommendations for Teacher Apprenticeship

In 2025, BEST NC published *Teacher Apprenticeship in North Carolina: Exploring In-Classroom Preparation for the Next Generation of Teachers*, which included a comprehensive set of recommendations for the implementation of a statewide teacher apprenticeship initiative:

Phase I: Competitive Pilots

1. Establish a competitive grants program that allows districts to launch Teacher Apprenticeship programs, prioritizing schools that are implementing Advanced Teaching Roles.
2. Require a rigorous independent evaluation of district teacher apprenticeship pilots.
3. 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.
4. Provide school districts with technical assistance to better leverage state and federal funding streams.
5. Incentivize EPPs to design programs that support teacher apprenticeship models.

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.

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