Registered Teacher Apprentice

District Guidance

How to determine if an apprenticeship/apprentice is right for your district.

KANSAS STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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How to determine if an apprenticeship/apprentice is right for your district:

- Teacher shortages: If your district is experiencing a shortage of qualified teacher candidates, particularly in high-need areas such as elementary education, special education, or STEM, a registered apprenticeship program could help attract and develop new talent to fill these positions.
- Recruitment challenges: If your district is having difficulty attracting candidates with the necessary qualifications and experience to fill open teaching positions, a registered apprenticeship program can create a pipeline for developing new talent internally.
- Pathway for advancement: If your district lacks a pathway to advancement for paraprofessionals and instructional aides, utilizing a registered teacher apprenticeship program offers the right candidate a direct and structured approach to teacher development. This not only ensures a pipeline of skilled educators but also promotes a collaborative learning environment, enriching the overall quality of education within the district.

How To Select an Apprentice:

- Selecting and vetting potential apprenticeship candidates is a significant decision and can ultimately impact apprentice retention and teacher success rates. Determining how apprentices will be admitted into the program and what criteria partnerships will use to evaluate candidates is the first key transition point in any apprenticeship program.
- Establish a progressive wage scale for your apprentices. If you are using the KSDE Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Standards, the base pay for any apprentice is $14/hr with progressive wage increases of 2% every 6 months if the apprentice demonstrates progress in their apprenticeship. Districts can opt to start the base pay at or above $14/hr, but not below. Districts are also able to establish a different progressive wage increase than the KSDE standards, as long as it is progressive (it could be a yearly wage increase instead of every 6 months).
- Establish a set of hiring standards:

- This minimum set of hiring standards must be followed, but the district can add to this list as needed:

- 18 years of age;
- HS diploma or GED;
- Able to enroll in a teacher preparation program at a Kansas university/college, demonstrate the promise to progress successfully in their coursework and have the potential to attain a bachelor's degree;
- Can complete and pass a fingerprint and background check.

Hiring an Apprentice:

- To meet federal apprenticeship requirements, programs must ensure the following conditions are met in the application process:
  - Public notification of apprenticeship positions is advertised on the district website and/or job board.
  - The length of the application period is at least two weeks.
  - A review of applications is conducted to determine qualified candidates.
  - All applicants who complete an application, including submitting all required documents, and who meet the minimum qualifications of the job posting are contacted for an interview.
  - An interview committee and standard interview guide with questions are established.
  - Background checks are conducted on all qualified candidates. This is essential because once your apprentice applies for licensure, they will have to undergo an additional background check and, if they cannot pass the licensure background check, they cannot become a licensed teacher in your district.
  - The sponsor or school district makes decisions based on merit and ensures that no candidate is discriminated against on the basis of the candidate's race, color, ethnicity, national origin, sex, age, or other protected category.
  - The sponsor provides equal opportunity for all qualified candidates in the apprenticeship program and operates the apprenticeship program as required under Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), part 30.
  - The sponsor provides each apprentice a copy of the Standards of Apprenticeship 29 CFR § 29.5, Requirements for Apprenticeship Sponsors Reference Guide, any applicable written rules and policies, and requires apprentices to sign an acknowledgment of their receipt.

Things to consider:

- Capacity to support apprentices: Does your district have the necessary resources and expertise to support a registered apprenticeship program, including qualified mentor teachers and effective training and professional development programs? It's important to assess the district's capacity to provide a high-quality apprenticeship experience for aspiring teachers.
- Funding the apprentice position: Many paraprofessionals and instructional aides in districts are paid using money for special education provided by the state due to the services they offer the district. In a registered apprenticeship, apprentices in the early years of their apprenticeship may still be providing special education services for the district, and that pool of money can be used to fund the apprenticeship position. Additionally, if the apprentice is pursuing special education licensure and is providing special education services for the district during their on-the-job learning, the district can use their special education money to fund the apprenticeship position. However, if the apprentice is in a general education classroom during their on-the-job learning, the district may not be able to use their special education money to fund the position. The district will need to use money from other sources, like unfilled FTE positions, to fund the apprentice for the duration of their apprenticeship.

Frequently Asked Questions (District):

Why should our school district consider implementing a Registered Teacher Apprentice program?

Answer: Incorporating a Registered Teacher Apprentice (RTA) program into the school district's plans is crucial for tackling teacher shortages, enhancing diversity, and attracting seasoned educators. This initiative provides a structured pathway for career progression towards acquiring a teaching license within the district. Furthermore, embracing programs like "Grow your own" not only fosters community engagement but also actively nurtures local talent, ensuring a sustainable and well-prepared pool of qualified educators. By investing in these initiatives, the district fosters a robust educational ecosystem that benefits both educators and the communities they serve.

How does an RTA program differ from traditional teacher preparation programs?

Answer: RTA programs typically combine classroom-based instruction with on-the-job training, offering hands-on approach with a longer duration and more classroom experience compared to traditional teacher education. The RTA program allows districts to develop a pathway to licensure for their paraprofessionals and instructional aides who do not have bachelor's degrees. It also allows districts to play a significant role in training.

What are the potential benefits of having apprentice teachers in our district?

Answer: Having an apprentice in your district allows you to play a significant role in training and supporting an individual who is working to become a licensed teacher in your district. It also allows your district to have a path to career advancement for qualified candidates.

Are districts obligated to hire an apprentice in their district once they become a licensed teacher?

Answer: There needs to be a reasonable expectation of employment in your district if an apprentice completes an apprenticeship in your district.

What are the eligibility requirements for potential teacher apprentices in an RTA program?

Answer:

- 18 years of age;
- HS diploma or GED;
- Able to enroll in a teacher preparation program at a Kansas university/college, demonstrate the promise to progress successfully in their coursework and have the potential to attain a bachelor's degree;
- Can complete and pass a fingerprint and background check.

How does the mentorship component work in an RTA program?

Answer: The district will assign a mentor teacher with a professional license to the apprentice. The mentor teacher should be an experienced teacher who is willing to provide support, guidance, and feedback to the apprentice. The mentor will play a role in guiding and providing valuable feedback to their apprentice. They will also consult

with the building administrator, or whoever is conducting evaluations and observations but will not be providing the evaluations themselves.

It is ideal that the apprentice have the same mentor throughout the entirety of their apprenticeship, however, mentors can be changed if needed.

How long does it typically take for an individual to complete an RTA program and become a fully licensed teacher?

Answer: The apprenticeship would ideally take four years if an individual was hired as an apprentice with no classroom experience (either as a para or instructional aide) and no college credit prior to starting as an apprentice. However, depending on the years of experience in a district and the number of college credits attained prior to starting the apprenticeship, the apprenticeship could take less than four years. It is essential prior to the start of an apprenticeship that the district meet with the apprentice to discuss their prior classroom experience and college credit to determine whether the duration of the apprenticeship can be shortened depending on the apprentice's prior experiences.

Is there a minimum duration an individual must be in the apprenticeship program to complete it?

Answer: Yes, an individual must be employed by a school district for a full calendar year to complete apprenticeship.

What should the on-the-job learning in the district look like for the apprentice?

Answer: If the apprentice starts with no classroom experience, it is highly recommended that they spend the first year as a para-professional to experience life in a district and working with kids. As the apprentice progresses through the program, they should be given additional experiences like developing lesson plans, grading assignments, and leading a classroom discussion or lesson. It is at the district's discretion to provide the best opportunities and experiences for the apprentice teacher, so they are ready to take on all the requirements and responsibilities of the teacher of record, once they are licensed. During the apprenticeship, the apprentice will never be the teacher of record.

Are apprentices required to be only in one classroom throughout their on-the-job learning?

Answer: No, the district is encouraged to move the apprentice around into various classrooms (that are appropriate to the licensure endorsement area they are pursuing) to ensure they have a wide variety of experiences.

Can the district use the apprentice as an emergency substitute?

Answer: It is not recommended that the district use the apprentice in a substitute role.

Can the district use money earmarked for special education to fund the apprentice position?

Answer: Special education expenses, including staff pay, may be paid out of the Special Education Fund. Special education costs are related to the additional services required by an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in order for an identified student to receive a free and appropriate public education. Expenditures must be proportionate to the portion of the expense related to special education, meaning that if a para works 80% of their time assisting with special education services, then 80% of their pay may come from the Special Education Fund.

How will the university know that our district has an apprentice enrolled in their program?

Answer: Once KSDE receives the district's apprenticeship application, which identifies the university/college the apprentice will be attending, KSDE will notify the university and establish contact between the university and the district to ensure that all parties can establish lines of communication.

Will the requirements and student teaching experience change for an individual in the apprenticeship program?

Answer: No, since many non-traditional pathways to the initial teaching license already exist, universities have implemented the use of multiple practicums for work within the classroom in lieu of the traditional student teaching experience. However, it is essential that the district works closely with the apprentices' chosen university to know what the university's specific requirements are to help shape the most useful experience for the apprentice.

What happens if an apprentice decides the apprenticeship program is not for them or has to be fired from the district, which would end the apprenticeship for that individual?

Answer: If an individual must take a leave of absence from work within the district or the apprenticeship, their progress in the apprenticeship can be suspended. If the apprentice is able to return at a later date, their progress would be resumed where it ended. If an individual decided to voluntarily stop being part of the apprenticeship, it does not mean their employment in the district must end or their pursuit of a bachelor's degree. It just means that they will not receive the same level of support from KSDE, local workforce boards or the district. If an individual is terminated from their position of employment for cause, the district will need to notify KSDE, so KSDE can remove them from the apprenticeship in the USDOL RAPIDS system. Finally, an individual being terminated from employment in the district does not affect their relationship with the university/college they are attending. It is up to the university/college to determine the individual's enrollment status based on their own set of academic criteria. The individual would just not receive any further support from the district or KSDE.

What is the annual/semi-annual reporting requirement for districts to KSDE?

Answer: This reporting is done every six months, no later than January 31st and July 31st of each year, ensuring that KSDE receives accurate and up-to-date information on the apprentices' development, accomplishments, and areas of focus. Districts will ensure apprentice competencies are assessed on a bi-annual basis and reported to KSDE. Districts will submit an assurance statement to KSDE to apprentice@ksde.gov confirm the apprentice is making progress. The assurance statement can be found here.

Before implementing an RTA program, it's essential for school districts to carefully consider these questions and consult with relevant education authorities to tailor the program to their specific needs and circumstances. For any questions or concerns, please contact apprenticeship@ksde.gov

For more information, contact:

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