

# NYS Educator Workforce Development HUB



Thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony about an innovative solution to address the educator workforce crisis in the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget.

## **The economic health of NYS is dependent upon a well educated workforce.**

Teaching undergirds the professions by equipping students to become the workforce of the future. That can't happen without well-trained teachers, principals and teacher assistants. NYS has a severe shortage of these educators as officials estimate over 180,000 new teachers alone will be needed in the next decade.

Why is there a shortage?

First, enrollment in New York's teacher education programs has been, and continues to be, in serious decline. Why?

- Becoming a certified educator in NYS is very expensive, presenting financial barriers with the prohibitive costs of tuition, books, tools, and assessments.
  - According to TEACHNY.org the cost of an undergraduate program and living expenses to become a teacher is \$60 thousand **per year** and graduate programs cost \$36 thousand **per year**. This is coupled with an entry salary typically between \$50 and \$60,000 which, as of 2022, was 26.4% lower than other college graduates
- There is poor career accessibility created by unpaid placements in traditional programs.
  - Most people can not afford to quit a paying job in order to complete their degree requirements.
- There is an increasingly unfavorable social view of teaching as a profession.
  - The Pew Survey reports two-thirds of adults in the US believe teaching is a hard job and 74% believe teachers are underpaid.
  - This is also evident in the NEA survey with 62% of teachers responding they would not advise a young person to become an educator.

Retention of qualified teachers is also a serious problem.

- Education has extremely high rates of attrition among early career educators with over 50% leaving within their first few years.
  - High attrition rates come with a high price tag for districts and their taxpayers. The Learning Policy Institute cites school district replacement costs ranging from almost \$12,000 to \$25,000 dollars per teacher.
- Retirement compounds this issue with the NYS Teacher Retirement System reporting one-third of the workforce is eligible to retire.

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For districts this is creating the perfect storm. It is evidenced in the 2024 NYS School Board's study where 90% of superintendent and teacher respondents felt that teacher recruitment within their districts is a major concern.

What can be done?

The NYS Legislature has the opportunity to again lead the nation in workforce development through the creation of a sustainable and multi-faceted approach to Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) for educators. Apprenticeships are the gold standard of workforce development. RAPs, using the 'earn to learn' model, will create more accessible educator pathways, broaden the pipeline, remove financial barriers and provide additional support during the training process. Establishing a robust and accessible apprenticeship program for educators will also address systemic inequities in education and make sure that traditionally underserved populations have access to this profession.

NYS Legislative funding support will enable sustainability at scale by embedding state and local investment at the heart of workforce development for educators. RAPs will also positively impact students statewide as the research is clear, teachers have the greatest impact on student achievement. So don't we want to prepare them well? NYS legislative support for RAPs for educators will be pivotal in alleviating the shortage, and will dovetail and enhance several statewide workforce initiatives currently in place.

Governor Hochul and the NYS legislature, in 2022, launched the Empire State Teacher Residency Program (TRP) grant which was designed to strengthen and expand the state's teaching workforce. The TRP ultimately laid the foundation for the legislative branch to build and scale Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) for educators. Also, in 2022, the work around RAPs for educators began in earnest when NYSUT Education and Learning Trust (ELT) was awarded a US Department of Labor Apprenticeship Building America (ABA) grant to address the crisis of the educator shortage. NYSUT ELT partnered with TEACHMEducation Services, a NYS Women Owned Business (WOB) and expert in this field, to create the NYS Educator Workforce Development HUB (HUB). The HUB provides the necessary technical assistance to establish and implement the RAP model in the education sector.

The NYS legislature has the opportunity to build on the foundation of the TRP and the work of the HUB through legislative funding to support educator apprenticeships. The HUB will continue and expand their focus to support partnerships establishing high-quality RAPs in education and also act as an intermediary to help sponsor programs.

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To fund these three critical workforce initiatives, we strongly urge the NYS Legislature to act upon the following:

1. Create a new categorical state aid for the specific purpose of offsetting district costs for Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) for educators. This will recognize schools investing in the training of educators through the gold standard of RAPs at a rate of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) per educator, to be capped in the pilot year at five-million (\$5M) dollars. Creating this aid category will address structural misalignments such as:
  - a. **Certification Portability:** NYS educators are certified to serve the entire state, as opposed to just the local entity, so registered apprenticeships should be supported by state funds in concert with the local investment.
  - b. **Funding Source:** Apprenticeships, unlike the TRP, are not grant funded. This is an important advantage as all communities are responsible to provide high-quality public education. Competitive grants often exacerbate and further perpetuate systemic inequities. They award a few "winners" rather than helping all schools reach their next level of growth. It also fosters the idea that schools must compete for limited resources, entrenching the zero-sum perception that some students 'win' and others 'lose'. Categorical aid will provide stability and sustainability across all NYS zip codes to support the contextual hiring needs of school communities without inequity.
  - c. **Targeted Aid:** Categorical aid lines allow schools to provide critically important services for students and address local wealth disparities. Given that research points to an effective teacher as the most important factor in a student's success, the establishment of categorical aid earmarked for the specific purpose of Educator Apprenticeships is the strong and logical next step to embed the program in the underlying framework of school systems. Categorical funds empower the state to incentivize educator workforce development and enact policies that benefit all.
2. Expand existing funding in the Excessive Teacher Turnover Prevention program with an additional line to recognize schools training educators through RAPs at a rate of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) per educator apprentice. This fund would be capped at two million (\$2M) dollars during the pilot year. This will offset costs for Part 853 and 4410 private special education schools that would not have access to the newly proposed categorical aid. These additional funds will be used to:
  - a. **Meet Student Needs:** Help school districts meet the critical needs of students with disabilities, further exacerbated by a scarcity of well-prepared certified special education teachers. The private special education schools (part 853 and 4410) serve the neediest NYS students and provide a public function with

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public funding. In many ways they are an extension of the NYS public school system, services, and funding structures. These schools often provide new teachers with the entry point for learning and experience in the special education field, yet they struggle with excessive turnover, and have extreme difficulty keeping positions filled with qualified staff. These challenges ultimately hurt the most vulnerable of our students, which the NYS legislature recognizes by appropriating funds each year (under Excess Teacher Turnover Prevention) to assist these schools in addressing retention issues. The expansion of this fund will incorporate another workforce development strategy to also address the recruitment need.

- b. **Collect Improvement Data:** Develop and launch RAPs through Part 853 and 4410 schools, which will provide a platform to test logistics and gather data to prove value and reveal challenges before bringing to scale. This incubator approach will benchmark the efficacy of the program on meeting the need for special education teachers and retaining experienced teachers through teacher leader opportunities. It will also foster a culture of professional learning and enhance current staff instructional practice with new research, pedagogy, and best practices.
  - c. **Invest in Knowledge:** Train apprentices in these specialized schools which will develop an expansive knowledge base of the complex needs of students with disabilities. The depth of pedagogical knowledge and real experience in these high-need schools, serving high-need students will advance a well-prepared special education teacher workforce. Public school students statewide will benefit. First, as apprentices serving in the Part 853 and 4410 schools and later, as well-trained certified special education teachers who continue to serve either in the private setting or choose to move to the public school environment, bringing the investment in their professional knowledge with them.
  - d. **Sustainability:** Building on the Excess Teacher Turnover Prevention funds will allow Part 853 or 4410 schools that access these funds for two consecutive years to have the amount embedded in their state tuition rate, making the program costs sustainable.
3. Provide pass-through funding to the NYSDOL to continue the work of the NYS Educator Workforce Development HUB (through TEACHMEducation Services) at one million dollars (\$1M) annually. These funds will accomplish the following:
- a. **Technical Assistance:** Continue and expand the critical work of the HUB toward addressing the educator workforce crisis. Given the severity of the problem and the horizon required to establish RAPs statewide, the time to act is now. The HUB team has a tremendous depth of experience working in

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education - in 18 months it has moved the field from 1 RAP to 15, with 22 programs in the development phase. The HUB has recognized the need and will expand the work to act as an intermediary, sponsoring programs for educational agencies without the capacity to establish a RAP.

- b. **Knowledge Base:** Apprenticeships for educators require a multifaceted proficiency to span state agencies and implement this system change. The retention of the HUB's specialized expertise, strategic relationships (including with state agencies), and knowledge of the multiple systems will be imperative.

In 2021, NYS led the nation developing Registered Apprenticeship programs for educators. Forty-seven states and territories now follow in NYS's footsteps creating RAPs to confront the nationwide educator shortage. The investment requested is an opportunity to implement effective and sustainable strategies to address a workforce crisis impacting every corner of the state. It is a pivotal moment for the State of New York. With these actions, the NYS Legislature could ensure that all students have a well-trained educator and lift up those who hope to become educators yet have not had the necessary support.

Our students, the future workforce across all sectors, will benefit from a highly trained and retained educator workforce. The consequences of inaction will be dire. In the absence of highly qualified educators, nearly 2.5 million NYS students – from NYC, the largest district in the nation of over 1 million students to the smallest rural district in the state of just 17 students – will not exit the education system with the necessary skills to be successful in the global workplace, diminishing NYS's economic competitiveness.

We urge the Legislature to support this **\$8 million set of appropriations in the 2025-26 state budget** so every student in New York State has a well-trained educator. Education is New York State's largest public spending program, accounting for more than 25% of the state's operating budget. By investing in educator workforce development you will ensure that investment is well spent. Registered Apprenticeship programs for educators are the smartest investment this legislature can make to serve the students and taxpayers, while preserving the economic prosperity of NYS.