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**Project TOPS:
Teacher Opportunities, Pipeline, and Supports**

Background

# Oklahoma’s Teacher Shortage

The COVID-19 pandemic greatly exacerbated a pre-existing teacher shortage in many states across the nation, with the U.S. Department of Education reporting that the overwhelming majority of states experienced critical teacher shortages in special education, math and science during the 2020-21 academic year ([Learning Policy Institute](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/blog/teacher-shortages-take-center-stage)). In Oklahoma, critical shortages exist in other content areas as well that further exacerbate the need for quality and effective teachers in Oklahoma classrooms, and the state Board of Education approved over 3,400 emergency-certified teachers for the 2021-22 academic year, exceeding the state’s previous record of 3,321 in 2019-20 ([Tulsa World](https://tulsaworld.com/news/local/education/teacher-shortage-milestone-new-record-set-for-nonaccredited-teachers-given-emergency-certification-in-oklahoma/article_e54744d2-3804-11ec-865a-174e88ee49b0.html)). Multiple factors have contributed to the teacher shortage, including relatively low pay, lack of professional support and respect, and limited opportunities for career advancement ([Southern Regional Education Board](https://www.sreb.org/blog-post/what-we-know-about-teacher-shortages-and-how-states-districts-can-respond)). As a result, Oklahoma faces significant challenges to its teacher pipeline, including 1) declining enrollment among college students in educator preparation programs, 2) increasing reliance on underprepared, emergency-certified teachers to meet workforce needs, 3) high teacher attrition and turnover, and 4) an aging teacher workforce.

## Declining Enrollment in Educator Preparation Programs

The most recent Teacher Education Admission Study produced by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education indicates that overall admissions to educator preparation programs (EPPs) at Oklahoma universities in 2019-20 declined 12% from the previous year. Moreover, the number of Oklahoma’s college students choosing to major in education declined 33% over the last five years, from 1,585 in 2015-16 to 1,056 in 2019-20. The decline in admissions to educator preparation programs can be attributed to both decreased interest in the teaching profession as well as an increasing trend toward alternative certification.

## Increasing Reliance on Emergency-Certified Teachers

Across the nation, many school systems report fewer applicants for open teaching positions. Subsequently, schools have become increasingly reliant on uncertified teachers and long-term substitutes to fill school vacancies. The number of emergency-certified teachers approved by Oklahoma’s state Board of Education significantly increased over the last decade, from only 32 in 2011-12 to 3,428 in 2021-22, with elementary school education, early childhood education, and English as the three largest categories of emergency certifications granted for the current academic year ([Tulsa World](https://tulsaworld.com/news/local/education/teacher-shortage-milestone-new-record-set-for-nonaccredited-teachers-given-emergency-certification-in-oklahoma/article_e54744d2-3804-11ec-865a-174e88ee49b0.html)). Additionally, analyses of initial teacher certification pathways conducted by the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability demonstrate a trend toward alternative certification, increasing from 35% of Oklahoma General Education Test (OGET) test-takers in 2015-15 to 50% in 2019-20 (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2021 Teacher Education Admission Survey).

## Teacher Attrition and Turnover

Approximately 90 % of open teaching positions are created by teachers who leave the profession, with two-thirds of those leaving the professions before they are eligible for retirement (Learning Policy Institute). Nationally, research indicates that approximately 20-30% of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years. In Oklahoma, more than 40% of Oklahoma college graduates majoring in education are either out-of-the profession or have moved out-of-state within five years after graduation. Additionally, over the last decade, Oklahoma lost teachers at an average rate of 10% (or 5,000 teachers) per year, with retirement accounting for only one-tenth of that turnover (Oklahoma Supply & Demand Report 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic increased teacher turnover as more than 18% of public school teachers did not remain in the same position from the 2019-20 to the 2020-21 school years. Teacher turnover is highest in urban school districts and in schools with high concentrations of low-income students ([Oklahoma Educator Supply & Demand Report 2021](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwi45qDg1qL2AhWulGoFHeZcBI4QFnoECAwQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fsde.ok.gov%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2F2021%2520Oklahoma%2520Educator%2520Supply%2520%2526%2520Demand%2520Report_Draft.pdf&usg=AOvVaw1iluHoofkI1hnjNkdENtws)).

## Aging Teacher Workforce

The COVID-19 pandemic contributed to increased teacher retirements in Oklahoma as the number of teachers retiring increased between the 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic years in terms of both quantity and rate, with more than 200 additional teachers retiring than otherwise expected. ([Oklahoma Educator Supply & Demand Report 2021](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwi45qDg1qL2AhWulGoFHeZcBI4QFnoECAwQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fsde.ok.gov%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2F2021%2520Oklahoma%2520Educator%2520Supply%2520%2526%2520Demand%2520Report_Draft.pdf&usg=AOvVaw1iluHoofkI1hnjNkdENtws)). Moreover, the average age of Oklahoma’s teachers is 45, and as the state’s teacher workforce ages, retirements will significantly increase, further straining Oklahoma’s teacher workforce ([Southern Regional Education Board](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiggb3x2aL2AhXMlWoFHYm_Db8QFnoECBgQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sreb.org%2Fsites%2Fmain%2Ffiles%2Ffile-attachments%2F2020_oksupply_demand.pdf%3F1596750696&usg=AOvVaw3NW5wVYvQazdDfNJ-kf1xx)). This becomes especially dire when considering there is a limited pool of future educators coming behind them.

# Negative Impact of Teacher Shortage

Given that the average teacher impacts over 3,000 students during their career, the importance of having well-qualified teachers in the classroom cannot be overstated ([Southern Regional Education Board](https://www.sreb.org/blog-post/long-term-solution-teacher-shortages)). Moreover, teacher quality is estimated to have two to three times the effect of any other school factor, including services, facilities and leadership, on student teacher and performance ([RAND Corporation](https://www.sreb.org/blog-post/what-we-know-about-teacher-shortages-and-how-states-districts-can-respond)). Teacher shortages negatively impact student achievement as schools often cancel courses due to vacancies or staff classes with substitutes and underprepared teachers. Underprepared teachers often exhibit higher turnover rates, leaving the classroom at rates 2-3 times greater than those who enter the teaching profession through an educator preparation program.

Lack of access to well-prepared teachers presents significant challenges as schools struggle to address learning disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, more than 700,000 students and 54,000 educators were impacted by pandemic-related school closures and transitions to online learning. Research demonstrates that pandemic-related learning loss among K-12 students is significant, with students averaging 5 months behind in math and 4 months behind in reading ([McKinsey & Company](https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-and-education-the-lingering-effects-of-unfinished-learning)). Additionally, the non-profit testing organization NWEA reports that the median student in grades 3 – 8 is 9 to 11 percentile points behind in math and 3 to 7 percentile points behind in reading. Furthermore, the pandemic widened pre-existing opportunity and achievement gaps for students, with learning loss greatest among those from traditionally disadvantaged backgrounds – students in high-poverty schools and students of color ([McKinsey & Company](https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-and-education-the-lingering-effects-of-unfinished-learning); [NWEA](https://www.nwea.org/content/uploads/2021/07/Learning-during-COVID-19-Reading-and-math-achievement-in-the-2020-2021-school-year.research-brief-1.pdf); [U.S. Department of Education](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjOiPzyvqD2AhUOmGoFHc4qAtAQFnoECC4QAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww2.ed.gov%2Fabout%2Foffices%2Flist%2Focr%2Fdocs%2F20210608-impacts-of-covid19.pdf&usg=AOvVaw22PA3OxU4P3Epb_PNrx-KZ))

Pandemic-related learning loss has significant implications for future economic outcomes. Worldwide, estimates show that pandemic-related school closures may cost the current generation of students $17 trillion in lifetime earnings, or approximately 14% of today’s global GDP ([World Bank](https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/12/06/learning-losses-from-covid-19-could-cost-this-generation-of-students-close-to-17-trillion-in-lifetime-earnings)). Nationally, pandemic-related school closures and learning loss could cost the U.S. economy between $14 trillion and $28 trillion, with students in K-12 experiencing a 3% lower income over their lifetimes ([U.S. News & World Report](https://www.usnews.com/news/education-news/articles/2020-09-14/report-coronavirus-school-closures-could-cost-us-economy-14-trillion)). Therefore, mitigating pandemic-related learning loss among K-12 students is critical Oklahoma’s future economic stability and growth.

# Teacher Education in Oklahoma

Increasing the number of students choosing to major in teacher education is a critical component to addressing Oklahoma’s teacher shortage. In Oklahoma, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education coordinates educator preparation programs at the following 23 public and private universities:

* Bacone College
* Cameron University
* East Central University
* Langston University
* Mid-America Christian University
* Northeastern State University
* Northwestern Oklahoma State University
* Oklahoma Baptist University
* Oklahoma Christian University
* Oklahoma City University
* Oklahoma Panhandle State University
* Oklahoma State University
* Oklahoma Wesleyan University
* Oral Roberts University
* Randall University
* Southeastern Oklahoma State University
* Southern Nazarene University
* Southwestern Christian University
* Southwestern Oklahoma State University
* University of Central Oklahoma
* University of Oklahoma
* University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma
* University of Tulsa

Additionally, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education sponsors Oklahoma Teacher Connection (OTC), whose mission is to recruit, retain and place teachers throughout Oklahoma’s K-12 schools through a variety of programs and initiatives. OTC collaborates with educational agencies, K-12 schools, and educator preparation programs (EPPs) at public and private universities in the state to support Oklahoma’s teachers and enhance student-centered academic performance. To improve Oklahoma’s teacher pipeline, OTC sponsors several programs for middle and high school students designed to increase interest in the teaching profession, such as Teach Oklahoma, Lead Oklahoma, and Educators Rising. Additionally, OTC administers the Teacher Shortage Employment Incentive Program (TSEIP), which incentivizes Oklahoma’s teacher education graduates in science and mathematics to commit to teaching for at least five years after graduation.

TOPS Project Proposal

# Sponsoring Organization

## Organization Name

Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education

The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education is comprised of 25 colleges and universities – including two research universities, 10 regional universities, one public liberal arts university and 12 community colleges – and 11 constituent agencies and one university center. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education serves as the constitutional coordinating board of control for the state system while governing boards of regents are responsible for the day-to-day management and operations of state system colleges and universities.

The State Regents prescribe academic standards of higher education, determine functions and courses of study at state colleges and universities, grant degrees, and approve each public college's and university's allocations, as well as tuition and fees within the limits set by the Oklahoma Legislature.

The State Regents also manage scholarships and special programs. In addition, the State Regents operate OneNet, the state's most advanced technology network, and the Oklahoma College Assistance Program, which provides college access, aid awareness, financial literacy and student loan management programs and services for students and parents.

## Organization Headquarters

Oklahoma County – 655 Research Parkway, Suite 200, Oklahoma City, OK 73104

# Project Overview

## TOPS: Teacher Opportunities, Pipeline and Supports

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education requests American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to address Oklahoma’s teacher shortage though a comprehensive strategy that improves Oklahoma’s teacher pipeline by increasing recruitment and retention of well-qualified students in educator preparation programs and providing professional development and support opportunities to new teachers as they enter the classroom.

# Project Funding

## Total Funding Requested

$81,832,2015

## ARPA Expenditure Category

Addressing negative economic impacts

## ARPA Expenditure Sub-Category

Other public health services

## Use of Funds

Funds will be used to implement the following initiatives designed to provide a comprehensive approach to addressing Oklahoma’s teacher shortage:

## Paid Student Teaching

In collaboration with the Southern Regional Education Board, the Oklahoma Educator Supply & Demand Network identified policy and implementation barriers to paid student teaching internships as priority challenge related to practice-based training of in-state teacher candidates. To help address fiscal constraints limiting paid student teaching, the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) has allocated $12.75 million in federal relief funding to implement a “Paid Student Teaching” initiative in partnership with the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE). Through this initiative, payments of up to $3,250 will be provided to each student teacher approved by educator preparation program (EPP) providers. For the first payment, the OSDE will transfer applicable funds to the OSRHE, which will distribute $1,625 to the student teacher by the first week of student teaching. The second $1,625 payment will be distributed to the school district that hires the student teacher, which will then pay the student teacher directly. Funding from OSDE for the Paid Student Teaching initiative will last through the 2023-24 academic year. The OSRHE requests $4,000,000 to continue payments to student teachers for two additional years, which will provide additional financial support to students who are in the process of completing their student teaching requirements in Oklahoma K-12 districts. Research demonstrates that compensating student teachers is a strong teacher recruitment strategy that reduces barriers to degree completion, especially among traditionally underrepresented minorities ([Oklahoma State Department of Education](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwj8wYn91Kb2AhXVlGoFHY4KBjAQFnoECAgQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Freadytogether.sde.ok.gov%2Fdocument%2F88&usg=AOvVaw3b8sgQT3iH9DGqxyzkTdzr); [Southern Regional Education Board](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiBzPuP1ab2AhUknGoFHS-vBt8QFnoECBwQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sreb.org%2Fsites%2Fmain%2Ffiles%2Ffile-attachments%2F2020_oksupply_demand.pdf%3F1596750696&usg=AOvVaw3NW5wVYvQazdDfNJ-kf1xx)).

## Scholarships

The OSRHE requests $14,300,000 to provide scholarships to students who declare Teacher Education as a major to partially offset educational costs as they matriculate through coursework and programs. In addition to attending classes, many teacher education majors also work full- or part-time jobs in order to pay for college. Research shows that scholarships lead to higher rates of college enrollment, persistence and degree completion ([State Higher Education Executive Officers Association](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiYi9SB26b2AhUmkmoFHRcCBnA4FBAWegQIFBAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fsheeo.org%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2021%2F05%2FSHEEO_ImpactAppropationsFinancialAid.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0v1jFie9b_TK3_cPYQNYNX)). Additionally, reducing financial barriers serves as a strategy to increase diversity among students enrolled in traditional educator preparation programs, which leads to better student outcomes as there is clear evidence that a diverse teaching workforce benefits all students, especially students of color [(National Association of State Boards of Education](https://nasbe.nyc3.digitaloceanspaces.com/2021/09/Lindsay_Sept-2021-Standard.pdf)).

## Alternative Certification Support

To address Oklahoma’s teacher shortage, the Oklahoma State Department of Education offers several alternative pathways to teacher certification. Specifically, the alternative placement program provides individuals with a non-teaching bachelor’s degree to enter the teaching workforce with the requirement to complete 6-18 college credit hours of professional education or 90-270 clock hours of professional development approved by an Oklahoma school district in education within 3 years of acceptance. As part of this requirement, all participants must complete a college course on classroom management and a college course addressing general or subject-specific pedagogical principles ([Oklahoma State Department of Education](https://sde.ok.gov/alternative-paths-teacher-certification)). Given that increasing reliance on alternative and emergency certified teachers can have negative impacts on student achievement and result in higher teacher turnover, ensuring that these individuals receive rigorous and high-quality professional education is critical to their success in the classroom ([U.S. Department of Education](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwj4lbDg4ab2AhVAl2oFHUvsAL0QFnoECA8QAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww2.ed.gov%2Fadmins%2Ftchrqual%2Frecruit%2Faltroutes%2Freport.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2B4UaqKvZ0qd8IBymqL0S5)). Oklahoma’s 23 educator preparation programs are well-positioned to provide quality instruction and supports to nontraditional teacher candidates as they enter the classroom and complete requirements to become fully certified (Oklahoma Association of Colleges for Teacher Education). The OSRHE requests $24,000,000 to provide financial assistance to non-traditional teacher candidates enrolled in courses offered through approved educator preparation programs in the state.

## Teacher Mentorship

Mentorship is one of the most effective ways to grow, support and retain new teachers in the classroom regardless of their preparation pathway given that one of the top reasons early career teachers leave the profession is lack of support ([Learning Policy Institute](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/Teacher_Exodus_Infographic.pdf); [Education Commission of the States](https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Mitigating-Teacher-Shortages-Induction-Mentorship.pdf)). More specifically, mentorship and participation in an induction program increases teacher retention, improve teaching instruction, and result in higher student achievement (Southern Regional Education Board).The OSRHE requests $1,000,000 to implement a teacher mentorships program to support novice teachers as they enter the classroom and improve teacher retention rates. Through this initiative, educator preparation program faculty, as well as National Board Certified Teachers, will partner with K-12 school districts to provide instructional support and mentorship opportunities to new teachers.

## Professional Development

Continuing professional education and development opportunities support new and seasoned teachers access emerging best practices in classroom management and pedagogy; adapt to the ever-changing landscape of issues and needs that educators address in working with students, families and communities; implement changes in state policy and statute that govern schools; and transition to new professional responsibilities, especially when assignments and duties change ([National Education Association](https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/professional-learning/teachers)). Given the learning disruptions caused by COVID-19, professional development and support that address learning loss and alternative instructional delivery methods are critical to mitigating the potential negative long-term economic impact of the pandemic. The OSRHE requests $4,000,000 in funding to support Oklahoma’s 23 educator preparation programs in providing professional development opportunities to K-12 teachers to improve teacher effectiveness and reduce turnover. Professional development will not only address learning loss among K-12 students but also build partnerships with school districts to strengthen teaching and learning in the classroom.

## Future Teacher Academies

Over the last decade, pre-collegiate student interest in the teaching profession significantly declined, dropping from the 4th most-reported major of interest to 8th among students taking the ACT ([ACT](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwj0kNTn66b2AhUMkWoFHWPgBYMQFnoECAkQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.act.org%2Fcontent%2Fdam%2Fact%2Funsecured%2Fdocuments%2Fpdfs%2FEncouraging-More-HS-Students-to-Consider-Teaching.pdf&usg=AOvVaw16Sodc6qrKYEPCiLLXxFF9)). Increasing student enrollment in teacher education programs begins with generating interest among middle and high school students. The OSRHE requests $3,680,000 to implement pre-collegiate future teacher academies for middle and high school students. As a type of “grow-your-own” strategy for teacher recruitment, future teacher academies provide potentially interested students with opportunities to develop a better sense of the teaching profession through hands-on learning experiences ([ACT](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwj0kNTn66b2AhUMkWoFHWPgBYMQFnoECAkQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.act.org%2Fcontent%2Fdam%2Fact%2Funsecured%2Fdocuments%2Fpdfs%2FEncouraging-More-HS-Students-to-Consider-Teaching.pdf&usg=AOvVaw16Sodc6qrKYEPCiLLXxFF9); [Education Commission of the States](https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Targeted_Teacher_Recruitment.pdf)).

## School Counselor Production

Given that Oklahoma currently ranks 5th in the nation for school-aged students with adverse childhood experiences and Oklahoma’s significant shortage of school counselors, educators in the classroom increasingly serve as social workers in addition to their primary teaching responsibilities. While the American School Counselor Association recommends a student-to-counselor ratio of 250-to-1, Oklahoma’s current ratio is 374-to-1 ([Oklahoma State Department of Education](https://sde.ok.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/Fast%20Facts%202021-22.pdf)). Increasing the production of certified school counselors is critical to addressing the learning needs of students. To help address this shortage, the OSRHE requests $1,109,463 to support a cohort of 50 teachers obtain master’s degree and standard certification in school counseling. This funding will be used to cover costs associated with tuition and fees and the Oklahoma Subject Area Test (OSAT) fee for certification.

## Child Care Assistance

Child care costs can be prohibitive to students trying to complete their college degree. Nationally, 26 % of college students have a dependent child, with single mothers and single fathers comprising 43 % and 11 % of the student parent population, respectively ([Institute for Women’s Policy Research).](https://iwpr.org/iwpr-issues/student-parent-success-initiative/4-8-million-college-students-are-raising-children/) Student parents are more likely to be low-income, and 61 % of all student parents have no money to contribute to college expenses. Moreover, research shows that student parents take longer to complete their degrees and are less likely to graduate than their childless peers ([Inside Higher Ed](https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/10/02/student-parents-complete-degrees-more-slowly-drop-out-due-time-poverty)). Providing financial assistance for child care removes barriers to college attendance by reducing the amount of part-time or full-time work needed to cover child care expenses while student parents attend classes and complete homework. To support student parents enrolled in teacher education programs, the OSRHE requests $29,742,552 to provide financial assistance to cover out-of-pocket child care costs.

# Project Timeline

## Expenditure Deadline

December 31, 2026

## Project Completion Deadline

December 31, 2026

# Project Scope

## Number of Oklahomans Benefiting from Project

All Oklahomans will benefit from increased teacher recruitment and retention (3.9 million).

## Counties Most Impacted by Project

Statewide

## Qualified Census Tracts

Given that the benefits of this project are statewide, all 209 qualified census tracts in Oklahoma will be impacted by this project.

## Vulnerable Communities and Populations

The COVID-19 pandemic created learning disruptions for all students, especially those from systemically underserved backgrounds (i.e., low-income students, students belonging to a racial/ethnic minority, students with disabilities, English learners, students experiencing homelessness, and students in the foster care system) ([U.S. Department of Education](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjOiPzyvqD2AhUOmGoFHc4qAtAQFnoECC4QAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww2.ed.gov%2Fabout%2Foffices%2Flist%2Focr%2Fdocs%2F20210608-impacts-of-covid19.pdf&usg=AOvVaw22PA3OxU4P3Epb_PNrx-KZ)). In Oklahoma’s public schools, 53.7% of students identify as belonging to a racial/ethnic minority and 56% of the total student population are economically disadvantaged ([Oklahoma State Department of Education, Oklahoma Public Schools Fast Facts 2021-22](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiK9OWr86X2AhX_mmoFHWquB3QQFnoECAMQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fsde.ok.gov%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fdocuments%2Ffiles%2FFast%2520Facts%25202021-22.pdf&usg=AOvVaw1ITfIP1_9IVmSj1wG3oxXV)). Research demonstrates that the COVID-19 pandemic widened pre-existing opportunity and achievement gaps for students, with learning loss greatest among those from traditionally disadvantaged backgrounds – students in high-poverty schools and students of color ([McKinsey & Company](https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-and-education-the-lingering-effects-of-unfinished-learning); [NWEA](https://www.nwea.org/content/uploads/2021/07/Learning-during-COVID-19-Reading-and-math-achievement-in-the-2020-2021-school-year.research-brief-1.pdf); [U.S. Department of Education](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjOiPzyvqD2AhUOmGoFHc4qAtAQFnoECC4QAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww2.ed.gov%2Fabout%2Foffices%2Flist%2Focr%2Fdocs%2F20210608-impacts-of-covid19.pdf&usg=AOvVaw22PA3OxU4P3Epb_PNrx-KZ)). In addition to the learning disruptions caused by the pandemic, these students were more likely to face food and housing insecurity, unreliable access to remote-learning technology, and reduced access to student support services ([The Education Trust](https://edtrust.org/strategies-to-solve-unfinished-learning/)). Ensuring that well-prepared, high quality teachers are in the classroom is critical to addressing disparities in learning loss among Oklahoma’s K-12 students. Teachers, comprehensively prepared by approved educator preparation programs, remain in the classroom longer and have a greater impact on student academic achievement than teachers entering the field through alternative pathways, and they are rated as more effective than their emergency and alternatively certified counterparts by school administrators (First Year Teacher and Administrator/Mentor surveys, Office of Educational Quality and Accountability, 2021). Additionally, teachers who are underprepared can and do have an adverse impact on student achievement which negatively impacts core subject areas. such as math and reading. and perpetuates the need for remediation (Fuxa et. al., 2019).

# Evidence for Proposed Interventions

## Teacher Recruitment

Research demonstrates that increasing the pipeline of students interested in entering the teaching profession requires a comprehensive approach that includes early exposure and incentives for high school students to explore the teaching profession and financial incentives, such as service scholarships and other long-term employment and financial incentives, to underwrite the cost of high-retention preparation. Pre-collegiate teaching academies and courses provide opportunities for middle and high school students to explore the teaching profession through hands-on experiences before they enter college.

## Teacher Retention

Participation in an induction program increases the likelihood that a teacher will remain in the field and at that particular school. Furthermore, studies examined in the 1990’s found that teachers who participated in induction programs typically averaged a three-year retention rate around 90%, while new teachers who did not participate in an indication program averaged a retention rate around 70% or less.

## Teacher Residency Programs

Teacher residency programs are an effective intervention to address retention challenges among new teachers. Research demonstrates that 80-90% of teacher residency graduates stay in the same district for more than three years and 70-80% are still in the same district after five years ([Learning Policy Institute](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/teacher-residency)).

## New Teacher Mentorship and Support

Investing in the professional growth of beginning teachers who have potential is one strategy to improve teacher retention. If a new teacher receives mentoring, collaboration, and extra resources, and is part of a strong teacher network, first-year turnover is cut by more than half (from 41% to 18%). But just 3% of beginning teachers had such a comprehensive set of supports in 2012 ([Learning Policy Institute](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/coming-crisis-teaching-brief)). In addition to retention efforts, mentoring support improves a teacher’s professional practice and positively impacts student academic achievement through effective instruction (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011). Novice teachers do not have the vast experience in education to navigate challenges they may face as they transition into the classroom. A mentor teacher who is more experienced is able to provide the instructional support, wisdom and guidance necessary to help ensure the success of novice teachers and the students they serve. Mentorship gives novice teachers increased efficacy and confidence in their ability to navigate the classroom and impact student learning in a positive way.

## Similar Project Successes

The Oklahoma Teacher Connection (OTC) supports pre-collegiate programs that recruit high school and middle school students into the teaching profession. These programs serve as a precursor to collegiate grant programs aimed at teacher recruitment and retention from a campus-based perspective and takes advantage of the unique strengths of each institution’s educator preparation program. Through these partnerships, students have had opportunities to interact with higher education personnel and learn about key elements in college preparation in addition to valuable experiences for the teaching profession. Data extracted from the 2021 First-Year Teacher Survey report from the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (OEQA) indicate that out of 504 first-year teachers who responded to the question, “As a high school student, did you participate in any programs or classes that influenced your decision to become a teacher,” 20% (104 teachers) indicated prior participation in some type of future teacher class/organization which emphasized a career in teacher education. Many of the respondents recognized a teacher mentorship program or a future teacher organization that helped influence their decision to become classroom teachers.

Professional development is another key component of successful teacher retention. For many years, the Oklahoma State Regents OTC administered the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Title II, A Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) Grants which supported effective professional development activities in Oklahoma. The goal of the program was to ensure that all students had access to highly effective teachers - i.e., teachers with the subject-matter knowledge and effective teaching and learning skills necessary to help all children achieve high academic standards, regardless of individual learning styles or needs. With this goal at the forefront, the program funded professional development with a strong emphasis on content and pedagogical knowledge to improve teacher effectiveness, in classrooms using scientifically based methods to improve teacher quality, school accountability, and core content knowledge leading to increased student academic achievement. From 2014-2017, the program awarded 18 grants for approximately 2.1 million and served 950 teachers and instructional leaders, impacting 82,232 students and 195 school districts. Results reflected significant gains in fundamental concepts associated with student learning, including the areas of science, technology, engineering, math, and English Language Arts.

# Project Implementation

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) will distribute funds to participating Oklahoma educator preparation programs for project implementation and administration. The OSRHE will collect data from all participating institutions for performance outcomes reporting.

# Other Funding & Support Resources

## COVID-19 Relief Funds

Oklahoma’s state system institutions have been awarded $677,142,022 in pandemic relief funding through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES), the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSAA), and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). To date, institutions have expended $387,972,213 in federal pandemic relief funds.

## Federal Funding

For FY22, state system colleges and universities expect to receive $432,078,377 from federal sources, although these funds are restricted for specific purposes.

## Community Support

Insert sources of community support at institutions.

## Collaboration

The State Regents and state system colleges and universities will seek to collaborate with various partner organizations during project implementation to maximize resource leverage. Potential partners include the Oklahoma State Department of Education, the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability, and the Deans of Education Council.

# Project Outcomes

## Performance Measurement

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) will collect data from participating institutions to measure program outcomes. Evidence of project success include: number of middle and high school participants participating in future teacher academies; increased student enrollment in educator preparation programs; increased student retention in educator preparation programs; increased teacher education degree production; number of in-service teachers receiving mentorship and professional development support; and decreased attrition rates among new teachers within the first 5 years of entering the profession. The OSRHE will collect data from participating institutions for performance outcomes reporting related to future teacher academies; student enrollment, retention, and graduation; alternative certification support; professional development; and teacher mentorship/professional support. OSRHE will collaborate with the Oklahoma State Department of Education and/or individual school districts to measure new teacher attrition rates.

## Revenue Generation

Oklahoma’s state system of higher education is a key driver of economic growth and wealth generation in Oklahoma. According to a 2019 report sponsored by the Oklahoma State Chamber Research Foundation, for every dollar of state funding appropriated to higher education, Oklahoma’s state system of higher education generates $9.40 in economic output. Additionally, increasing the number of teacher education graduates will financially benefit the state through increased tax revenue generation given that college graduates an average of $328,511 in lifetime taxes (federal income, state income, property and sales) while high school graduates generate only $136,564 ([Lumina Foundation](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cdblanke%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CINetCache%5CContent.Outlook%5CM7T46AXR%5C.%20https%3A%5Cwww.luminafoundation.org%5Cfiles%5Cresources%5Cits-not-just-the-money.pdf)).

# TOPS: Teacher Opportunities, Pipeline and Supports Use of Funding

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Use of Funding** | **Amount Requested** |
| Paid Student Teaching | $4,000,000 |
| Scholarships | $14,300,000 |
| Alternative Certification Support | $24,000,000 |
| Teacher Mentorship | $1,000,000 |
| Professional Development | $4,000,000 |
| Future Teacher Academies | $3,680,000 |
| School Counselor Production | $1,109,463 |
| Child Care Assistance |  $29,742,552  |
| **Total** | **$81,832,2015** |