



Case Study: Hawkins County

This case study illustrates a Grow Your Own partnership between a district and Education Preparation Provider (EPP) that provides innovative, no-cost pathways for aspiring educators to help establish a strong pipeline to train and develop Tennessee teachers.

Overview

Hawkins County Schools is a rural school district located in east Tennessee. Currently in their second year of Grow Your Own (GYO) programming, the school district has partnered with Lincoln Memorial University, Tennessee Tech University, and Tusculum University to support various vacancies in both secondary school classrooms and special education. Initially, Hawkins County recognized strong talent within their community; however, financial needs and degree costs barred potential participants from serving in the classroom as a teacher of record. The district's multiple university partnerships provide a wide range of options and opportunities to support the individualized needs and experience of candidates. Ultimately, this innovative GYO teacher preparation model allows Hawkins County a chance to refine and develop their own talent, at no-cost to the candidate, to address classroom vacancies.

Participant Example

Hawkins County recently hired a GYO program graduate to fill a 6th grade science classroom vacancy. The candidate was a former teacher's aide (also referred to as a paraprofessional or teacher's aide) and earned a bachelor's degree, teaching license, and special education endorsement through the GYO program. The candidate developed relationships under the guidance of a mentor teacher, which enabled the candidate to start the position with strong connections in both the school and district.



Program Reflections

The district relies on a liaison to monitor the progress and needs of candidates, district partners, and universities. The liaison is a grant writer for Hawkins County with experience working on a university campus. With the assistance of a small team, the liaison created an application process to screen potential candidates and ultimately gauge their long-term success. This process helps to evaluate district needs and vacancies within their criteria for selection.

Future Opportunities



Expanding into the Teaching as a Profession (TAP) Pathway

Expanding into the TAP pathways—an already established pathway for future talent—is an important opportunity to develop early career readiness opportunities for current students interested in teaching.



Efforts to Retain Program Completers

Districts could consider leveraging promissory agreements or length commitments with their candidates committing to the program. Districts may also establish stronger retention measures in their teacher-candidate contracts, or offer salary increases and retention bonuses to address potential departures.



Continued Strategic Partnerships

Leveraging strong partnership opportunities, including rural initiatives for teacher educators and EPPs, districts can specifically promote opportunities for regional teachers who prefer a rural context.