



Labor & Industry Secretary Nancy Walker said fewer people are pursuing teacher certifications, creating staffing challenges in Pennsylvania schools. PHOTO/PACAST

Apprenticeship program for PA teachers addresses staffing shortages

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A \$379,000 grant to Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit to develop an apprenticeship program for teachers has been announced by the Shapiro Administration.

The grant addresses staffing shortages in Pennsylvania schools and creates earn-as-you-learn opportunities for individuals interested in careers as certified elementary and secondary teachers.

The Departments of Labor & Industry (L&I) and Education (PDE) partnered to address Pennsylvania's teacher shortage in early 2023 by expanding the apprenticeship model in the education sector through the creation of the Certified Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Program in Pennsylvania (TAP.PA). TAP.PA seeks to provide training for individuals like paraprofessionals and teachers' aides who want to become certified elementary and secondary teachers.

L&I Secretary Nancy Walker said that fewer people have pursued teacher certification in Pennsylvania in recent years, creating staffing challenges in schools.

"The Shapiro Administration is committed to reversing this trend through targeted investments in our workforce," Walker said in a statement. "The Certified Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Program moves us closer to big-picture solutions while providing real career opportunities for individuals dedicated to the education of our children."

Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit was selected by the Shapiro Administration to design a registered apprenticeship program that school districts across Pennsylvania can use as a template for teacher career pathways. Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit has been tasked with building a sustainable model for teacher training that includes strong partnerships with various stakeholders, including community colleges, higher education institutions, workforce development organizations, government agencies, and local education agencies.

As these partnerships include a wide geographic range, they address urban, suburban, and rural areas.

"Every child deserves a bright future, and that starts with having a well-qualified teacher in every classroom," PDE Secretary Dr. Khalid N. Mumin said. "As a former teacher myself, I know firsthand how important it is to support any Pennsylvanian who wants to serve their community by becoming a teacher. The Certified Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Program will help us rebuild our educator pipeline, so that everyone in Pennsylvania has the freedom to chart their own course and opportunity to succeed."

TAP.PA's important aspects include the following:

- **Curriculum Development:** Aligning with Pennsylvania's educational standards and teacher certification requirements, it integrates existing coursework and offers flexible learning methods. The program adopts a competency-based apprenticeship approach, blending practical on-the-job training in school settings with classroom instruction.
- **Diverse Pathways:** Tailoring a program for both paraprofessionals and emergency-certified teachers, ensuring their alignment with Pennsylvania's teacher certification criteria.
- **Mentorship and Diversity Training:** Focusing on enhancing inclusivity and equity within the educator workforce.

According to Penn State College of Education's Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, the number of teaching positions filled by individuals on an emergency permit has significantly increased compared to the number of newly certified teachers who participated in state teacher preparation programs. While there are more than 30 registered apprenticeship programs in the education sector throughout Pennsylvania, most are focused on the early childhood education workforce.