# **Massachusetts Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program (RTAP)**

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

1. **What is the Massachusetts Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program (RTAP)?**

The RTAP is an innovative pathway into the teaching profession designed to diversify the educator workforce, expand access to the teaching profession (particularly in hard-to-staff roles), and support high-quality instruction. It allows individuals to earn their Initial teaching license while gaining hands-on experience in a classroom. Each RTAP is supported by a partnership between an employing school district and approved educator preparation providers (EPPs).

1. **What is the difference between a registered teacher apprenticeship program, teacher residencies, and a grow-your-own program?**

An RTAP is a formal program that provides a paid path to becoming a teacher. It combines on-the-job training with academic coursework so participants can earn a salary while working toward their teaching license. RTAPs in Massachusetts are approved by the state’s Department of Elementary & Secondary Education and authorized through the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development in accordance with state laws governing preparation and licensure and U.S. Department of Labor requirements and guidelines for registered apprenticeships.

Grow-Your-Own (GYO) programs vary in program design and objectives. While they often focus on recruiting aspiring educators from the local community into pipeline programs related to education, they may or may not adhere to state preparation and licensure requirements nor result in licensure.

Teacher residencies also vary in scope and program design. These are typically post-baccalaureate programs that allow an individual to be employed in a teaching position (often on a Provisional license) while completing the requirements for Initial licensure.

More information about the differences between RTAPs, GYO programs, and teacher residencies is available [here](#_Characteristics_of_RTAPs,).

1. **Who is eligible to operate a RTAP?**

In Massachusetts, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) approves all district-based RTAPs and serves as the intermediary to the state’s Division of Apprentices in the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. A public school district or school may apply to operate an RTAP pathway as the employer in partnership with an approved educator preparation provider as the related technical instructional provider.

1. **Who is eligible to be a teacher apprentice?**

To qualify as an apprentice, candidates must be at least 18 years old or older and employed in a full-time instructional role related to the teacher occupation (e.g., paraprofessional, teaching aide). Apprentices may not be teachers-of-record. Candidates must have a high school diploma or a Massachusetts High School Equivalency Credential. Candidates must meet the physical requirements set by the employing Massachusetts Local Education Agency and be able to access and navigate all areas of a school. Employment eligibility within a Massachusetts Local Education Agency includes passing background checks, fingerprinting, and other pre-screening processes. Additionally, candidates must meet the admission requirements of the educator preparation provider. More information can be found in Appendix A: Work Process Schedule, SELECTION PROCEDURES. All other eligibility requirements are determined by the school districts and EPPs. Applicants must meet the qualifications outlined by these entities. Individuals cannot apply directly without district sponsorship.

1. **How does the RTAP differ from the Performance Review Program for Initial Licensure (PRPIL)?**

PRPIL (Performance Review Program for Initial Licensure) is an alternative Massachusetts Teacher's License program for teachers who wish to advance from a Provisional license to an Initial license. Candidates engaged in PRPIL earn their Initial license while they continue to teach.

While both PRPIL and RTAP result in Initial licensure, PRPIL candidates are teachers-of-record with at least three years of experience teaching on a Provisional license. Registered teacher apprentices are not required to have a Provisional license, and they may not be employed as teachers-of-record while completing their apprenticeship term. An individual may also pursue Initial licensure via PRPIL on their own, while a registered teacher apprentice must by sponsored by an employing district.

1. **What are the goals and main components of the RTAP?**

The RTAP aims to diversify the educator workforce, expand access to the teacher profession in hard-to-staff roles, and support high-quality instruction. Key components include a culturally responsive curriculum, wrap-around supports, mentorship and supervision from experienced educators, flexible programming, and access to an earn-while-your-learn preparation model with progressive wage increases.

1. **How is the RTAP structured?**

Each RTAP involves a partnership between the sponsoring school district and an approved EPP(s). Apprentices are employed full-time in classrooms in an instructional role while completing coursework through their EPP and demonstrating on-the-job competencies under the supervision of a licensed supervising practitioner. RTAPs are flexible enough to be designed around a post-bac model that supports college graduates or career changers, or it may serve as a degree-granting baccalaureate pathway for recent high school graduates or individuals with their associate's degree.

1. **How long does it take to complete a RTAP?**

Registered teacher apprentices must complete at least 2,000 hours of on-the-job learning and no less than 150 hours of related instruction per year. Given that a typical academic school year is comprised of 180 instruction days, this type of model will likely yield apprenticeship terms that span at least two academic years. RTAPs may extend beyond two years depending on prior experience and the requirements of the license.

1. **Who should apply?**

This program is ideal for career changers, paraprofessionals, college and community college students, or anyone seeking a cost-free pathway to become a teacher.

1. **How does the RTAP support culturally responsive teaching?**

Districts will work closely with EPPs to teach apprentices how to use culturally responsive teaching. This means they help apprentices create classrooms where all students feel included and valued, no matter their background. Districts and EPPs make sure apprentices are trained to understand and respect students' different cultures and experiences. Employing districts and partner EPPs will need to demonstrate evidence of expertise in cultivating culturally and linguistically sustaining teaching and learning environments.

1. **What are the costs and financial assistance obligations associated with the RTAP?**

RTAPs are intended to be an affordable way to become a teacher. While apprentices earn a living wage, employing districts and EPPs cover almost all costs associated with obtaining licensure through state and federal grant programs. Remaining costs for individual apprentices may be covered through scholarship programs.

1. **What happens after I complete the RTAP?**

Upon successful completion of the program, apprentices are endorsed for their Initial teaching license and are eligible for full-time teaching positions in Massachusetts.

1. **How does the RTAP align with Massachusetts' educational goals?**

The RTAP supports diversity, equity, and excellence in teaching, aligning with DESE’s Educational Vision and commitment to cultivating and sustaining an educator workforce that is diverse, culturally responsive, well-prepared, and committed to continuous improvement, ensuring that all students have equitable access to effective educators. The program also works to expand the pipeline into hard-to-staff fields such as STEM and special education. As a potential apprentice, you might wonder what type of teacher you could become. RTAP provides pathways to train in subjects like early childhood, STEM, or special education, depending on the needs of the districts involved.

1. **Who can I contact for more information about the RTAP?**

For more information, contact us at [EducatorApprenticeships@mass.gov](mailto:EducatorApprenticeships@mass.gov)

## **Characteristics of RTAPs, GYOs, and Teacher Residencies**

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| **Element** | **MA RTAP** | **GYO** | **Residencies** |
| **Federally recognized** | • |  |  |
| **Community-based recruitment** | • | • | ° |
| **Individualized support** | • | • | ° |
| **Multiple pathways (e.g., HS, UG, Grad)** | • | ° | ° |
| **Progressive wages** | • |  |  |
| **Paid work-based learning** | • | ° | ° |
| **Aligned coursework** | • | ° | • |
| **Minimum number of hours/years of work-based learning** | • |  | • |
| **Cohorts** | • | ° | ° |
| **Culminates in a degree** | ° | ° | ° |
| **Prepares candidates for Initial licensure** | • |  | • |
| **Focused on diversifying the profession** | • | ° |  |
| Mentorship and Coaching | • | ° | • |
| In partnership w/ Educator Prep Provider | • | ° | • |
| Long-term Career Support | • | ° |  |
| Equity-Focused Pedagogy | • | ° | ° |
| Formal Evaluation and Feedback Loop | • |  | • |

• = always present ° = sometimes present

*Adapted from “*[***What's the Difference Between Grow Your Own, Teacher Residency, and Teacher Registered Apprenticeship?***](https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/whats-the-difference-between-gyo-teacher-residency-and-teacher-registered-apprenticeship/)***”*** *by New America, 2024*