



Unpacking the 6,000 Hour Requirement for K-12 Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Programs

Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs are an emerging strategy for recruiting, preparing, and retaining a diverse pool of qualified teachers. RA programs in the education sector, like all RA programs, are certified by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Office of Apprenticeship (OA) or State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA) and registered locally if the program meets the requirements of the occupation. To approve the K-12 teacher occupation, DOL convened a working group of experts in the field of teacher preparation, which determined that it generally takes 6,000 hours of on-the-job learning for individuals to gain the skills needed to meet the qualifications to become a well-prepared teacher. Apprentices enter programs with a range of education and work experience; therefore, depending on the target audience of the RA program, there may be some variability in the length of the program.

Implications for Program Design

Most K-12 Teacher RA programs use competency-based approaches to measure apprentices' skill and knowledge acquisition, though time-based or hybrid approaches may also be used. In a competency-based approach, apprentices must successfully demonstrate acquired skills, knowledge, and competency on the job, as verified by the sponsor.* Program standards must address how on-the-job learning and supplemental education will be integrated into the program, with the required competencies described in a program's Work Process Schedule (WPS).¹ For K-12 Teacher RA programs, the WPS should reflect the understanding that it generally takes 6,000 hours for someone to demonstrate mastery of the competencies needed to become a well-prepared teacher.

Approaches to Providing 6,000 Hours of On-the-Job Learning

The WPS for the K-12 teacher occupation outlines all competencies expected to be learned on the job within 6,000 hours. Sponsors have flexibility in how RA programs are designed to meet the needs of their community, as well as the target demographic of the K-12 Teacher RA program. The 6,000 hours estimation is not necessarily the actual length of the program; the actual length of the program should ultimately be determined by the amount of time it takes the apprentice to demonstrate proficiency in each competency. For example, if the educator RA program is designed for a target audience of paraeducators, apprentices may be able to leverage their prior work experience to demonstrate their proficiency in each competency in fewer than 6,000 hours.

* As noted in CFR 29, Part 29, the competency-based approach measures skill acquisition through the individual apprentice's successful demonstration of acquired skills and knowledge, as verified by the program sponsor. Programs utilizing this approach must still require apprentices to complete an on-the-job learning component of Registered Apprenticeship. The program standards must address how on-the-job learning will be integrated into the program, describe competencies, and identify an appropriate means of testing and evaluation for such competencies.

RA program sponsors can determine how the 6,000 hours can be structured in alignment with state legislation or policy. For example, the Tennessee Department of Education’s WPS for a hybrid Teacher RA program lists requirements for how many hours should be spent on specific topics and competencies within the on-the-job learning² (**Exhibit 1**).

Exhibit 1. Excerpt from Tennessee Department of Education’s Table C: On-the-Job Learning Hour Requirements

Table C:
On-the-Job Learning Hour Requirements

1,500 hrs	<p>Concepts for Beginner Teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations of first- and second-year teachers • Critical attributes of domains, components, and elements • Innovative ideas in teaching • State curriculum frameworks and lesson design • Expectations related to district-wide initiatives practice, policies, and procedures • School resources that are available to assist students in crisis • Work/life balances for teachers • Navigation of the standards aligned systems and websites • Understanding the public-school education system and its influence
100 hrs	<p>Safety Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School district specific training will be provided
1,700 hrs	<p>Classroom Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom management tips and techniques • Application of best practices in time management in and outside of classroom • Challenging lesson plans for diverse student populations • Virtual and traditional classroom settings
500 hrs	<p>Becoming a Career Ambassador</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality traits and career choices for students • Myers Briggs Type Indicators/Strong Interest Inventory • Career readiness awareness and application
700 hrs	<p>Workplace Trends & Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace/industries and their needs • Basics of Employment Law/Dos and Don’ts • Role of the Human Resources Manager • What employers need from HS graduates
500 hrs	<p>Summer Rotations/Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing the summer of rotation/journaling and reporting • Collaboration with other teachers/teamwork • Internet resources
1,000 hrs	<p>Presentation Skills in the Classroom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best practices in training and workforce development • Application of training techniques in the classroom

Total Hours: 6,000

K-12 Teacher RA programs with fewer than 6,000 hours typically require other degrees or credentials to demonstrate attainment of required competencies. For example, the WPS from the Pathways Alliance National Guideline Standards³ includes a competency checklist for an estimated program length of 2,000 hours (**Exhibit 2**). Typically, approved K-12 Teacher RA programs with a requirement of 2,000 hours of on-the-job learning are post-baccalaureate programs with a pre-requisite of a bachelor’s degree for entry. In these cases, program entrance requirements should include previously earned credentials (e.g., a bachelor’s degree in a relevant field) that may allow them to demonstrate competencies in fewer than 6,000 hours.

Exhibit 2. Excerpt from Pathways Alliance National Guideline Standards’ Appendix A: Work Process Schedule K-12 Teacher

K-12 Teacher			
Job Description: Teaches one or more subjects to students at the elementary, middle, intermediate, junior high or high school level.			
RAPIDS Code: 3024CB		O*Net Code: 25-3099.00	
Estimated Program Length: 2000 hours			
Apprenticeship Type:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Competency-Based	<input type="checkbox"/> Time-Based	<input type="checkbox"/> Hybrid

Classroom Academy, a 2-year post-baccalaureate K-12 Teacher RA program in New York State, is an example of a RA program in which apprentices demonstrate career-ready competency (based on the New York State Teaching Standards⁴) in fewer than 6,000 hours. In the Classroom Academy RA program, apprentices leverage their education and experience to demonstrate competency of the standards in 2,000 to 2,800 hours.

K-12 Teacher RA programs can be designed to allow flexibilities in how much time apprentices require to demonstrate the acquisition of skills and knowledge and their proficiencies in the competencies. But these flexibilities must not shortchange the amount of time apprentices need to demonstrate the skills, knowledge, and competencies needed to become a high-quality K-12 teacher.

¹ Circular 2016-01 Subject: Guidelines for Competency-based, Hybrid, and Time-based Apprenticeship Training Approaches. <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/sites/default/files/bulletins/Cir2016-01.pdf>

² Tennessee Department of Education. May 2022. Table C: On-the-Job Learning Hour Requirements

³ Appendix A. On-the-Job Learning Outline K-12 Teacher. O*Net-SOC CODE: 25-3099.00 RAPIDS CODE: 3024CB

⁴ New York State Teaching Standards and Elements. <https://www.ocmboces.org/tfiles/folder1602/NYS%20Teaching%20Standards%20placemat.pdf>