

# Building Degree Apprenticeships in Louisiana A State-Led Approach to Strengthening the Teacher Pipeline

## Why Degree Apprenticeships?

**State Challenge:** Louisiana faces a persistent shortage of qualified teachers, and the cost of a teaching degree has proven to be a barrier for aspiring educators. Compounding this problem is that the traditional pathway into the classroom requires a year-long student teaching residency that is unpaid, meaning students pay tuition while working full-time with no wage.

**Key Insight:** Education and workforce leaders in Louisiana saw degree apprenticeship as an opportunity to flip the traditional model on its head. Instead of students paying tuition and working without a wage, the apprenticeship helps to pay their tuition and provides them with wages while they train. This shift presents an opportunity to make the traditional, well-supported four-year teaching pathway accessible to more students, rather than pushing these students toward faster, less supported alternative certification routes. It also gives school districts a built-in, yearlong opportunity to evaluate and develop future hires before bringing them on as staff.

### Snapshot

**State:** Louisiana

**Priority Sector:** Education

**Current Status:** Multiple pilots underway and statewide framework in development

**Program Sites:** Louisiana Delta Community College; Southeastern Louisiana University

**Employer Partners:** 13 school districts engaged through the Delta Community College

**Apprentices Served:** 54+ apprentices across five cohorts at Delta Community College, with additional cohorts at Southeastern Louisiana University and Tangipahoa Parish.



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## **Building the Foundation**

**Governance Structure:** Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry has made the education-workforce continuum a top state priority, including through the Board of Regents' [Louisiana Prospers](#) initiative, which aims to raise educational attainment among the working-age population by ensuring 60% of all working-age adults have a college degree or high-value credential by 2030. Establishing this as a top priority has helped pull agencies together around a shared goal. Notably, no single agency championed degree apprenticeship in Louisiana. Instead, the Governor's Office, Board of Regents, Department of Education, LA Works, and the community college system identified a common problem and determined that apprenticeship could be an effective solution. The Board of Regents has since taken the lead in documenting lessons from existing pilots and is now convening the Department of Education and LA Works to build a statewide framework grounded in what they are seeing from these pilots.



**Lesson for Other States:** Cross-agency collaboration rather than single-agency ownership has been critical for building trust and momentum and a clear signal from the governor's office that education and workforce alignment is a priority has served as the impetus for bringing agencies together.

### **Core Leadership Team**

- Governor's Office
- Louisiana Board of Regents
- Louisiana Department of Education
- LA Works

### **Key Stakeholders**

- School Districts
- Louisiana Delta Community College
- Southeastern Louisiana University



## **Sector Strategy and Program Design**

Louisiana has focused its initial degree apprenticeship work on education because of the dual pressure of teacher shortages and the high costs of postsecondary education. The two pilot programs leading the way are:

- Louisiana Delta Community College, which is running an accelerated three-year, associate and bachelor's degree program as a registered apprenticeship: 1.5 years toward an associate degree followed by 1.5 years toward a bachelor's degree with apprentices working full-time in districts during summers. The program has grown from 6 to 13 partner districts since its inception and is now in its 5<sup>th</sup> cohort, with 54 apprentices having been served.
- Southeastern Louisiana University is in the process of building district partnerships.
- Tangipahoa Parish leveraged its general funds for its initial cohort consisting of five apprentices, using a contract structure that gives the district the right of first refusal to hire its apprentices.

## **Funding and Sustainability**

Louisiana's funding approach is still largely developed on a program-by-program basis rather than built around a statewide cost model. Thus far, school districts are typically the primary wage payer. Many apprentices are already employed as full-time paraprofessionals and continue drawing that salary while in the program, and true registered apprentices are hired at an apprenticeship rate to meet program requirements. On the education side, tuition is covered through a mix of sources, including Pell grants for eligible students, WIOA funds where available, early exploration of Title II funding and MOUs for tuition reductions on transfer credits, and the Geaux Teach tuition-waiver program. In at least one system, the local education agency has opted to pay tuition entirely out of general funds after seeing early results.

## **Early Results and Impact**

While Louisiana's pilots are still young, their early outcomes are encouraging. Delta Community College's first cohort achieved 100% job placement in the districts where apprentices trained. In Caldwell Parish, all three apprentices from the first cohort were hired in their districts immediately upon graduation.



Louisiana is currently tracking short-term metrics like completion and employment and is one of six states selected for [NGA's policy academy to advance data dashboards, where they are receiving support to better measure progress and success in education and the workforce](#). As Louisiana continues to grow their Degree Apprenticeship programs, the state is looking to collect metrics that track long-term outcomes, including how many students become masters' teachers or instructional coaches or are promoted to system level positions. As part of this effort, they are looking to build the infrastructure to support long-term data tracking for several of their education and workforce development programs, including degree apprenticeship.

## **Governor's Action Items**

Louisiana's experience, which has been built on strong pilots that are maturing into a statewide model, offer a few clear takeaways for governors looking to launch similar efforts:

- **Establish degree apprenticeship as a top workforce and education priority for the Governor:** A clear signal that education and workforce alignment is a governor's priority helps bring agencies to the table without requiring a single champion to drive the work.
- **Convene all higher education, K-12, and workforce agencies.** These are the entities that are well-positioned to drive degree apprenticeship, and ensuring they come together can create alignment and understanding of priorities and challenges.
- **Build data tracking into the program from the start.** This helps to demonstrate the short-term value and capture the longer-term career outcomes that make the case for continued investment.