



Maryland Leads Strategy: Grow Your Own Staff

Evaluation Report

Office of Research

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MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Executive Summary

As part of Maryland's Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding allotment, the Maryland State Department of Education created the Maryland Leads initiative, which committed the state's set aside funds to local education agencies to implement at least two of seven high-leverage strategies. In February 2022, 23 LEAs were awarded a total of \$47.5 million to implement Grow Your Own (GYO) programs in order to bolster the pipeline of teachers and other professional support staff.¹ This report summarizes findings in relation to the activities and characteristics of programs and the perceived successes, barriers, and challenges related to program implementation.

The following summarizes the findings of this report:

- **Activities and characteristics of programs** – As of quarter 1 of 2024, LEAs and partners had combined to spend roughly \$9.5 million on their GYO programs. Out of the six focus areas, the greatest proportion of these funds were spent on:
 - establishing a residency program (23%),
 - creating programs for high school students to pursue careers in education (21%),
 - enabling teaching assistants to become teachers (19%),
 - designing opportunities to build pipelines for hard-to-fill areas (19%).
- **Successes** – Perceived successes included:
 - increases in participants of all stages of the pipeline, from the number of high school students on track to undertake careers in teaching to teachers employed in local schools
 - increasing the pipeline of underrepresented teachers and/or teachers in hard-to-staff positions
- **Barriers and challenges** – LEAs reported various barriers and challenges to the implementation of GYO programs:
 - The timing of the grant period and/or late release of funds. For example, several LEAs stated that the grant period was not long enough to cover the period that is required for teacher candidates to complete their licensure programs.
 - Engaging capable university partners that also offered flexibility for teacher candidates who were often working full-time jobs.
 - Local labor markets and the ability to find adequate candidates for their programs.
 - The greatest number of barriers/challenges were reported at the program level. While challenges were numerous and touched on a broad number of areas, it was commonly reported that students and teacher candidates struggled to meet the demands of coursework and other program requirements due to the various demands on their time.

¹ The budget for GYO was later amended to \$23.9 million.

Introduction

In an attempt to overcome the learning loss resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, states received a substantial increase in revenue through the allocation of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds. In February 2022, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) announced a portion of these funds would be used to fund the Maryland Leads grant initiative which covered seven high-leverage strategies, including Grow Your Own Staff (GYO).² With the purpose of developing the pipelines of teachers and other professional support staff, each local educational agency (LEA) that received a grant under this strategy was required to implement activities that support one or more of the following focus areas:

- Establish a year-long, paid residency program for teachers and other professional support staff (e.g., social workers, speech language pathologists, etc.).
- Enable teaching assistants to become teachers.
- Develop programs to diversify the teaching corps (underrepresented groups).
- Create programs for high school students to pursue careers in education.
- Design opportunities to build pipelines for hard-to-fill areas such as math, science, special education, bilingual, CTE, etc.
- Build programs to support individuals in changing careers and entering the education field.

This evaluation report serves to examine the implementation of the GYO strategy activities. Following this introduction and the strategy overview, this report is sectioned into the six GYO focus areas, each of which discusses activity progress, expenses per participant, activity successes, and potential resulting changes to the educator workforce.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The following questions were used to guide this evaluation:

1. What are the activities that LEAs implemented for each GYO focus area, and what were the characteristics (participants and expenditures) of programs?
2. What successes are LEAs reporting in their GYO activities?
3. What barriers and challenges are LEAs reporting in their GYO activities?

² For more information on Maryland Leads, see <https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/MDLeads/index.aspx>

EVALUATION SCOPE AND SIZE

In 2022, 23 LEAs were awarded a total of \$47.5 million under the Maryland Leads GYO strategy.³ LEAs had the option of implementing at least one of six GYO focus areas. LEAs have developed partnerships with more than 45 different MSDE approved partners in order to fulfill the grant requirement to work with qualified partners to design and implement preparation programs. This evaluation examines the goals and activities reported for all focus areas and awarded LEAs. However, if both goals and spending were not provided for each focus area, all associated data was excluded from this evaluation.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

Local education agencies that received Maryland Leads grant awards were required to report progress throughout the grant period. Progress monitoring was conducted by MSDE via a reporting tool in Microsoft Excel and as a survey in Qualtrics in September 2023 and March 2024. These tools were used to collect data on expenses, goals, partners, participants, activities, successes and barriers/challenges as reported by the agency.

Analysis

Descriptive analysis of the monitoring data, combined with analysis of the qualitative survey data, comprised the analytic strategy of the report.

Limitations

Linking expenses, goals, and activities to focus areas occurred after applications were approved. While not requiring LEAs to link their application narratives to specific focus areas allowed for greater flexibility, this approach limited the robustness of this statewide evaluation. Due to this delayed categorization, it was not feasible to aggregate this data to the state level without excluding a significant amount of data.

³ The budget for GYO was later amended to \$23.9 million.

Strategy Overview

In February 2022, MSDE launched the Maryland Leads grant initiative to seed transformational change for schools across Maryland. Maryland's 24 LEAs had an opportunity to access the state's allotment of \$133 million ESSER funds through a single, non-competitive grant. Maryland Leads is based on seven high-leverage strategies which includes GYO.

REQUIREMENTS

To participate in the grant initiative, LEAs were required to select at least two of seven strategies. LEAs applying to implement the GYO strategy through the Maryland Leads grant were required to complete an online Google Form, from February 2022 to April 2022, that included the following⁴:

- A description of the challenges the LEA faces and how the pursuit of GYO will help the LEA overcome the challenges.
- A description of how planned grant activities align with the LEA's goals, priorities, or current activities.
- A description of how the LEA's pursuit of GYO will increase participation and impact on historically underserved groups.
- A description of what success will look like for GYO and the criteria that will be used to determine success.
- An uploaded copy of the LEA's completed budget document on the template provided by MSDE.

For each strategy including GYO, one or more of the focus areas were required to be supported by the grant activities. In addition to supporting one of the six GYO focus areas listed in the following section (**Table 1**), LEAs that selected GYO were required to develop partnerships with the 30 "best-in-class" partners identified by MSDE. Once implementation began in Summer 2022, LEAs were required to periodically report the progress of grant activities to MSDE.

FUNDING

Grant awards were announced in Spring 2022 with 23 LEAs receiving nearly \$48 million in grant awards for GYO. This amount includes a bonus of \$1 million for each LEA implementing a GYO program. LEAs were also eligible to supplement their awards through a match program with MSDE, which would match LEA contributions dollar for dollar up to and including \$1.5 million. Suggested uses of funds included covering tuition, certification costs, stipends, professional development, salaries, consulting, technical assistance, marketing, project management, and non-personnel LEA implementation costs.

⁴ This list does not include all of the information required in the online application. The entire list can be found here in the MSDE Maryland Leads Guidance Document on page 22.

FOCUS AREAS

In the most recent progress report, collected during quarter one of 2024, the 23 LEAs that were awarded funds for GYO reported grant activities across all six GYO focus areas. As shown in **Table 1** below, LEAs have reported spending more than \$9.5 million on GYO activities that have included over 3,500 participants. The second focus area, teaching assistants to teachers, included reported data from the highest number of awarded LEAs (16) while the first focus area, residency programs, included the least (4). The fourth focus area, high school programs, had the greatest number of reported participants (1,853) while the first focus area, residency programs, had the greatest cumulative expenses (\$2.2 million).

PARTNERSHIPS

Many LEAs reported developing partnerships with multiple partners and several LEAs utilized partners not initially approved by MSDE. However, despite the partnership requirement, some LEAs did not report having partners across each focus area. The second focus area, teaching assistants to teachers, had the greatest percentage of LEAs with partners (88%), while the first focus area, residency programs, had the least (25%) (**Table 2**). The second focus area also had the greatest amount of partner expenses (\$641,723) while the third focus area, diversifying teaching corps, had the least (\$36, 754).

Consultants vs. Service Providers

“We looked for partners that would provide services for us since smaller LEAs such as ours need people to do the work with them. However, many of the approved MSDE partners wanted to perform more of a consultant role.”

— Charles County Public Schools

Table 1. Partnerships, Participation, and Cumulative Expenses by Focus Area

#	Grow Your Own Staff Focus Area	LEA Count	LEAs with Partners	Participants	LEA Expenses	Partner Expenses
1	Establish a year-long, paid residency program for teachers and other professional support staff (e.g., social workers, speech language pathologists, etc.).	4	1	389	\$1,659,617	\$495,000
2	Enable teaching assistants to become teachers.	16	14	565	\$1,148,417	\$641,723
3	Develop programs to diversify the teaching corps (underrepresented groups).	5	2	99	\$277,751	\$36,754
4	Create programs for high school students to pursue careers in education.	13	6	1,853	\$1,682,000	\$294,067
5	Design opportunities to build pipelines for hard-to-fill areas such as math, science, special education, bilingual, CTE, etc.	9	7	155	\$1,273,645	\$519,481
6	Build programs to support individuals in changing careers and entering the education field.	6	4	372	\$932,106	\$600,000
	TOTAL	53	34	3,433	\$6,973,536	\$2,587,025

Residency Programs

The first focus area listed under the Maryland Leads GYO strategy included establishing a year-long, paid residency program for teachers and other professional support staff (e.g., social workers, speech language pathologists, etc.). In residency programs, candidates complete coursework from a partnering university while participating in clinical training with an expert teacher. Typically living stipends and tuition support are offered to candidates as they complete their credentialing and receive a master's degree at the end of the residency year.⁵

The design of residency programs varied across the four LEAs that chose this focus area to support grant activities. As shown in **Table 2**, LEAs have used more than \$2.1 million of their grant award to provide mentors, administrative residency and teacher apprenticeship programs, and licensure preparation to a total of 389 participants. The cost per participant across activities ranged from \$907 to \$101,427 with a median of \$28,146. Despite the partner requirement, only one LEA established a partnership to support the activities under this focus area.

Table 2. Summary of Residency Programs

Activity	LEA Count	LEAs with Partners	Participants	Cumulative Expenses
Offer mentorship for student teacher interns.	1	0	339	\$307,633
Provide administrative residency program to aspiring principals.	1	0	6	\$608,564
Provide teacher apprenticeship program to aspiring teachers.	1	0	22	\$743,420
Support teacher candidates with licensure preparation.	1	1	22	\$495,000
TOTAL	4	1	389	\$2,154,617

⁵ <https://compcenternetwork.org/sites/default/files/StrengtheningAndDiversifyingWorkforce.pdf>

SUCCESS BY NUMBERS

Figure 1 shows reported successes of the residency programs as of quarter 1 2024. The LEA with the largest number of participants reported 339 full-time teacher internship placements had been completed by Spring 2023. LEAs implementing teacher residency and apprenticeship programs reported 15 candidates had been hired after graduating from their programs and one LEA reported that four administrative interns had been accepted into an assistant principal pool.

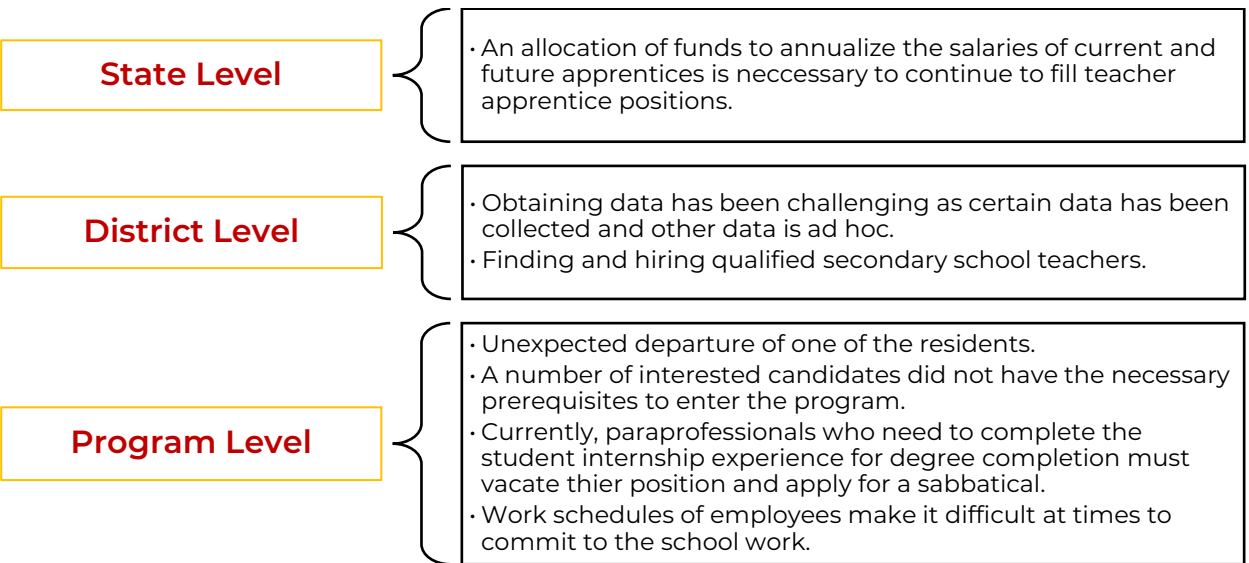
Figure 1. Residency Program Success by Numbers



BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

Figure 2 displays barriers and challenges to program implementation of residency programs reported across LEAs. A challenge that was reported at the state level was that an allocation of funds was necessary to annualize the salaries of current and future apprentices, in order to fill apprentice positions. A challenge reported at the LEA level was that data requirements were not sufficient, as different data sources had different reporting periods and some were too slow to be useful for planning purposes. At the program level a number of challenges were reported, though a common challenge was finding candidates with the necessary prerequisites to enter programs.

Figure 2. Residency Program Barriers and Challenges



Teaching Assistants to Teachers

The second focus area listed under the Maryland Leads GYO strategy included enabling teaching assistants to become teachers. Based on the progress reported to MSDE, 16 LEAs have offered support through this focus area to paraprofessionals, instructional assistants, and conditional teachers to earn degrees and certifications (Table 3). In order to support these educators, 14 of these LEAs partnered with either community colleges, universities, and/or nonprofit organizations. LEAs have used nearly \$1.8 million to provide supports to 565 participants. Cost per participant for activities ranged from \$62 to \$25,501 with a median of \$4,719.

Table 3. Summary of Teaching Assistants to Teachers

Activity	LEA Count	LEAs with Partners	Participants	Cumulative Expenses
Support paraprofessionals/instructional assistants in earning a degree and/or certification.	8	7	176	\$708,986
Support conditional teachers in earning full professional licensure.	4	4	57	\$316,048
Support educators to become more qualified.	4	3	332	\$765,106
Total	16	14	565	\$1,790,140

Note: One LEA's expenditures are not included because they did not provide any other information for this focus area.

Multiple Course Pathways

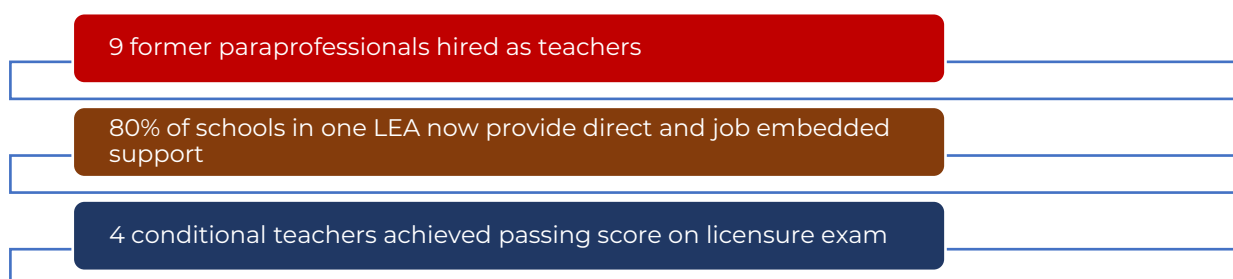
"With our degree programs, the number of courses participants must complete paired with the number of courses individuals might have already completed prior to joining the program created a variety of course pathways for each of our participants. Therefore, while all participants in the cohort are participating in the same program simultaneously, all participants might not participate in the same courses simultaneously. Thus, we have adapted our support to address broader programmatic issues and teambuilding needs in whole groups, while we provide course-specific support to individual participants."

— Anne Arundel County Public Schools

SUCCESS BY NUMBERS

Figure 3 highlights some successes reported by programs implementing support for teaching assistantships. Programs reported 9 paraprofessionals hired as teachers. One LEA reported that 80% of its schools now provide direct, job-embedded support. Additionally, it was reported that 4 conditional teachers achieved a passing score on their licensure exam. Generally, it was reported that the length of time to earn a degree and certification resulted in lower numbers representing success, compared to other focus areas of the grant.

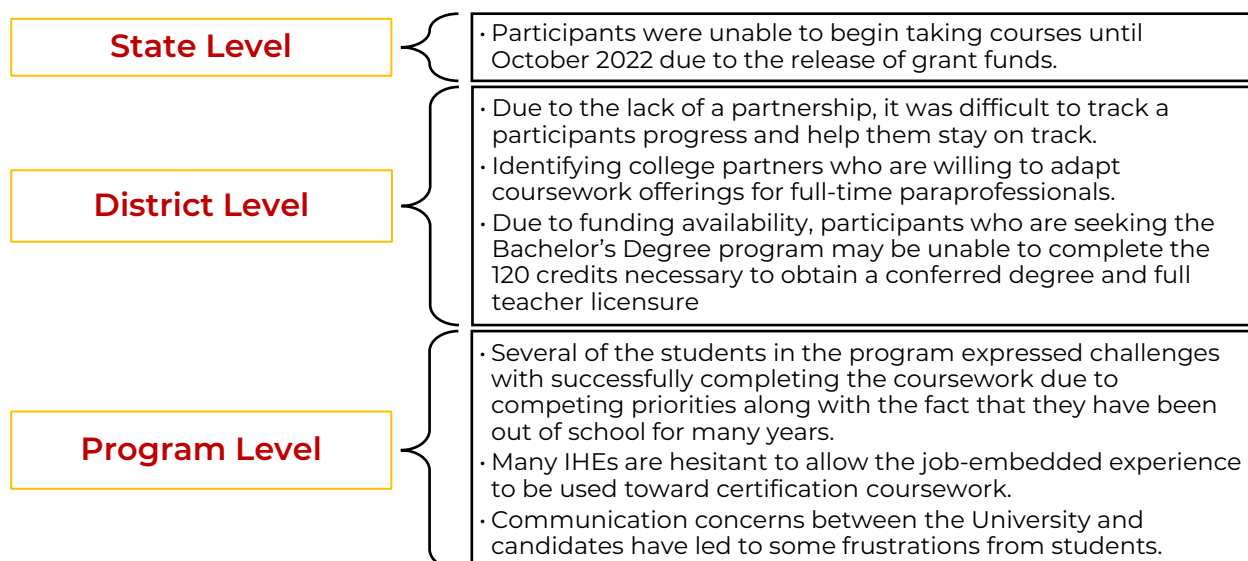
Figure 3. Teaching Assistants to Teachers Success by Numbers



BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

Figure 4 shows some barriers and challenges reported by programs. At the state level, participants were unable to begin taking courses until October 2022 due to the late release of grant funds. At the district level, there were a number of challenges reported with regard to partners. For example, in one LEA, it was difficult to track participants' progress because of the lack of an established partnership. It was also reported that some colleges were unwilling to adapt coursework to meet the needs of full-time paraprofessionals.

Figure 4. Teaching Assistants to Teachers Barriers and Challenges



Diversifying Teaching Corps

The third focus area is diversifying the teaching corps. Table 4 summarizes LEA activities associated with the GYO focus area of diversifying the teaching corps. The table shows that the largest number of LEAs (4) chose to recruit educators of color through partnerships and incentives. However, the largest number of participants (60) were associated with the activity of retaining educators of color through offering change process courses. Here, only one LEA chose this activity.

Table 4. Summary Table of Diversifying Teacher Corps

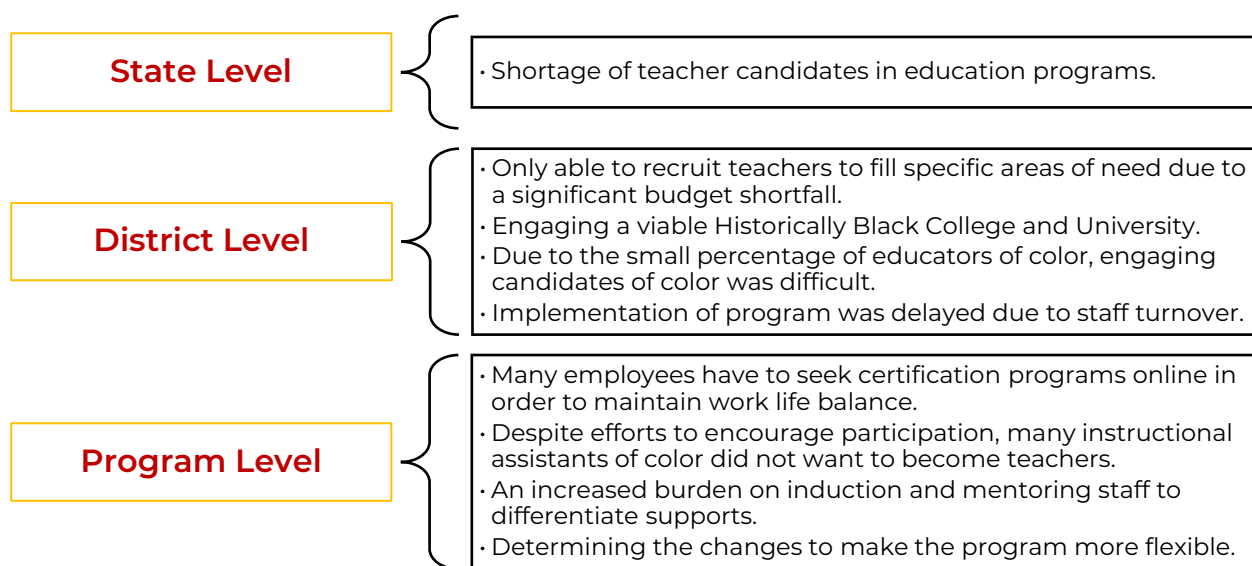
Activity	LEA Count	LEAs with Partners	Participants	Cumulative Expenses
Retaining educators of color through the offering of change process courses.	1	0	60	\$20,184
Recruiting educators of color through partnerships and incentives.	4	2	39	\$294,321
Total	5	2	99	\$314,505

Note: One additional LEA reported expenditures of \$307,963 in this focus area but did not break spending down by source and did not describe activities, so their information is not included.

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

Figure 6 shows some barriers and challenges reported by LEAs implementing activities to diversify the teaching corps. For example, at the state level, it was commonly reported that there was a shortage of teacher candidates in education programs. At the district level, LEAs were only able to recruit teachers to fill specific areas due to budget shortfalls. One LEA also reported challenges in engaging a Historically Black College/University. At the program level, there were challenges related to engaging teachers and instructional assistants of color and accommodating flexibility due to work schedules and the need to maintain work-life balance.

Figure 6. Diversifying Teacher Corps Barriers and Challenges



High School Programs

Table 5 summarizes the activities associated with GYO programs in the focus area related to high school programs. The activity with the largest number of participants (1,352) was expanding Educator Rising chapters into middle and high schools, and most of this participation was accounted for by one LEA. The activity with the highest expenses was offering courses through dual enrollment or accelerated jump-start programs. Other activities included recruiting and supporting diverse students entering the teacher academy, offering students a financial incentive, and recruiting and hiring high school students to become reading tutor apprentices.

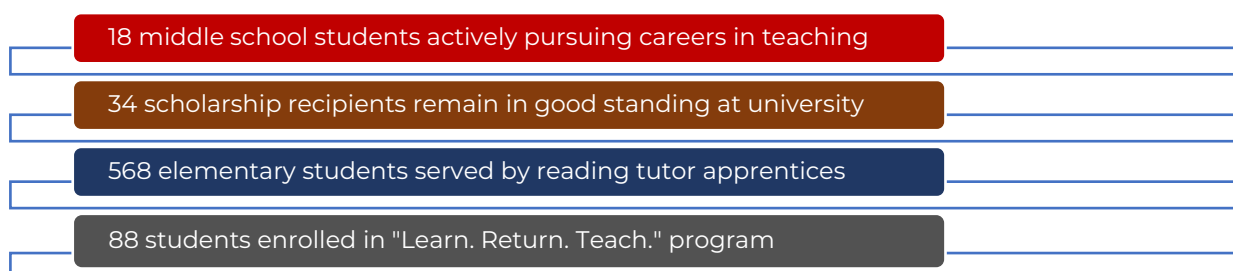
Table 5. Summary Table of High School Programs

Activity	LEA Count	LEAs with Partners	Participants	Cumulative Expenses
Offer courses through dual enrollment or accelerated jump-start programs to high school students.	3	2	121	\$579,626
Expand Educator Rising Chapters into middle and high schools.	2	0	1,352	\$384,607
Recruit and support diverse students in entering the Teacher Academy of Maryland.	3	1	94	\$139,318
Offer students a financial incentive such as scholarships or tuition support.	4	3	218	\$420,224
Recruit and hire high school students to become reading tutor apprentices.	1	0	68	\$452,291
Total	13	6	1,853	\$1,976,067

SUCCESS BY NUMBERS

Figure 7 shows some of the successes reported by LEAs. In total, 568 elementary students were served by reading tutor apprentices, 88 students were enrolled in the “Learn. Return. Teach” program, and 34 scholarship recipients were in good standing at their university.

Figure 7. High School Programs Success by Numbers

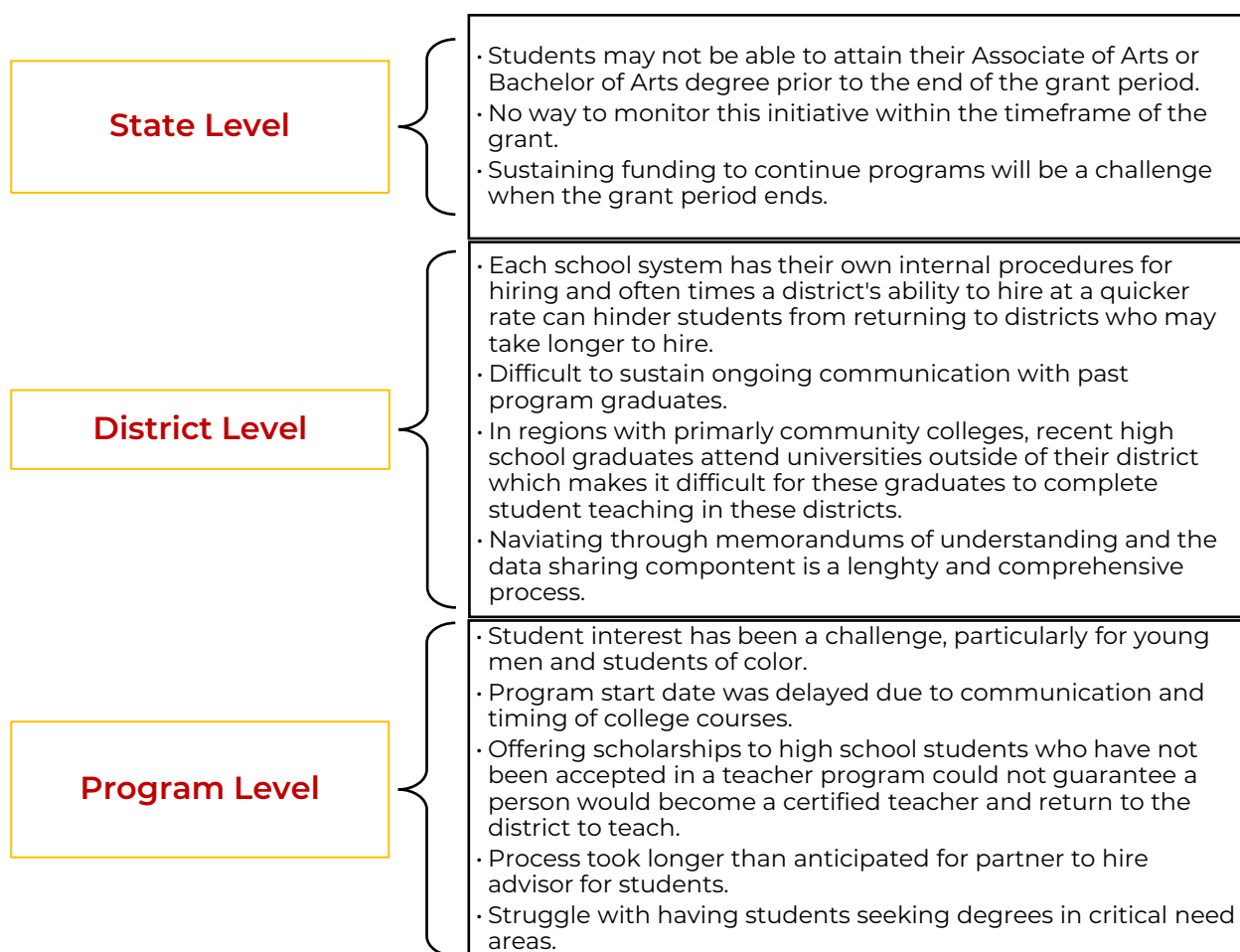


BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

Figure 8 shows some barriers and challenges reported by LEAs implementing activities to diversify the teaching corps. For example, it was commonly reported that there were a shortage of teacher candidates in education programs. At the district level, LEAs were only able to recruit teachers to fill specific areas due to budget shortfalls. One LEA also reported challenges in engaging a Historically Black College/University. At the program level, there were challenges related to engaging teachers and instructional assistants of color and accommodating flexibilities due to work schedules and the need to maintain work-life balance.

At the state level, Figure 8 shows that there were many challenges related to the timing of the grant activities. For example, most participating students would not attain their Associate's or Bachelor's degrees before the end of the period, and one LEA reported there was no way to monitor the initiative within the given timeframe. At the district level, smaller LEAs reported that students attended more distant higher education programs which made it difficult to fulfill teaching obligations in their home district. There were also challenges reported relating to the timing of hiring, with some districts taking longer and some taking shorter time periods. At the program level, several LEAs also reported timing challenges. One LEA reported the program's start date was delayed due to the timing of college courses, and another LEA reported delays in hiring an advisor for students.

Figure 8. High School Programs Barriers and Challenges



Pipelines for Hard-to-Fill Areas

Table 6 shows that most activities in the focus area of pipelines for hard-to-fill areas were related to supporting teachers and/or educators in earning additional degrees and/or certifications. In five LEAs, almost \$1.5 million was spent on supporting over 100 educators to earn a degree and/or certification in a hard-to-fill area. An additional \$80,000 was spent in 2 LEAs to recruit candidates to be placed in hard-to-fill areas.

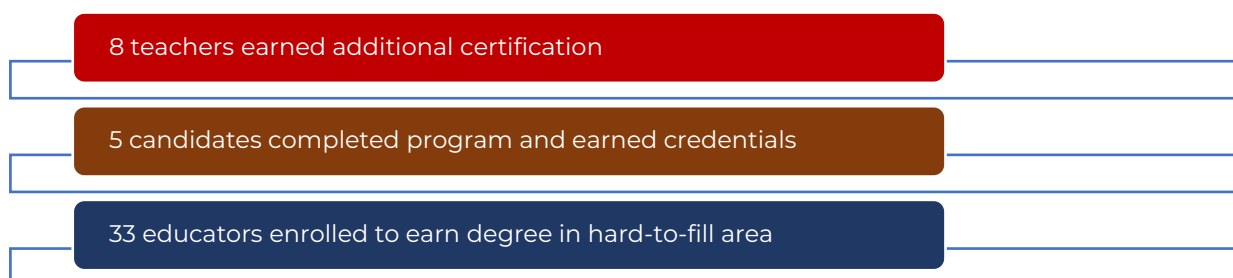
Table 6. Summary Table of Hard-to-Fill Areas

Activity	LEA Count	LEAs with Partners	Participants	Cumulative Expenses
Support teachers in earning an additional certification in hard-to-fill areas.	2	1	37	\$219,290
Support educators in earning a degree in hard-to-fill areas.	3	3	53	\$651,289
Support educators in earning a degree and/or a certification in hard-to-fill areas.	2	2	59	\$840,003
Recruit candidates to be placed in hard-to-fill areas.	2	1	6	\$82,543
Total	9	7	155	\$1,793,125

SUCCESS BY NUMBERS

Figure 9 summarizes some areas of success highlighted by LEAs implementing hard-to-fill programs. Thirty-three educators were enrolled to earn degrees in hard-to-fill areas as a result of GYO programs. 8 teachers earned additional certification, and five candidates completed their program and earned credentials.

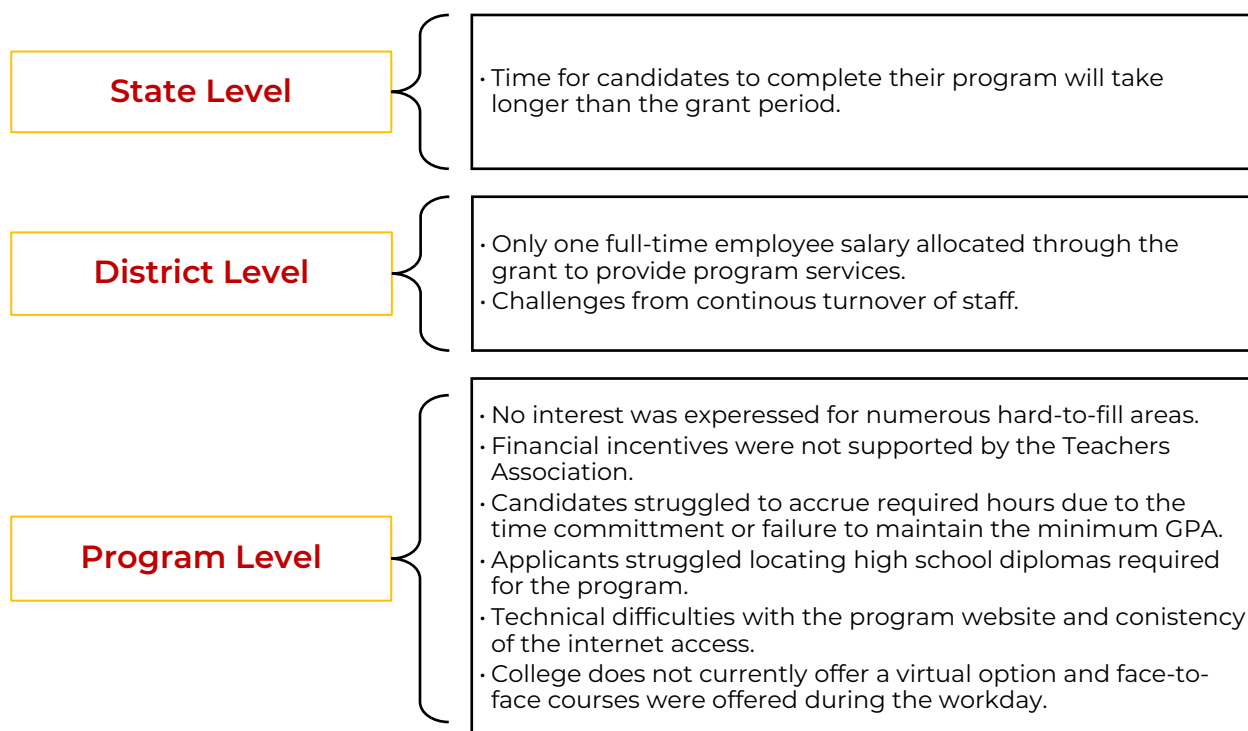
Figure 9. Hard-to-Fill Success by Numbers



BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

Figure 10 highlights some barriers and challenges reported by LEAs. Similar to other focus areas, there were challenges reported relating to the timeframe of the grant. For example, at the state level the time it would take to complete the program would be longer than the time covered by the grant period. At the district level there were challenges related to staff turnover and to hiring an adequate number of staff to administer the program. At the program level, where most of the barriers/challenges were reported, various difficulties were reported. Several LEAs reported challenges related to the time commitment and lack of flexibility to accommodate working schedules. There were certain hard-to-fill areas where no program participants expressed interest in filling. In one LEA, financial incentives were not supported by the teachers' association.

Figure 10. Hard-to-Fill Barriers and Challenges



Career Changers

Table 7 summarizes the activities of grantees that implemented programs for career changers. Four LEAs supported 156 candidates in earning a teaching certificate. Two LEAs with 216 participants provided mentors to newly hired teachers. Roughly equal expenditures were reported for both sets of activities (between \$700,000 and \$800,000).

Table 7. Summary Table of Career Changers

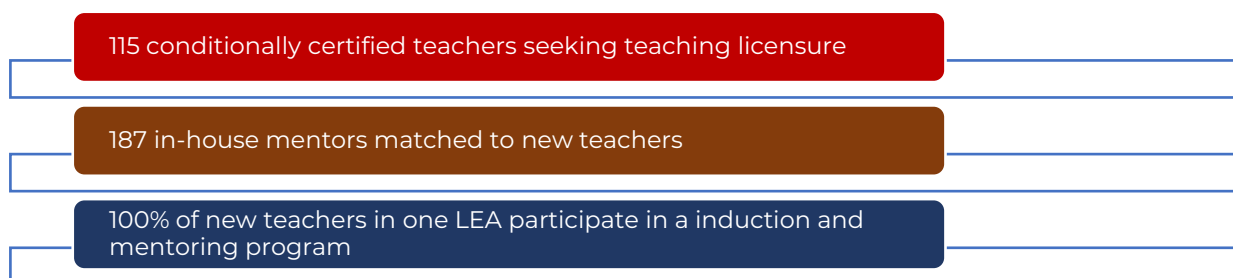
Activity	LEA Count	LEAs with Partners	Participants	Cumulative Expenses
Support candidates in earning teaching certificate.	4	2	156	\$712,963
Provide mentors to newly hired teachers.	2	2	216	\$819,143
Total	6	4	372	\$1,532,106

Note: One LEA reported expenditures of \$8,880 in this focus area but did not break information down by source and did not describe activities, so it is not included.

SUCCESS BY NUMBERS

Figure 11 summarizes areas of success for career changer programs. One LEA reported that 100% of new teachers participated in an induction and mentoring program. 115 conditionally certified teachers were reported to be seeking teaching licensures, and 187 in-house mentors were matched to new teachers.

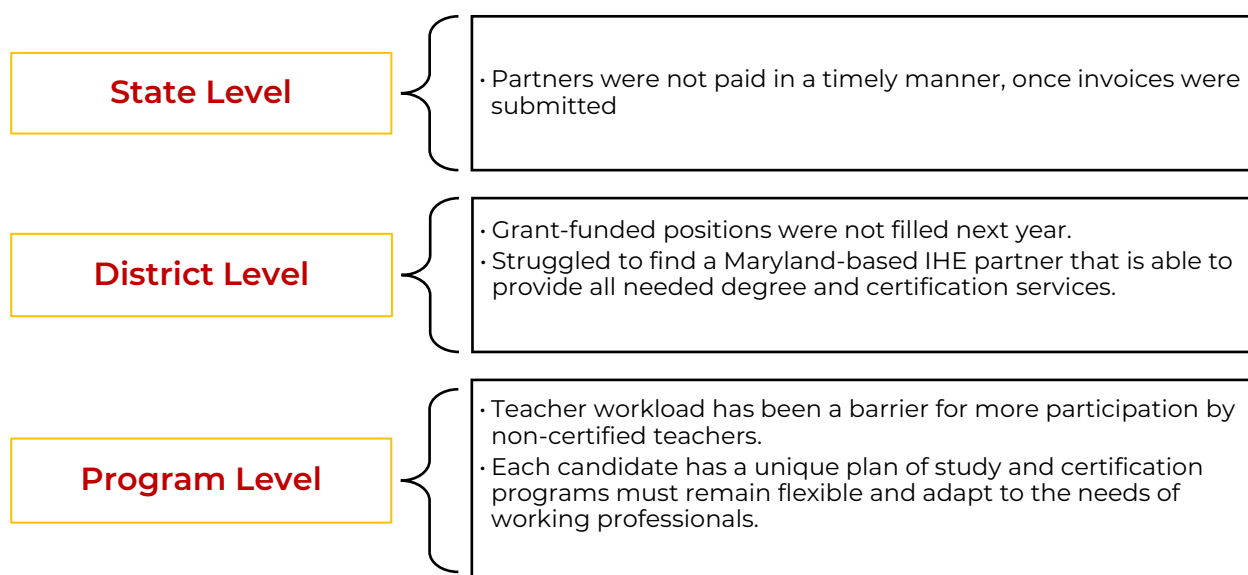
Figure 11. Career Changers Success by Numbers



BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

Figure 12 shows the main barriers and challenges reported across LEAs for program activities in the career changer focus area. At the state level, partners were not paid in a timely manner once invoices were submitted. At the district level, grant-funded positions were not filled in the following year. Additionally, one LEA reported struggling to find a Maryland-based higher education partner that could provide all degree and certification services. At the program level, there were challenges related to teachers' workloads and inability for programs to be flexible and meet the needs of working professionals.

Figure 12. Career Changers Barriers and Challenges



Recommendations

Based on LEA responses and findings from the analysis, the following recommendations are offered as a way forward:

1. Based on LEA survey responses, one area in which the state could improve the administration and oversight of funding is to find ways to streamline and develop a more rigorous approval and amendment process. One analysis shows that among the 50 states, Maryland ranks second from the bottom in terms of spending of ESSER funds.⁶ This suggests that LEAs in Maryland face particular challenges in carrying out grant requirements.
2. Another area of emphasis should be on technical assistance to LEAs and grant recipients to improve goal setting. A critical part of program monitoring is in ensuring progress in meeting goals, outputs and outcomes. LEAs could be instructed to use a framework such as SMART to improve program goals.⁷
3. LEAs faced numerous barriers in implementing programs. One suggestion that came out of the LEA survey was to hire “navigators” to help with the administration of program funding. Such individuals could help partners navigate resource and funding constraints, and also could help with scheduling. LEAs also reported significant challenges related to staff turnover and a lack of continuity of support from MSDE, and such an individual could also be a dedicated point of contact for working through program issues.
4. Programs should ensure that where possible, planning and evaluation should be evidence-based and should rely on the use of available data. As one example, data could be used to determine a target number of participants for programs, something that was not common across LEAs. Another area in which data could be improved is with a more coherent definition and analytical framework for measuring teacher shortages. UNESCO provides one set of indicators, relying on measures such as vacancy and ratios of staff to students.⁸
5. A final recommendation coming out of the LEA survey is regarding commitments from participants to teach in the district. Many LEAs reported that due to staff and graduate mobility, the results of grant investments may be diluted. This issue could be addressed through a requirement that graduates or completers of programs remain in the same LEA for a specific period of time.

⁶ Data available at <https://www.future-ed.org/progress-in-spending-federal-k-12-covid-aid-state-by-state/> and represents spending as of August 31, 2024.

⁷ Such a framework encourages programs to use goals that are specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, and time-bound. See more at https://www.ucop.edu/local-human-resources/_files/performance-appraisal/How+to+write+SMART+Goals+v2.pdf

⁸ See <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000388832> pg 35.