

Promising Practices and Innovations



Handouts offer clear and concise information of trending policies, practices, and innovations for Apprenticeship Building American (ABA) grantees to consider, explore, and utilize. The trends and innovations listed below draw from the expertise of ABA Technical Assistance Coaches, research, and grey literature (see references below).

The purpose of this ABA Promising Practices and Innovations is to offer ABA grantees either a practice or innovation that can be used to support grantee goals, including increasing the number of pre-apprentices and apprentices and to diversify the industries using Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs). The information provided in this document is a summary of best practices utilized by ABA grantee New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) Education & Learning Trust.

Like most states across the country, New York is experiencing an alarming decline in the number of qualified teachers. Between 30% and 50 % of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years, and there has been a 53% decrease in teacher preparation program enrollment in the last 10 years, according to the New York State Educator Workforce Development (EWD) Hub's website. To compound this problem, 33% of New York teachers are eligible to retire within the next five years.

The EWD Hub is implementing innovative RAP solutions to address the teacher shortage. They have already graduated 17 teacher apprentices and are quickly expanding their program and outreach efforts. EWD Hub Director Colleen McDonald provided some best practices and lessons learned with the ABA team.

Find Sustainable Funding Sources

One of the most important steps in planning any type of RAP is identifying dependable sources of funding. In New York, there are 37 state-funded Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) which focus on career and technical education, and McDonald's team was able to creatively leverage these existing funds to support teacher RAPs.

BOCES are concentrated in rural areas and provide state incentives for smaller district schools to share services, such as psychologists, English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, and support for students with disabilities. Districts receive rebates for sharing services with each other, which are based on the district's level of need and can range from 36% to 90% of the cost of services. NYSUT was able to embed the teacher apprenticeship programs into one of these BOCES funding streams, which provides a stable state-level funding stream that defrays a sizable portion of the RAP costs.

The BOCES funding has resulted in a significant increase in payment for both mentors and apprentices. Previously, teacher mentors received \$100/year for mentoring apprentices; now they are paid \$4500/year. The apprentice teachers are paid \$22000/year.

Identify the Right Communication Channels

In the preliminary stages of implementation, institutions of higher education (IHE) approached districts about participating in the teacher RAPs. Because the IHE priorities were not always aligned with those of the school districts, there was miscommunication with P-12 superintendents and the engagement efforts were unsuccessful.

Learning from this lesson, NYSUT staff now work through unions, employers, and seasoned educators instead of relying on IHE representatives to communicate the teacher RAP messaging. This approach has been a more effective strategy and resulted in higher engagement from the school districts.

Because communication is a critical component of RAP outreach, expansion, and sustainability efforts, NYSUT's ABA grant is being leveraged to create a technical assistance hub with the goal of raising awareness and increasing understanding of the apprenticeship model across the education community. The hub staff are experienced educators who can effectively communicate with school districts and other entities.

Leverage Union Support

Some apprenticeship programs find partnerships with unions challenging; however, securing their support is often a key to RAP implementation and success. McDonald has capitalized on unions' structure, and she emphasizes that, when framed appropriately, apprenticeships can be union friendly. A primary benefit of unions is that policies are better crafted when practitioners' views are incorporated, which is encouraged and often required by unions. Bringing these entities together as collaborative partners has strengthened NYSUT's teacher RAP and has also helped increase the program's visibility.

Recruit Apprentices from a Variety of Sources

NYSUT initially began recruiting apprentices from graduate-level teacher preparation programs through their higher education partners.

Since the program's inception, they have broadened their efforts to recruit potential apprentices from the list of individuals who have started their educator preparation program applications but have not yet completed them. McDonald noted that providing some additional incentives around a paid opportunity and possible tuition assistance has prompted application completion.

Additional pools of potential participants now include uncertified substitute teachers, teacher assistants, undergraduate students, and work study tutors. By casting a wide net, NYSUT is increasing the number of qualified RAP applicants, and ultimately the number of qualified teachers in New York.

Learn Your Partners' Communication Protocols

McDonald and her colleagues quickly learned that the various entities involved in the teacher apprenticeships use different terminology and speak differently about the same topic. The main purpose of the ABA-funded technical assistance hub is to learn the different communication protocols and act as a translator between the different partners. McDonald noted that the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and Education, state agencies, IHEs, P-12 educators and administrators have subtle but important differences in their chains of command and communication protocols, and problems can arise if those protocols are not followed. McDonald suggests having structured conversations early in the RAP process with each partner about how to best communicate and which point of contact should be used in different situations. With effective communication, teacher RAPs can also foster more collaborative partnerships between the entities involved.

Be Prepared To Change The Mindset

Teacher apprenticeships are an innovative model for training American educators. Because many people may not be familiar with how apprenticeships are structured, McDonald emphasized the importance of being prepared to change the mindset and tailoring the messaging to the audience. One successful strategy has been to start with the value apprenticeships add to for school systems, including lower rates of teacher attrition, reduced student-teacher ratios, and the positive impacts the model can have on the classroom and the school community.

Provide Teacher Turnover Costs

Teacher turnover costs \$9000 - \$20,000 per teacher who leaves. Given how many teachers leave the field within the first five years, this number can have a significant impact on school district budgets. McDonald and her NYSUT colleagues share the Learning Policy Institute's interactive tool to prospective education partners to show real dollar amounts. Notably, one of the main reasons newer teachers leave the classroom is a lack of adequate preparation. Teacher RAPs are designed to provide high-quality training to teachers before they are expected to manage classrooms on their own. Providing a solution to these expensive problems – lack of adequate preparation and high rates of turnover - can make teacher RAPs more appealing to potential partners. [What's the Cost of Teacher Turnover? | Learning Policy Institute](#)

Allow Employment Flexibility for Apprenticeship Graduates

McDonald and her NYSUT colleagues understand that situations can change over time and graduates of the apprenticeship program may need to move because of marriage, caring for family members, or other shifts in life circumstances. Because of that, apprentices are not required to remain employed in the district where they train after completing their apprenticeships. NYSUT is trying to avoid the "you owe me" mentality to make the teacher RAP more appealing to potential candidates.

Identify Your Champions

The NYSUT hub team includes retired teachers who are passionate about creating new, effective pathways in teacher training. The team members are highly motivated to see this model succeed. They also have high visibility champions with the Board of Regents, as well as leadership in the DOL and Education. Building a coalition of seasoned professionals who are motivated to see the RAP succeed has helped to increase visibility and enthusiasm about the program.

Systematically Measure Your Outcomes

The NYSUT team had the foresight to plan a mixed-methods research study to collect data for the first four years of the RAP. The project will involve collecting and analyzing survey responses, student performance outcomes, and classroom observation data. McDonald noted that measuring outcomes from the beginning of the program will be important for showing progress over time, which can lead to program improvement, support for sustainability efforts, and additional funding opportunities.

In addition to the ongoing mixed-methods study, McDonald's team has produced a case study explaining the program and showing the preliminary results of the program.

Looking Ahead

McDonald said although NYSUT's teacher apprenticeship program is off to a good start, there are still improvements to be made. For example, some education apprentices don't have access to healthcare, or the plans they are offered are prohibitively expensive. McDonald's goal is to provide healthcare to New York apprentices at a reasonable rate. She believes the workforce development landscape for all professions needs to change to include healthcare as a benefit of the earn-while-you-learn model.

