

SENATE BILL 936

By Yarbro

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49,
relative to teacher residency programs.

WHEREAS, Tennessee has a shortage of well-prepared teachers, especially teachers in high-need areas such as science, mathematics, foreign languages, English as a second language, and special education; and

WHEREAS, the department of education expects half of Tennessee's 65,000 teachers to retire in the next ten years; and

WHEREAS, statistics from Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) highlight this teacher shortage; roughly 140 positions in MNPS remained unfilled at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, especially in mathematics and special education; and

WHEREAS, up to twenty percent of the MNPS teaching staff leave, retire, or are not reappointed in a given year; fifty percent of the teachers leaving are in their first three years of teaching; and

WHEREAS, the teacher shortage cannot be solved simply by producing more teachers. Tennessee needs to focus attention on better preparation and support of programs to attract and educate strong teacher candidates who, once licensed, will remain in Tennessee in the teaching profession; and

WHEREAS, to become prepared professionals, future teachers must learn their craft in and through practice; this is traditionally done in a semester of student teaching; and

WHEREAS, one-year teacher residency programs provide more meaningful pre-service experiences that may lead participants to return to their pre-service schools as teachers; and

WHEREAS, teacher residency programs allow residents to take on instructional responsibility gradually and collaboratively at their own pace and, thus, be better prepared to demonstrate competence, effectiveness, and resilience; and

WHEREAS, teacher residents working in the shelter of a team of experienced teachers can learn their craft fully supported and can, at the same time, be part of that team in instructing the students; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee has committed to using response to instruction and intervention (RTI²) as a framework for ensuring high quality instruction for every student with appropriate, targeted intervention as needed; and

WHEREAS, staffing RTI² in school districts with disproportionately large numbers of students with Tier 2 and Tier 3 needs is especially challenging; and

WHEREAS, teacher residents represent additional school staff members who, with guidance, can offer enriching instruction to Tier 1 students, freeing experienced faculty to work intensively with students with Tier 2 and Tier 3 needs; and

WHEREAS, reliance by schools on teacher leadership, teacher teaming, and small group teacher-student interactions can greatly increase teacher and student satisfaction and facilitate teacher residents in reaching proficiency in teaching; and

WHEREAS, teacher leaders and teacher team members in teacher residency programs take on more work and responsibility; these teachers should be rewarded for their additional efforts in increasing student achievement and disseminating effective teacher strategies by increasing teacher collaboration; and

WHEREAS, additionally, teacher residents need to be able to support themselves during their one-year residencies in order to devote their full attention to their pre-service training; and

WHEREAS, teacher residency programs that form partnerships with teacher preparation programs, school districts, schools, and teachers can most effectively accomplish the task of guiding a teacher resident to full participation in the teaching profession; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee should commit to preparing its future teachers to be effective members of and leaders in the teaching profession; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 5, Part 56, is amended by adding the following language as a new section:

(a) This section shall be known and may be cited as the "Teacher Residency Program Grant Act".

(b)

(1) The department of education shall establish and administer a program of grants for university teacher preparation programs and LEAs to create and implement innovative teacher residency programs in conjunction with a school-implemented, team-based leadership model that supports teacher residents in learning the craft of teaching.

(2) The grants shall be three-year grants. The department is authorized to award funding over the three (3) years of a grant based upon the program parameters set forth in the grant application to meet the yearly needs and goals of the teacher residency program.

(c)

(1) The department shall create an application process for the grant program.

(2) The department shall evaluate a grant application based on the commitment of the university, the LEA, and the LEA's participating schools to build an integral partnership. This partnership will require university personnel to regularly provide assistance and support to both teacher residents and the LEA's teacher leaders and teachers working in teams with the teacher residents.

(3) The commissioner of education may award grants through the grant program to qualifying partners as determined through scoring rubrics and policies developed by the department.

(d) To be eligible for a grant under this section, a teacher preparation program and its partnering LEA shall:

(1) Establish a one-year teacher residency that gradually integrates prospective teachers into student instruction by transitioning residents under the guidance of a team of teachers from observation of good teaching practices to being responsible for teaching classes by the end of the school year;

(2) Provide teacher residents with significant guidance from teacher leaders and teams of teachers to affect the goal of moving the teacher resident from being mentored by team members to full integration in the school's instructional plan for students;

(3) Pay teacher residents to enable them to work as full-time teacher residents while enrolled in any associated coursework in their teacher preparation programs. Grant applications may include funding for teacher resident stipends; and

(4) Provide additional pay for teacher leaders and members of teacher teams. Grant applications may include funding for stipends for teacher leaders and teachers working in teams with teacher residents.

(e) The department shall require that all grant applications be accompanied by a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed by the grant partners. The MOU shall:

(1) Contain an outline of the roles and responsibilities of the grant partners, a timeline for actions to be taken by the grant partners throughout a teacher's residency, and an outline of the program administration;

(2) Include a clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities of teacher residents over the course of the year of residency;

(3) Require a series of university and LEA partnership meetings as well as school and university partnership meetings that allow persons involved in the teacher residency program at various levels to assess program success and need for improvement;

(4) Require the partners to establish a plan for the continuation of the program beyond the timeframe of the grant under this section, including the future funding of teacher residencies, additional pay for teachers participating in the team-based leadership portion of the program, and administration of the program; and

(5) Require that students participating in the residency program have no more than sixty (60) semester hours left to complete their teacher preparation programs.

(f) The department shall give preference to applications for grants that:

(1) Form partnerships between university teacher preparation programs and LEAs with schools in which more than ten percent (10%) of the students are eligible for Tier 3 assistance under response to instruction and intervention (RTI²);

(2) Gradually integrate teacher residents into RTI²;

(3) Seek to implement the teacher residency program in twenty percent (20%) to thirty percent (30%) of the LEA's schools that meet the requirements of subdivision (f)(1) over the three-year period of the grant;

(4) Focus on the creation of a school-implemented, team-based leadership model in support of the school's students and the teacher residency program; and

(5) Employ two (2) or more teacher residents in each participating school.

(g) The department may give preference to applications for grants that:

(1) Focus on providing teachers for areas of high need such as science, mathematics, foreign languages, English as a second language, and special education; and

(2) Focus on recruiting a diverse body of teacher residents who reflect the diversity of the LEA's students as to race, ethnicity, and national origin.

(h)

(1) There is created within the state treasury a fund to be administered by the department of education and to be known as the teacher residency program grant fund. Appropriations made by the general assembly for teacher residency program grants for any fiscal year shall be deposited in the fund.

(2) Moneys in the teacher residency program grant fund shall be available to the department of education to make teacher residency program grants. A teacher residency program grant shall be awarded for a period of three (3) years with moneys for the grant earmarked in the grant fund and disbursed annually during the life of the grant according to the terms of the grant.

(3) The award of grants in any fiscal year is subject to the availability of funds in the teacher residency program grant fund. Amounts remaining in the grant fund at the end of each fiscal year shall not revert to the general fund, but

shall be carried forward into the subsequent fiscal year and remain available for use by the department for teacher residency programs.

(4) Moneys in the teacher residency program grant fund shall be invested by the state treasurer pursuant to title 9, chapter 4, part 6, for the sole benefit of the fund. All earnings attributable to such investments shall be credited to the fund.

(i) The department of education shall evaluate the teacher residency programs funded by grants under this section to determine if the programs have met their goals as stated in the grant applications. The teacher residency programs and their partnering LEAs shall assist the department in making its evaluation. The department shall report its findings and any recommendations concerning the grant program to the education committees of the senate and house of representatives by February 1 of the year following the third year of the grant program and by February 1 of any year thereafter if funding for the grant program is extended beyond three (3) years.

SECTION 2. The provisions of this act shall not be construed to be an appropriation of funds, and no funds shall be obligated or expended pursuant to this act unless such funds are specifically appropriated by the general appropriations act.

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.