

# EDUCATORS

Tennessee strives to be a top state to become and remain a teacher. The state has developed a range of initiatives to support the recruitment and preparation of new teachers, such as the [Grow Your Own](#) apprenticeship program, the [Tennessee Future Teacher Scholarship](#), and raising [teacher salaries](#). The TES gathers insight from teachers and school leaders on areas of growth or challenges within recruitment and preparation.



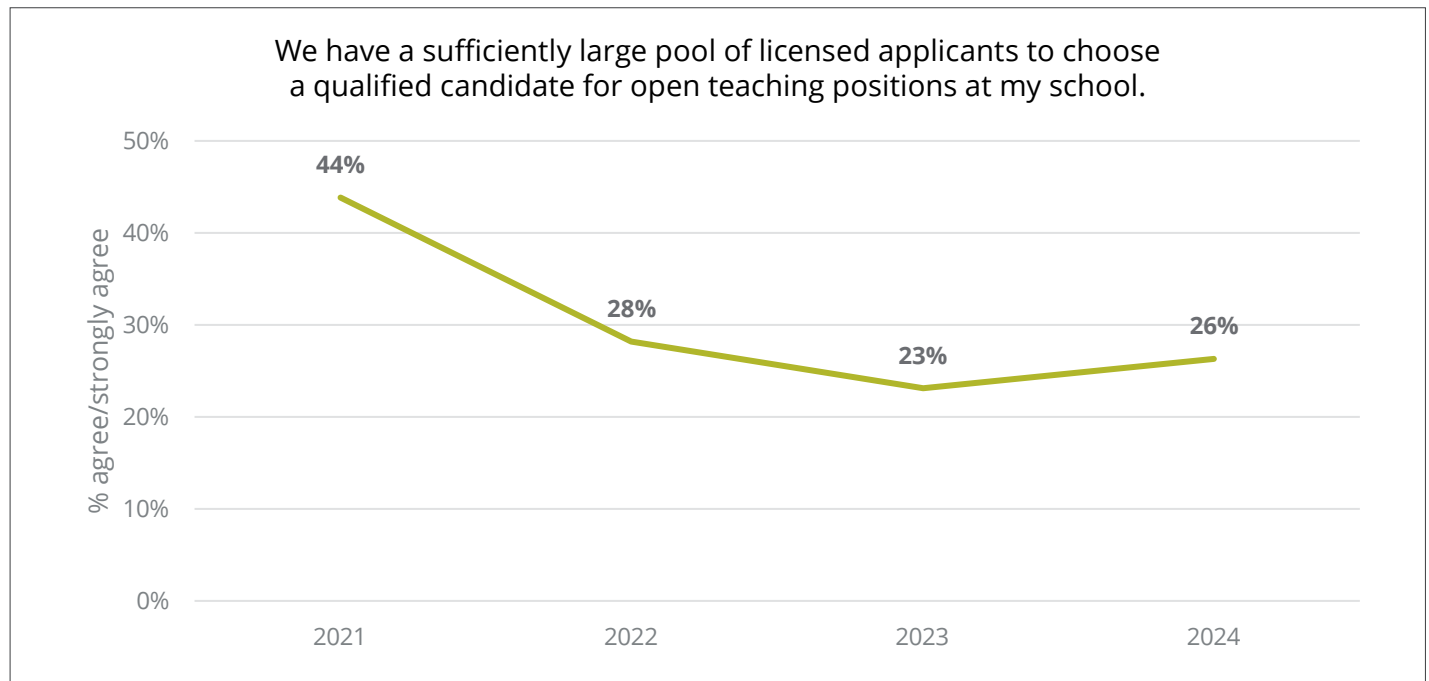
## Educator Preparation and Teacher Pipelines



**Many school leaders reported significant challenges with recruiting teachers to their schools.**

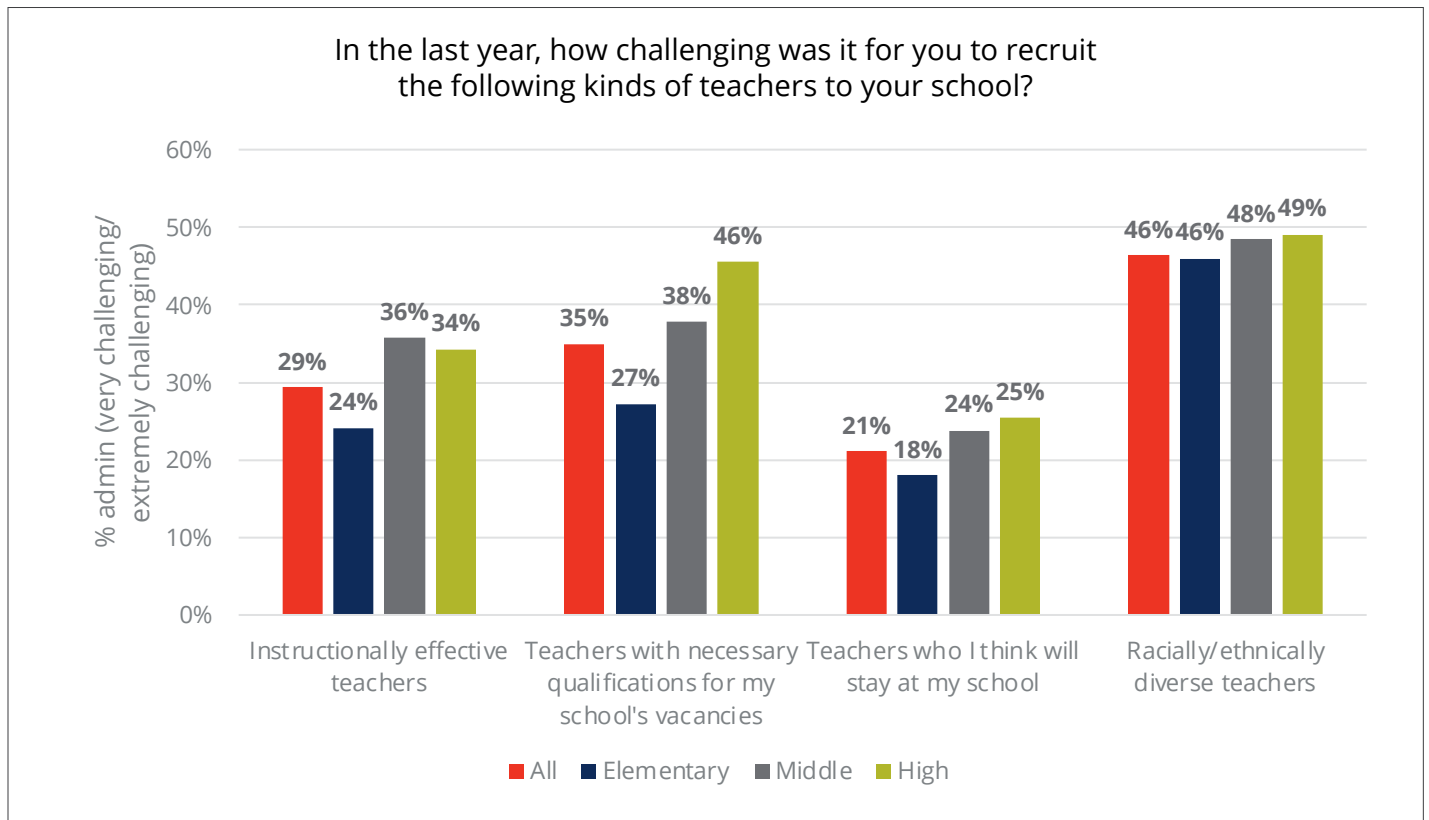


In 2024, 26% of school leaders agreed or strongly agreed that they have a sufficiently large pool of licensed applicants to choose a qualified candidate for open teaching positions at their schools. Elementary school leaders (33%) and leaders in schools with fewer economically disadvantaged (ED) students (lowest ED quartile, 30%) were slightly more likely to agree that they have a sufficiently large pool of licensed applicants. In 2021, 44% of administrators were satisfied with their teacher applicant pool, but this percentage has hovered around 25% for the past three years.





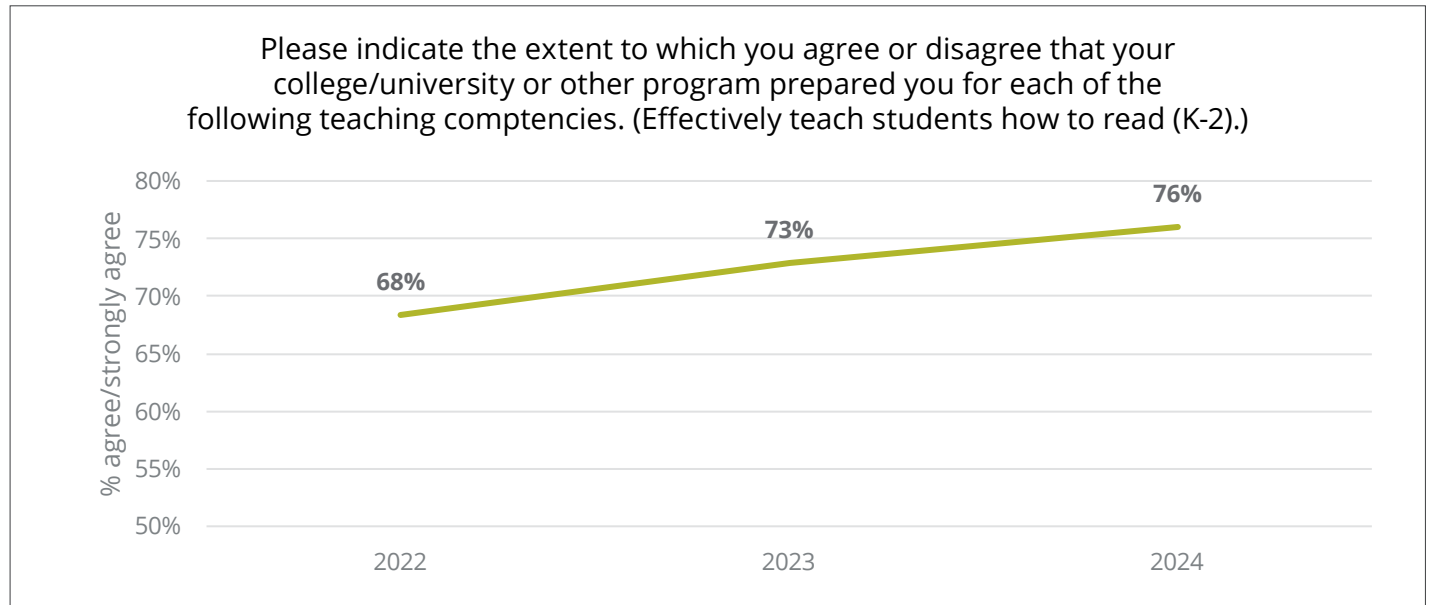
When asked about how challenging it was in the past year to recruit a variety of teachers to their schools, school leaders identified racially/ethnically diverse teachers as the most challenging to recruit – **46% of school leaders reported that this was very challenging or extremely challenging.** High school leaders reported the greatest challenges in recruiting teachers with necessary qualifications for their school's vacancies – nearly half (46%) of high school leaders said this was very challenging or extremely challenging, compared to 27% of elementary school leaders and 38% of middle school leaders.



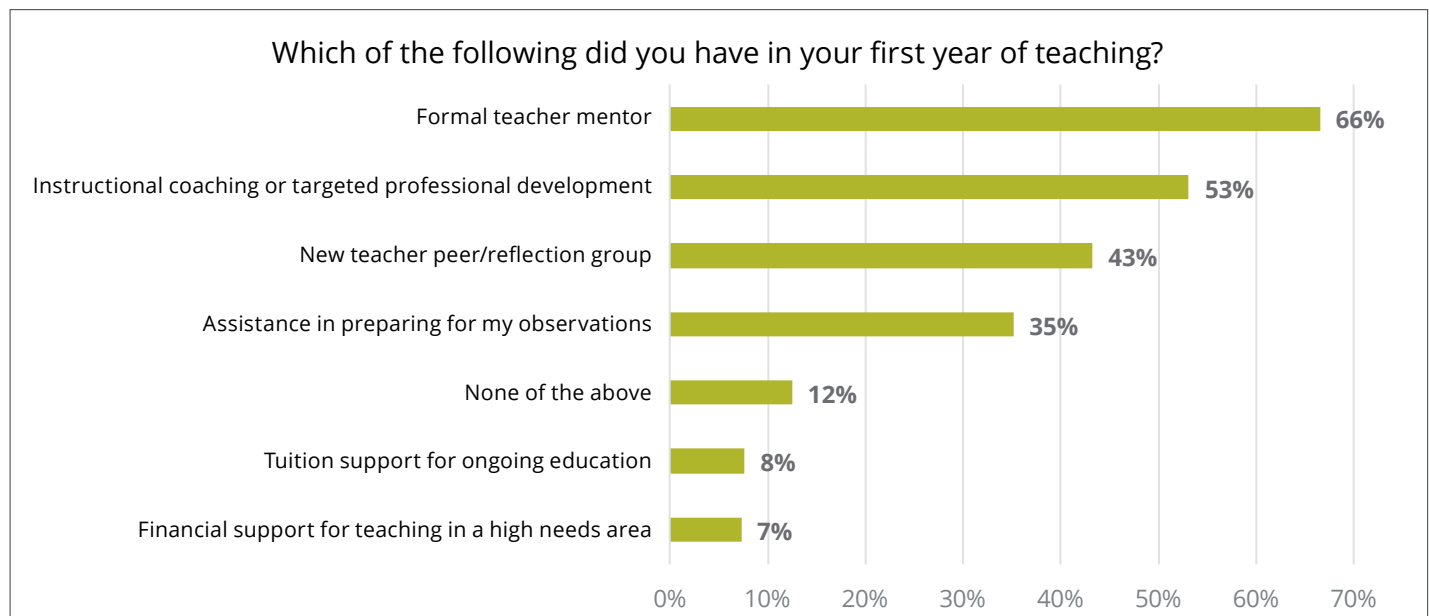


***A high percentage of early-career teachers reported that they feel well-prepared for their roles, and most receive mentorship support as new teachers.***

Early-career teachers in their first three years of teaching reported that their educator preparation programs (EPP) prepared them for a variety of teaching competencies, such as incorporating principles of engaging students in critical thinking (86%) and supporting all students' academic development (84%). While only 64% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their preparation program prepared them to effectively teach students how to read, this number was much higher for kindergarten teachers (84%) and K-2 teachers (76%). **Further, the percentage of K-2 teachers who said they were prepared to effectively teach students how to read has climbed since 2022, from 68% to 76% in 2024.**



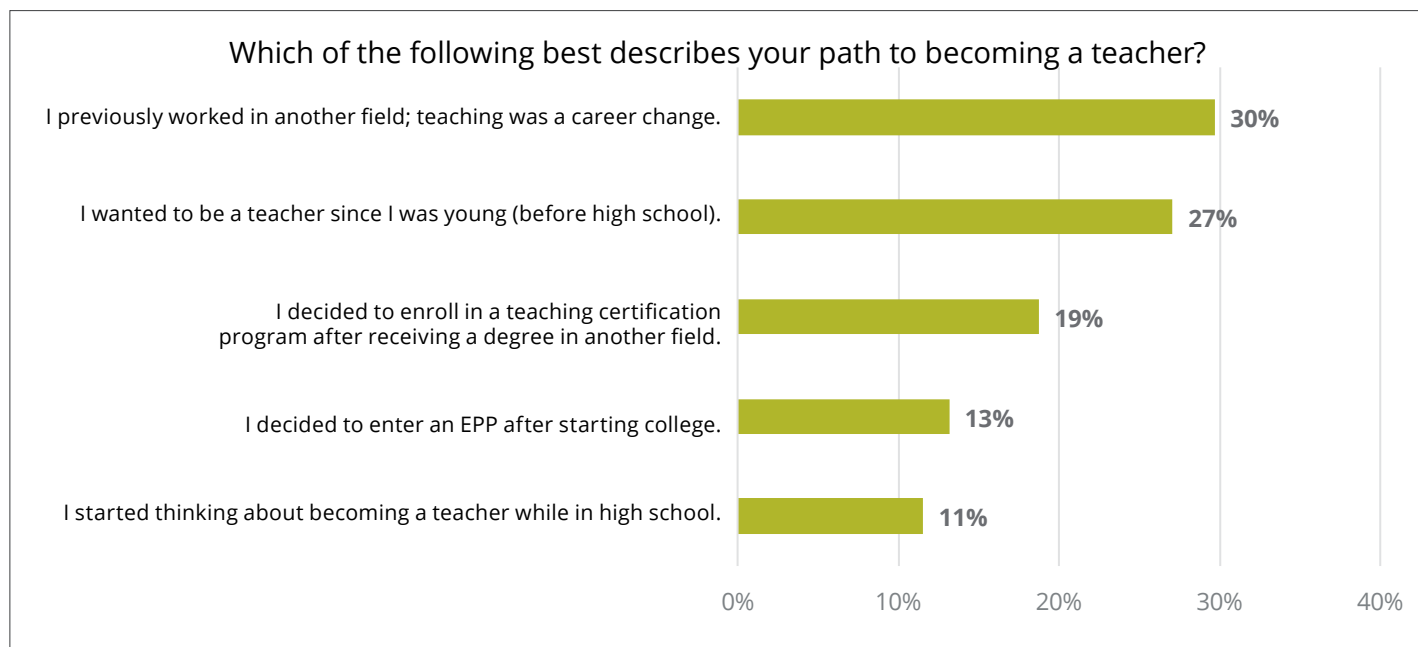
About 66% of early-career teachers (teachers in their first three years of teaching) reported that they received a formal teacher mentor in their first year of teaching, and 62% said they had a formal teacher mentor in the 2023-24 school year. 53% of early-career teachers reported that they received instructional coaching or targeted professional development in their first year of teaching, and 43% said they participated in a new teacher group. Twelve percent of early-career teachers reported that they did not receive any of the new teacher supports in their first year.





***The largest share of early-career teachers reported that they entered teaching as a career change. Pathways and motivations to teach tend to differ by grade level taught.***

In 2024, the largest share (30%) of early-career teachers in their first three years reported that they entered teaching via a career change and had previously worked in another field, an increase from 27% in 2023. Another 27% of early-career teachers said they wanted to be teachers since before entering high school.



High school teachers in grades 9-12 were the most likely to say that they entered teaching through a career change (43%), compared to 30% of teachers in grades 6-8, 23% of teachers in grades 1-5, and 14% of kindergarten teachers. Conversely, kindergarten teachers were the most likely to say they knew they wanted to be a teacher since they were young (43%), compared to 36% of teachers in grades 1-5, 22% of teachers in grades 6-8, and 13% of teachers in grades 9-12.

Early-career teachers most frequently identified enjoying working with kids in other settings and positive experiences in school among their top reasons for wanting to become a teacher. Kindergarten and first grade teachers were more likely to say they were influenced to teach because they enjoy working with kids in other settings (69% and 65%, respectively). Middle and high school teachers were more likely to say they felt motivated to teach because they wanted to share their passion for their content area (46% and 54%, respectively).

Half of early-career teachers reported that they did some or all of their student teaching in the district in which they currently work, an increase of 11% in the past year. This number was higher for kindergarten teachers (59%) and teachers in grades 1-5 (55%), compared to 47% of teachers in grades 6-8 and 40% of teachers in grades 9-12.

