

THECB Programs to Support the Teaching Workforce

Teach for Texas Loan Repayment Program

The purpose of the Teach for Texas Loan Repayment Assistance Program (TFTLRAP) is to recruit and retain certified classroom teachers in fields and communities that have a shortage of teachers in Texas.

To qualify for participation in this program, applicants must meet the following requirements:

- be certified in a critical shortage teaching field, be currently teaching full-time in that field, and have taught in that field full-time for at least one year in a Texas public school; or
- be a certified educator currently teaching full-time in a critical shortage community and have taught in that community full-time for at least one year.

Appropriations for the program have steadily declined over time. In FY2012, the maximum annual award amount was reduced from \$5,000 to \$2,500 to spread funding to more recipients. In multiple years, the program was only able to fund recipients already in the program due to budget constraints. Applications have declined significantly over the past few years.

Math and Science Scholars Loan Repayment Program

The primary purpose of the Math and Science Scholars Loan Repayment Program (MSSLRP) is to encourage teachers who demonstrated high academic achievement as math or science majors to teach math or science for at least four years in Title I public schools in Texas.

The program is open to teachers who completed an undergraduate or graduate program in math or science with a GPA of at least 3.0, are certified to teach math or science, and have an employment contract as a full-time classroom teacher to teach mathematics or science in a Title I school.

Teachers may qualify for up to \$10,000 a year in student loan repayment for a period of up to 8 years. The program originally required a 3.5 GPA and an eight-year service commitment, which was changed (SB 1757, 86th Legislature, Regular Session) to a 3.0 GPA and a four-year service commitment in a Title I school (with the option to provide an additional four years in any school). The Coordinating Board receives a low number of applications for this program each year despite continued outreach efforts with teacher associations.

Educational Aide Exemption Program

This program is designed to encourage educational aides to complete full teacher certification by providing need-based exemptions from tuition and fees at participating Texas public institutions of higher education. Institutions award the exemption based on applicant eligibility and the availability of funds. The Coordinating Board is appropriated limited funding to defray the cost to institutions for exempted tuition and fee revenue.

To be eligible, a financially needy student must:

- Be enrolled in courses required for teacher certification in areas that the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has determined to be experiencing a critical shortage of teachers
- Be employed in some capacity by a public school district in Texas during the full term for which the student receives the award
- Have been employed by a public school district in Texas working full-time, in a classroom directly with the students, in a teaching capacity as:
 - An educational aide for at least one school year of the past five school years preceding their initial exemption, or
 - A substitute teacher for 180 days of the past five school years preceding the term or semester for which the student is awarded their initial exemption.

Educator Preparation Planning Grants

In June, the Coordinating Board announced the availability of Educator Preparation Planning Grants to support planning grants for colleges of education to enhance or develop rigorous and innovative teacher credentialing programs aimed at increasing the number of certified teachers in Texas and strengthening the educator pipeline. In total, 37 institutions and systems were awarded approximately \$1.8 million in assistance. This program is funded through the federal Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) program.

Grant recipients are focused on the establishment or enhancement of:

- Pathways for paraprofessionals, substitute teachers, and others with some college or K-12 experience but no teaching credential;
- Promotion of accessibility and affordability to a diverse field of future educators;
- Post-baccalaureate certification programs, micro-credentials, competency-based education programs, or other innovative educator training programs;
- Innovative program recruitment, retention, and degree completion strategies;
- Innovative partnerships that strengthen both preparation programs and schools; and
- Evaluation plans programs and practices to assess efficacy and scalability.

Promoting Efficient Pathways

As part of the Coordinating Board's strong focus on student transfer and building on the momentum and tools for improving the transfer student experience adopted by the Legislature in Senate Bill 25 (86th Texas Legislature), the agency is currently in the process of revising the Fields of Study (FOS) curricula. The FOS provide transfer pathways for students who begin at a community college and intend to transfer to a university. These pathways provide clarity in the courses students need to complete and eliminate the need to re-take lower-division courses if the student enters the university having completed the identified field of study. This should help students complete a degree in less time and at less expense than under existing practices. Currently, a workgroup including representatives from community colleges, universities, TEA, and the Coordinating Board is evaluating the best approach for establishing a pathway for education.