SREB

Are the First Five Years Undermining Teacher Success — and the Profession Itself?

September 2025

SREB | Southern Regional Education Board

Breakfast

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SREB LGS 2025

Breakfast Trivia!

slideswith.com/25LGS

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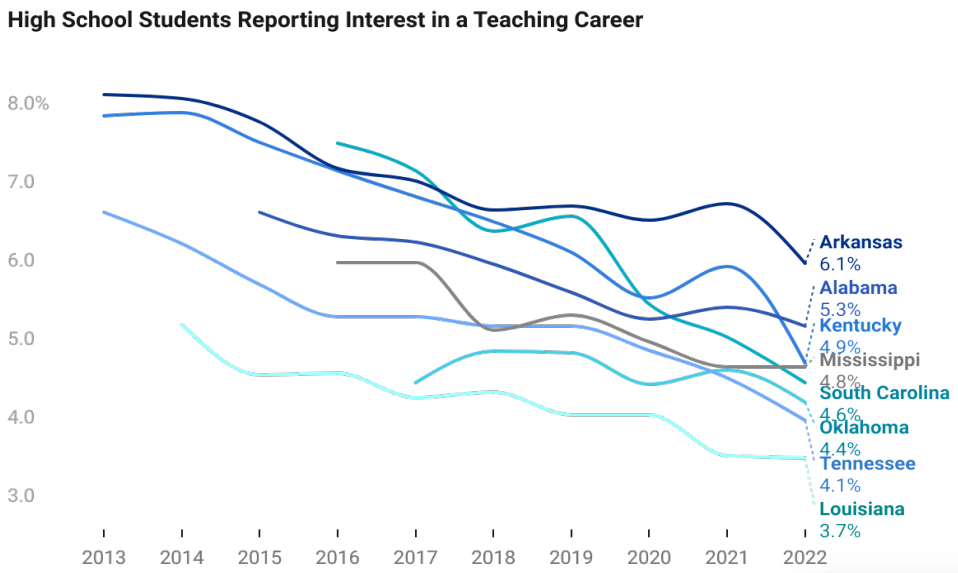
Research Partnership:

The Next Generation of Teachers



The ACT survey sample includes only students who enrolled in a 2- or 4-year institution.

Chart: SREB/Vanderbilt University • Source: ACT • Created with Datawrapper

GENERATION Z

Born 1996 to 2012

- Tech-savvy
- Racially and ethnically diverse
- More report mental health needs
- Half are from low-income families

What do they want in a career?

- A sense of purpose
- A collaborative, positive environment
- Advancement opportunities
- Mentorship and support
- Flexibility

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TN EDUCATION RESEARCH ALLIANCE

VANDERBILT Peabody College

- Interest in an education career among high school students declined steadily since 2013.
- Students who plan to major in education and express interest in an education career are predominantly white and female and have lower ACT scores.
- Enrollment in high school introductory teaching courses is increasing.
- Half of early career teachers formed aspirations to become educators before college.
- Future and current Gen Z teachers feel unsupported as they prepare for and enter the teaching profession.
- Participation in some non-traditional preparation pathways increased, as did hire rates of alternatively prepared teachers.
- Future and current Gen Z teachers feel unsupported as they prepare for and enter the teaching profession.

Research Partnership:

Teacher Labor Markets

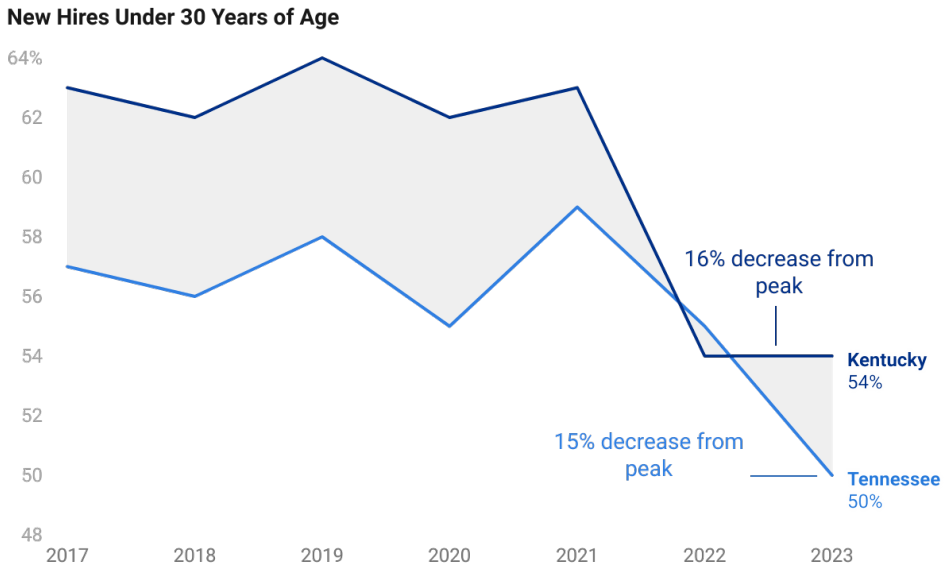

Chart: SREB/Vanderbilt University • Source: TDOE & KDE • Created with Datawrapper

Since the pandemic

- Teacher vacancies rose
- Teacher retention declined
- Applicants decreased

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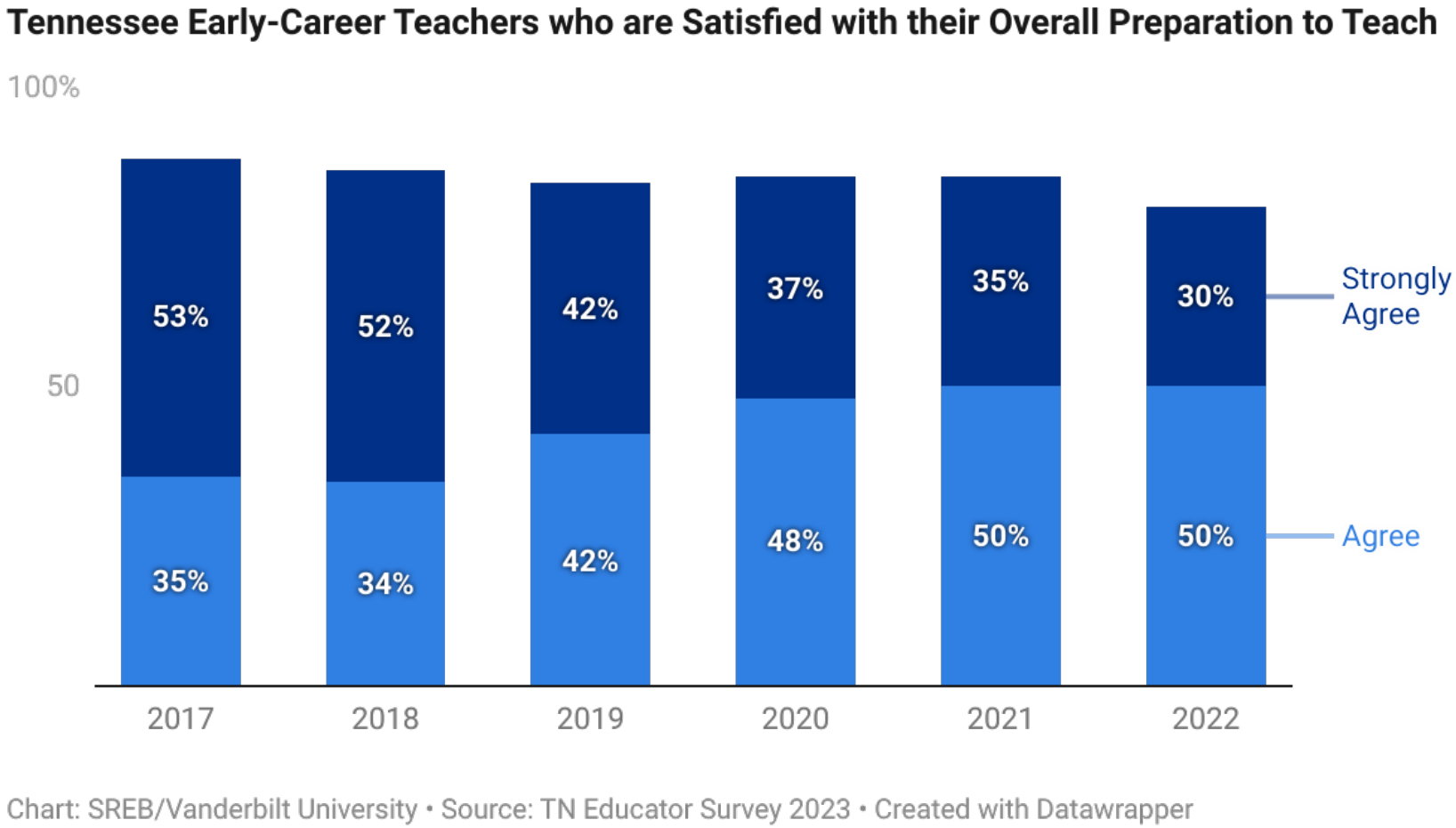
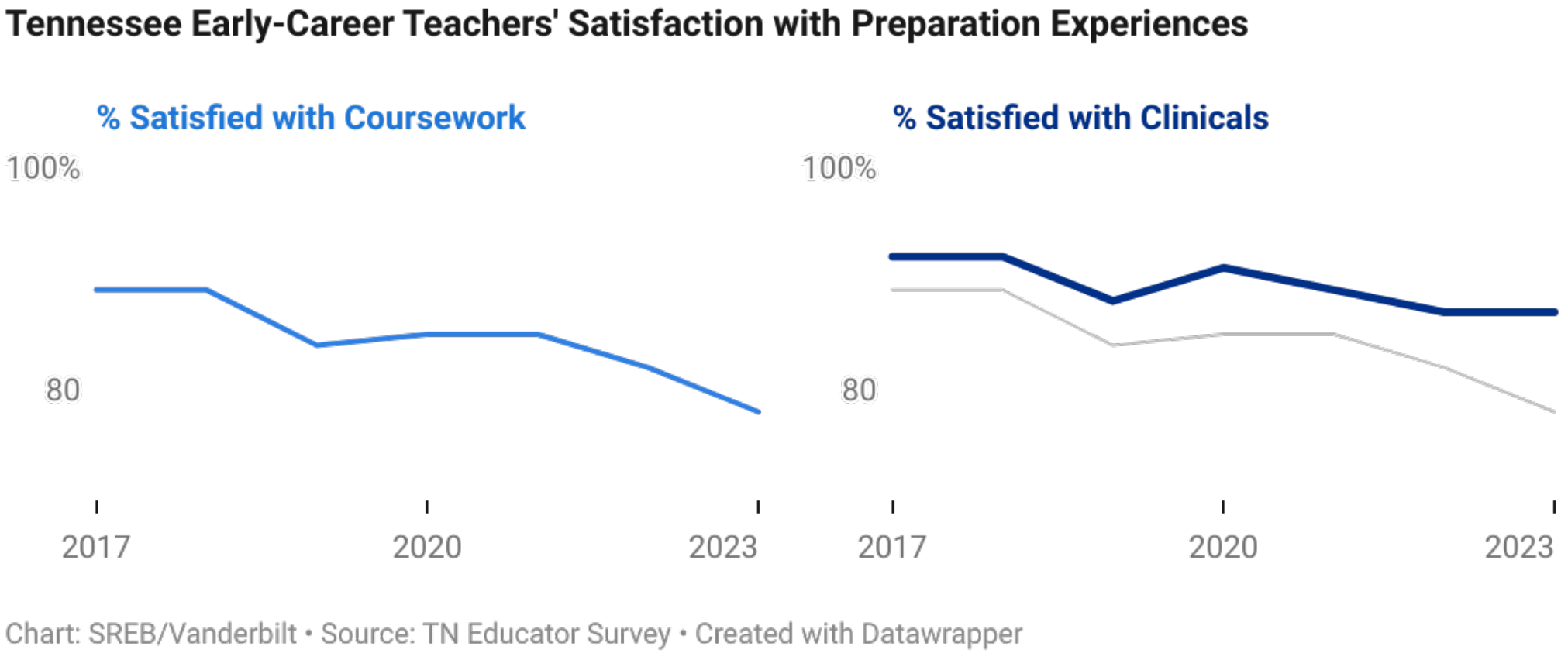
The percentage of early-career teachers in Tennessee who strongly agreed their preparation program prepared them to teach declined.



SREB TN EDUCATION RESEARCH ALLIANCE VANDERBILT Peabody College

Early-career teachers in Tennessee are more satisfied with their clinical preparation than their coursework.



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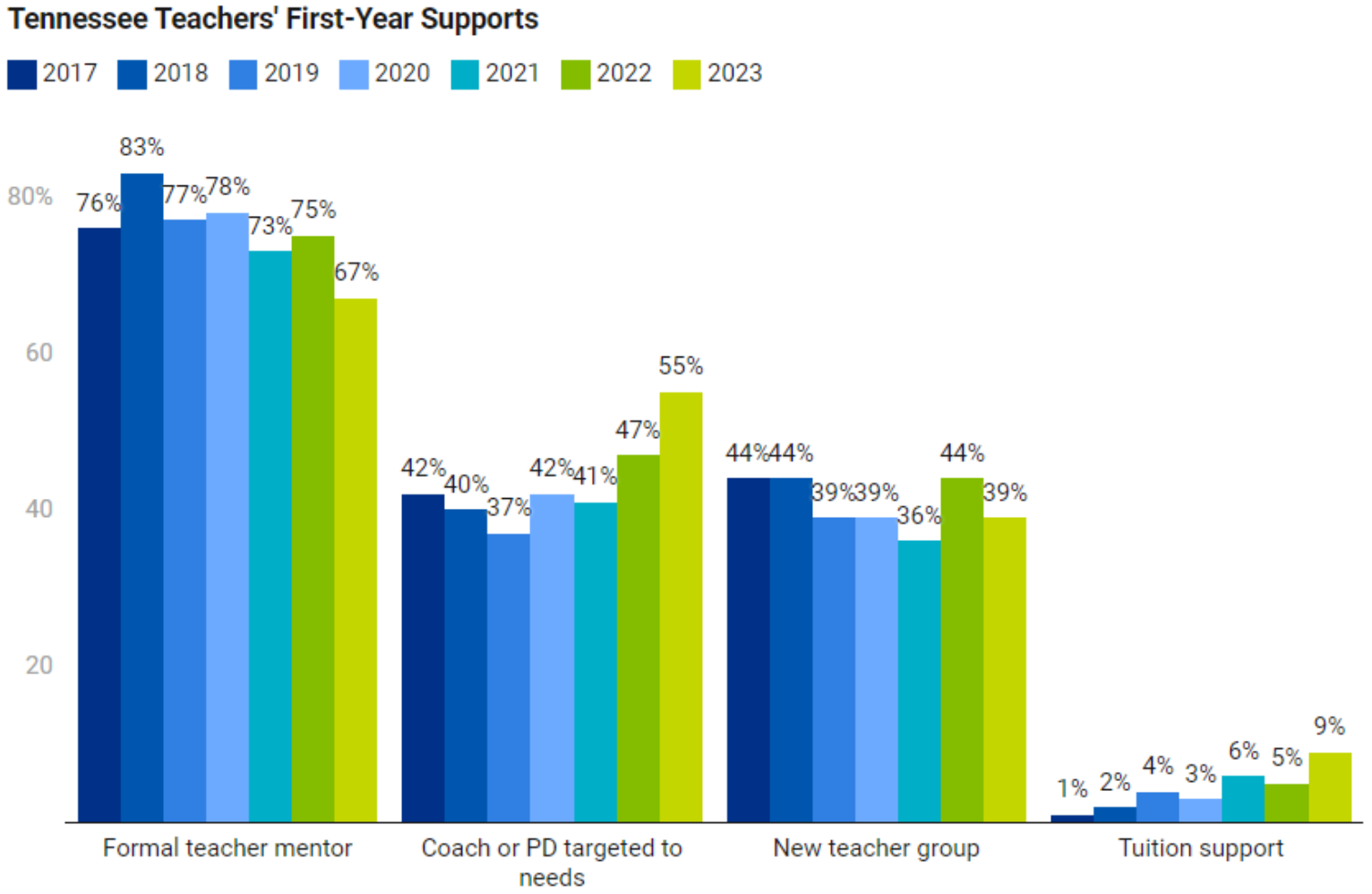
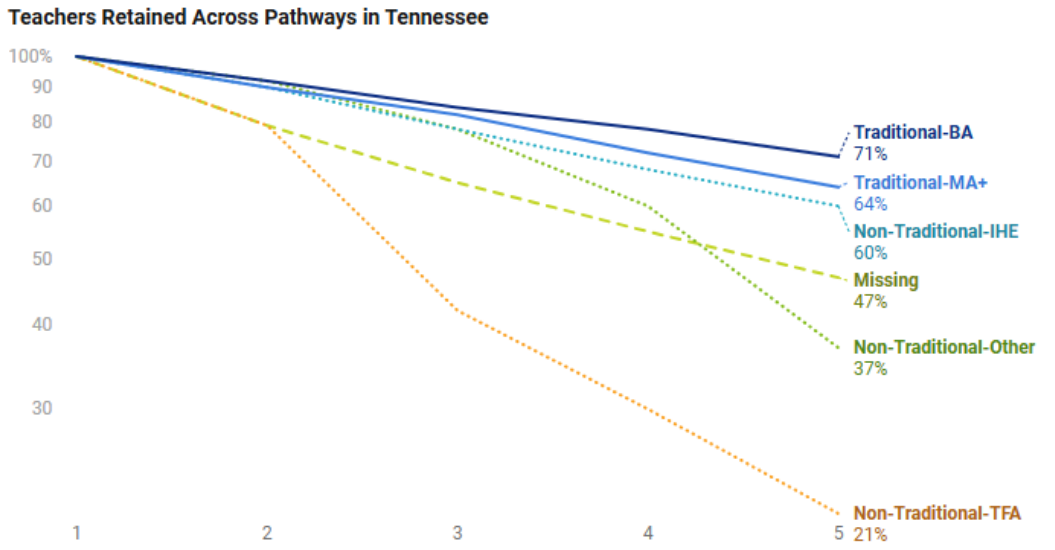
Fewer early career teachers reported having a mentor in their first year, but more reported having coaching or professional development targeted to their needs.



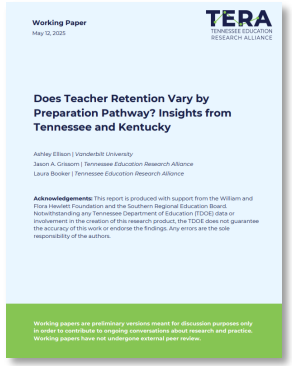
SREB TN EDUCATION RESEARCH ALLIANCE VANDERBILT Peabody College

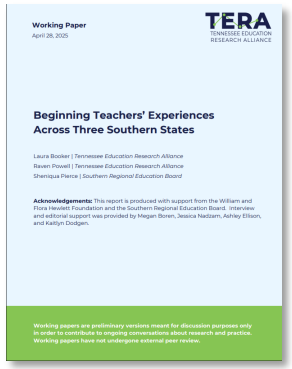
Research Partnership:
New Teacher Pathways and Retention



The graph shows the proportion of teachers who remained in teaching in the state averaged across cohorts of teachers who began teaching between 2017 and 2023 in Tennessee. Not all cohorts can be observed for the full five years. Year 1 marks a teacher's first year.

Chart: SREB/Vanderbilt University • Source: TDOE • Created with Datawrapper


Working Paper
May 12, 2025
TERA
TENNESSEE EDUCATION RESEARCH ALLIANCE
Does Teacher Retention Vary by Preparation Pathway? Insights from Tennessee and Kentucky
Ashley Ellison | Vanderbilt University
Jason A. Grissom | Tennessee Education Research Alliance
Laura Booker | Tennessee Education Research Alliance
Acknowledgements: This report is produced with support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Southern Regional Education Board. Notwithstanding any Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) data or involvement in the creation of this research product, the TDOE does not guarantee the accuracy of this work or endorse the findings. Any errors are the sole responsibility of the authors.
Working papers are preliminary versions meant for discussion purposes only in order to contribute to ongoing conversations about research and practice. Working papers have not undergone external peer review.


Working Paper
April 28, 2025
TERA
TENNESSEE EDUCATION RESEARCH ALLIANCE
Beginning Teachers' Experiences Across Three Southern States
Laura Booker | Tennessee Education Research Alliance
Raven Powell | Tennessee Education Research Alliance
Sherriqua Pierce | Southern Regional Education Board
Acknowledgements: This report is produced with support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Southern Regional Education Board. Interview and editorial support was provided by Megan Boren, Jessica Nadiam, Ashley Ellison, and Kaitlyn Dodgen.
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Beginning Teacher *Insights*

- Non-traditional pathways boost supply, not always retention
- Career changers bring value, need better classroom prep
- Gaps in preparation, certification and hiring support hinders new teacher success
- Many new teachers feel unready, unsupported
- Work-life imbalance starts early & fuels burnout
- Lack of early career support & strong relationships drives attrition
- High-need schools & subjects face biggest new teacher retention issues

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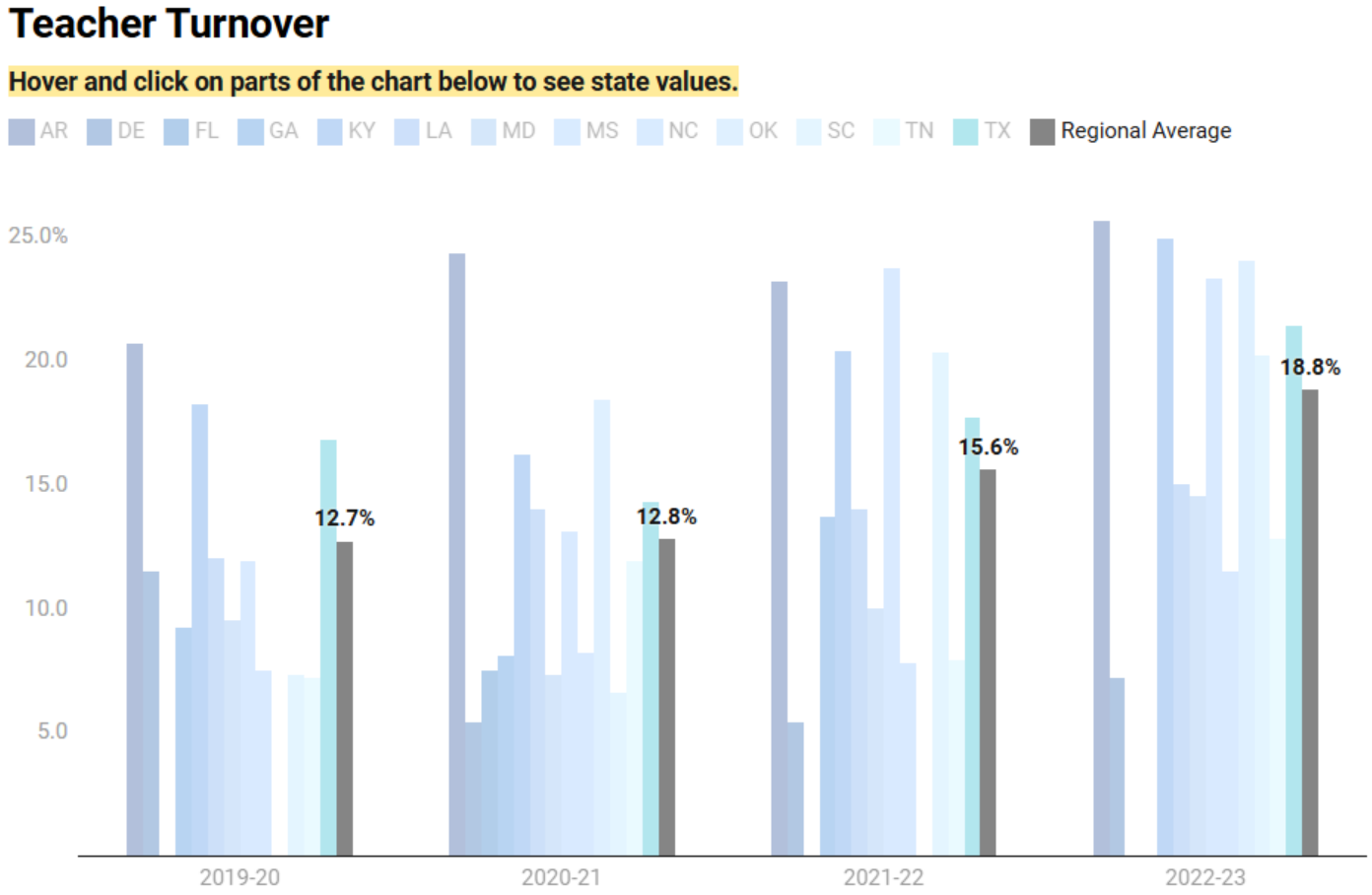
Why Focus on New or Early Career Teachers?

Nearly 50% of teachers leave their position within the first five years

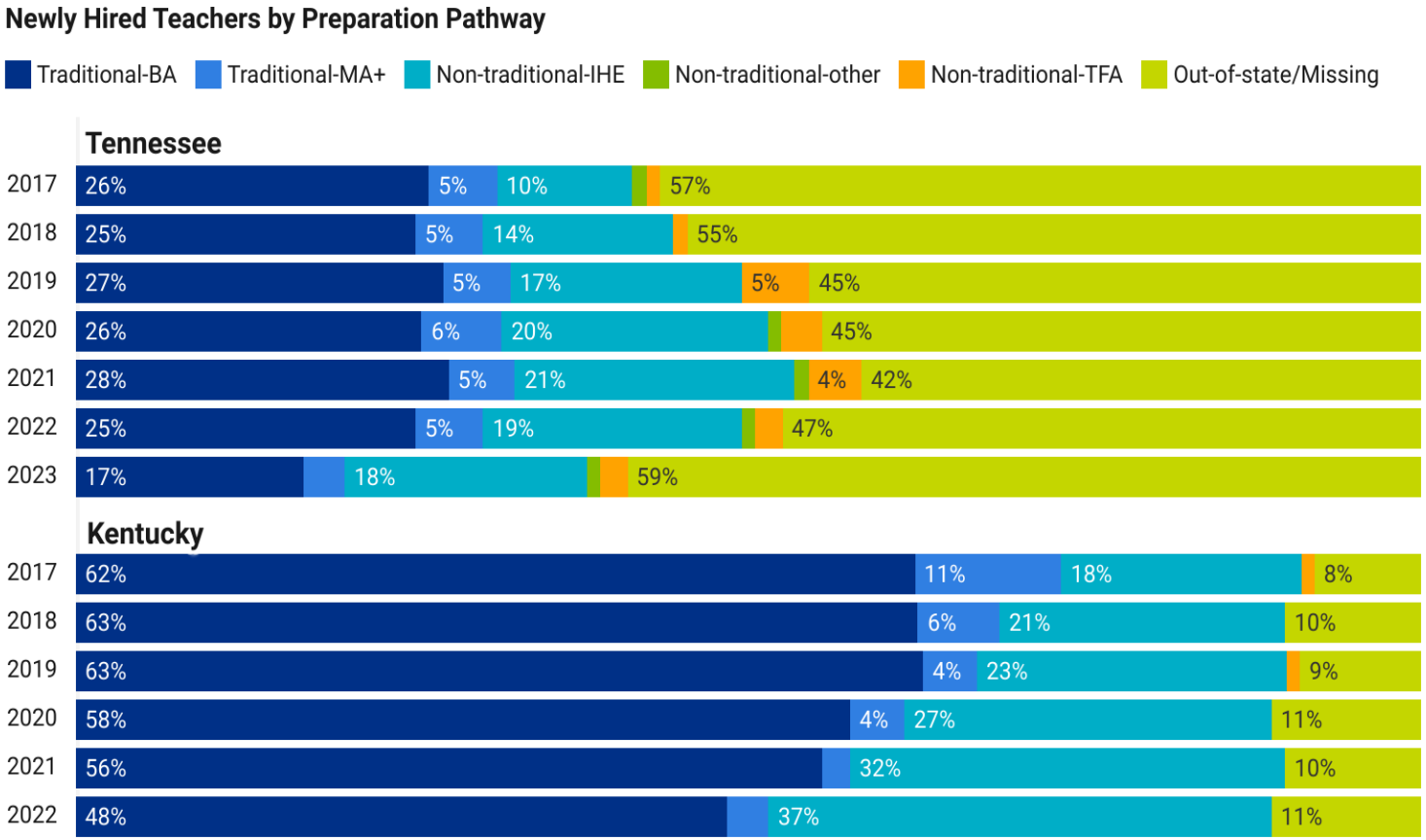
20% leave after the first year



Data not reported by all states for all years. VA and WV do not publicly report turnover rates.

SREB TN EDUCATION RESEARCH ALLIANCE VANDERBILT Peabody College

More newly hired teachers enter the profession via non-traditional routes.

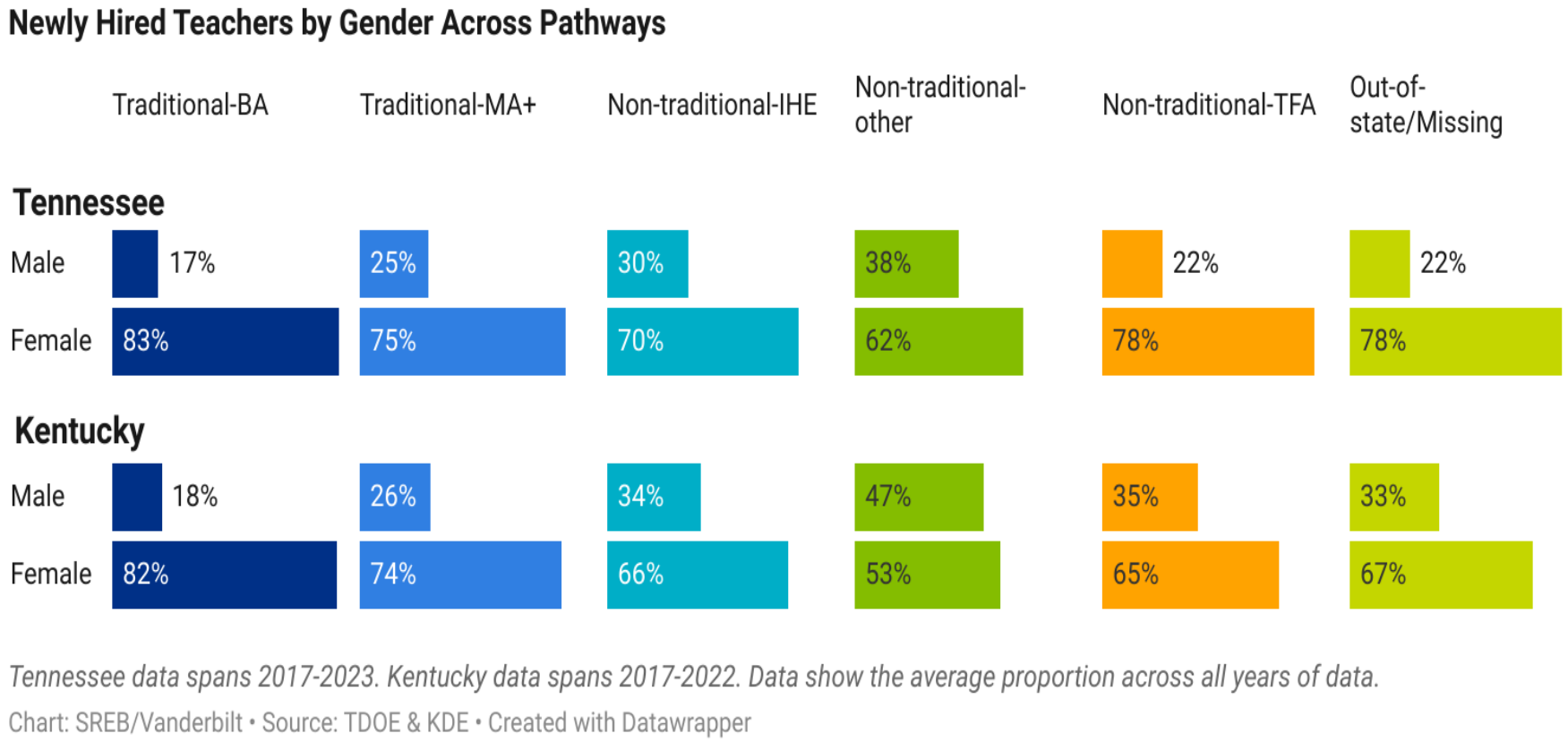


Figures represent the proportion of newly hired teachers from each preparation pathway each year, from 2017-2023 in Tennessee and 2017-2022 in Kentucky. The size of incoming cohorts varies.

Chart: SREB/Vanderbilt University • Source: TDOE & KDE • Created with Datawrapper

SREB TN EDUCATION RESEARCH ALLIANCE VANDERBILT Peabody College

Non-traditional completers are more likely to be male compared to traditionally prepared new teachers.



Tennessee data spans 2017-2023. Kentucky data spans 2017-2022. Data show the average proportion across all years of data.

Chart: SREB/Vanderbilt • Source: TDOE & KDE • Created with Datawrapper

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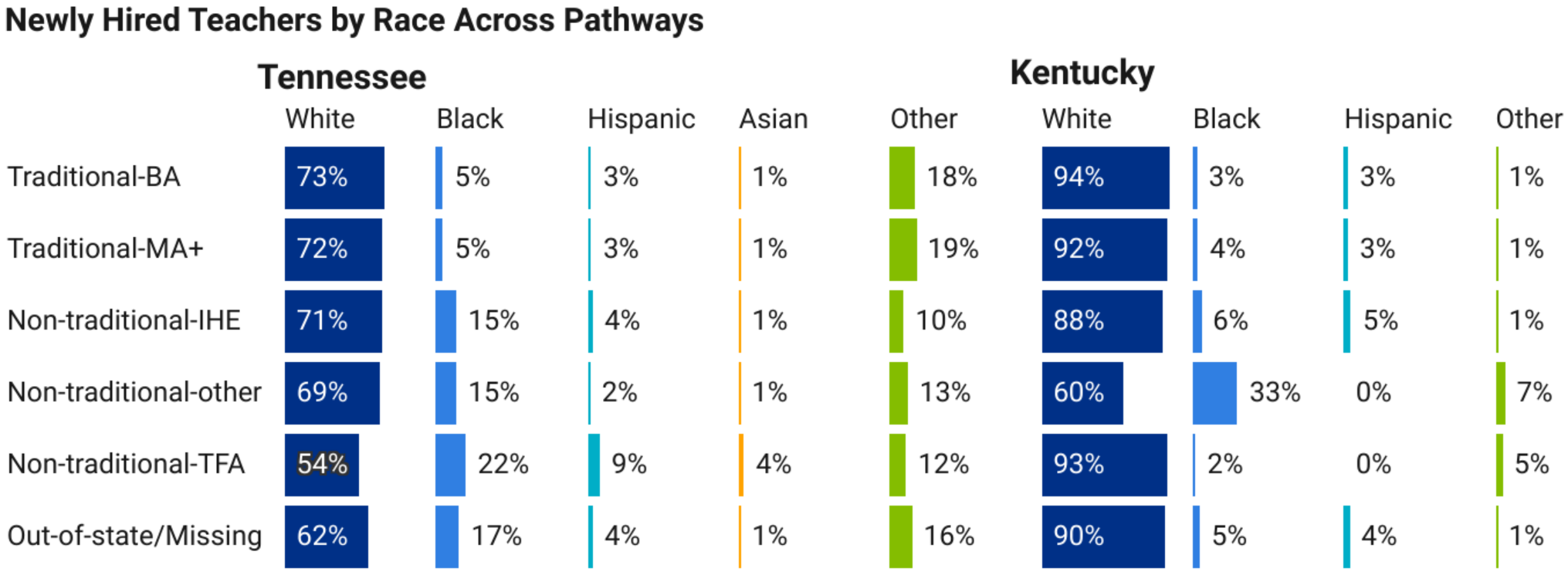
Non-traditional program completers are more likely to be from different racial or ethnic backgrounds, compared to newly hired teachers from traditional pathways. White teachers still make up a majority across all pathways.



Data show the average proportion from 2017 to 2023.

Chart: SREB/Vanderbilt • Source: TDOE & KDE • Created with Datawrapper

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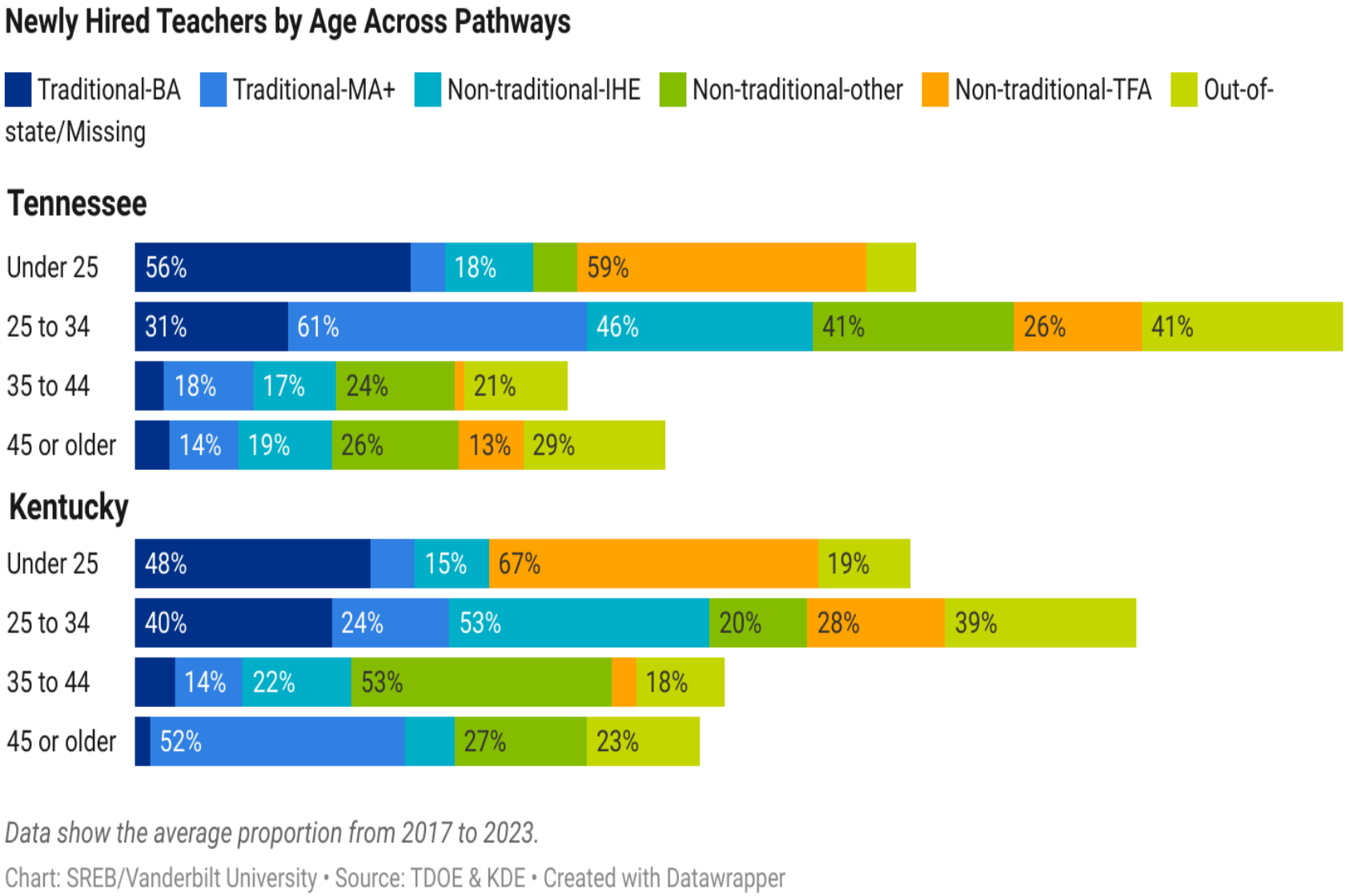
Most newly hired teachers are older than 25, aside from traditional-BA and Teach For America routes.



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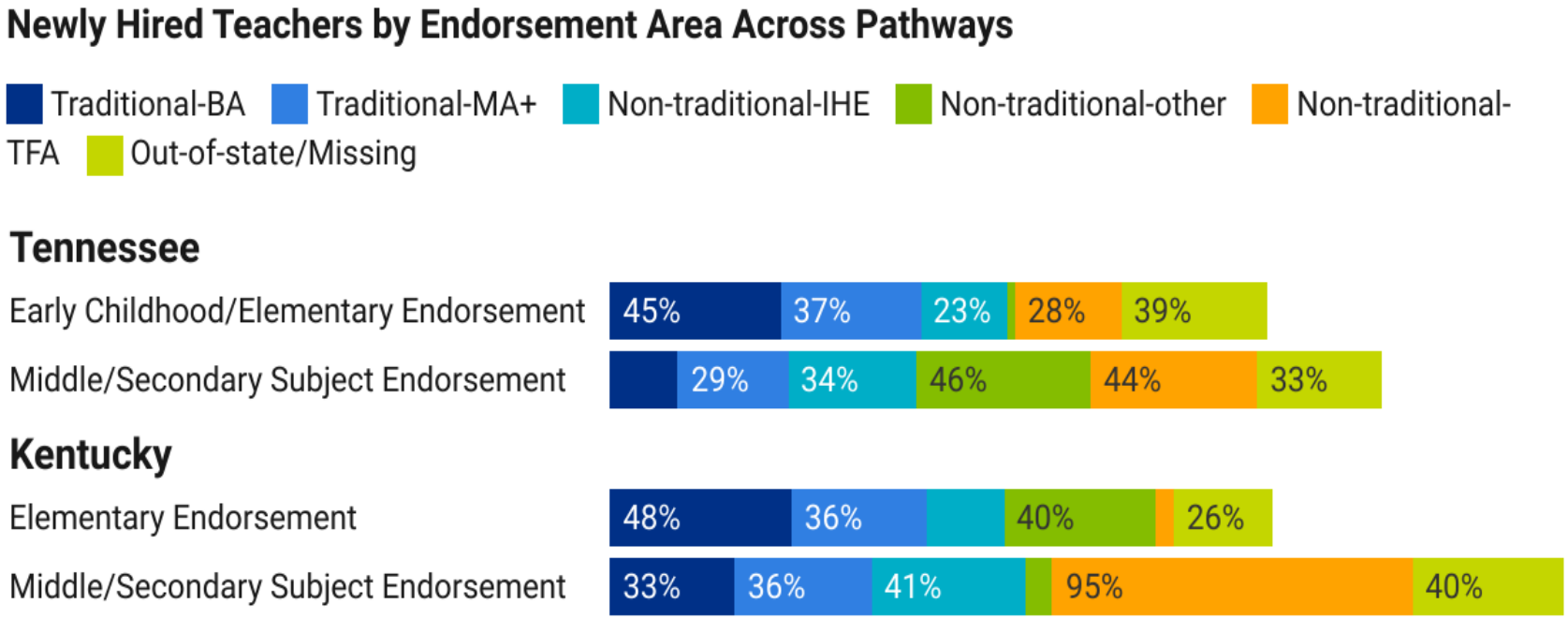
Non-traditional routes produce a greater proportion of teachers with middle and secondary endorsements.



Data show the average proportion from 2017 to 2023. Tennessee endorsements and certifications are captured from professional certification files. Middle subject endorsements include language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies for grades 6-8. Secondary subject endorsements include English, mathematics, sciences and social studies for grades 6-12. Health, arts, special education, ESL, languages, CTE endorsements not included. Kentucky newly hired teachers may hold more than subject endorsement type, resulting in totals over 100%. Kentucky endorsements and certifications are captured from credential descriptions and cannot be separated by grade level. English, mathematics, science, social studies, foreign language and special education are included; health and CTE endorsements not included.

Chart: SREB/Vanderbilt • Source: TDOE • Created with Datawrapper

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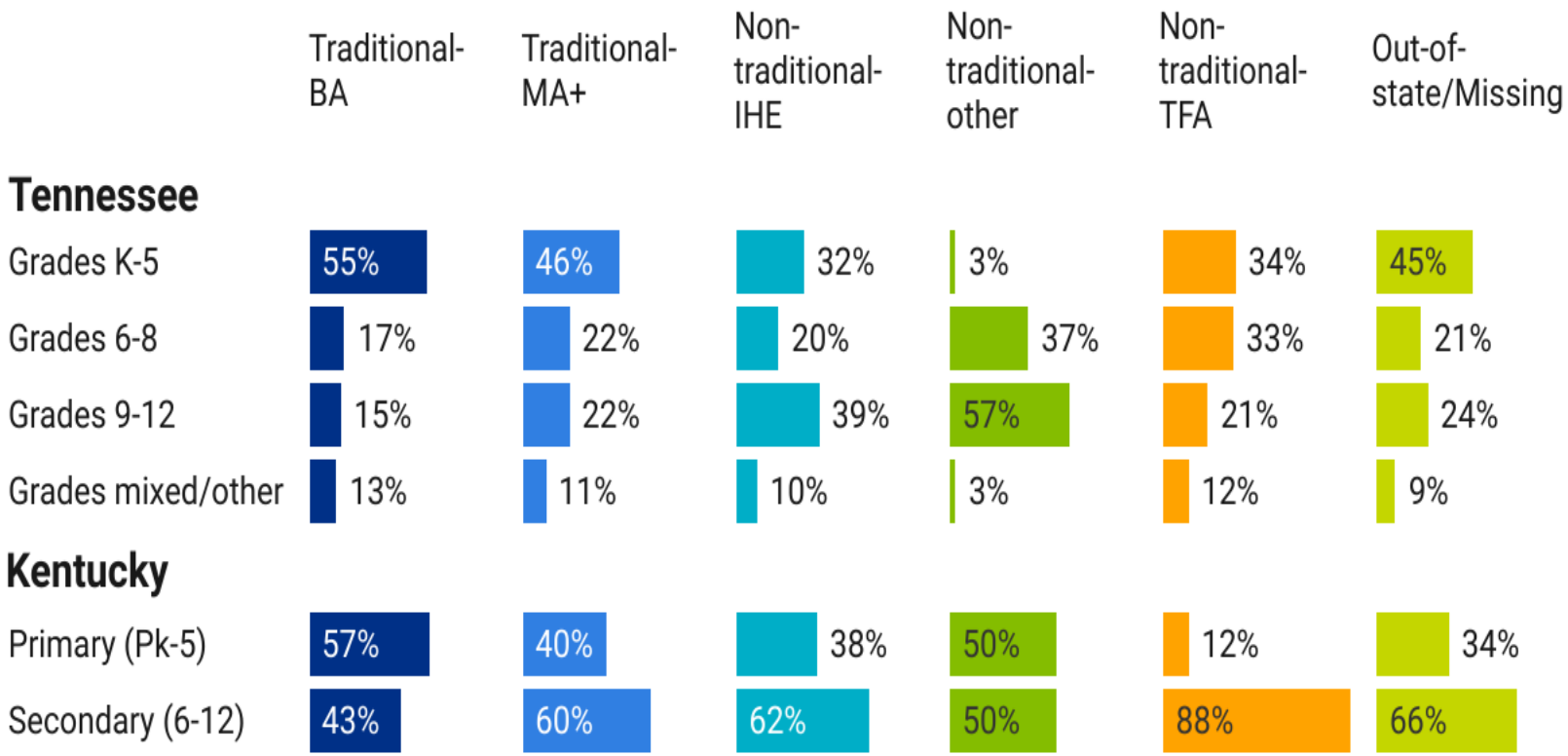
Over half of traditional-BA completers initially work in elementary schools.

Newly Hired Teachers by School Tier Across Pathways



Data show the average proportion from 2017 to 2023. School level in Kentucky is assigned based on the highest grades offered (primary) or lowest grade offered (secondary) in a school.

Chart: SREB/Vanderbilt University • Source: TDOE & KDE • Created with Datawrapper

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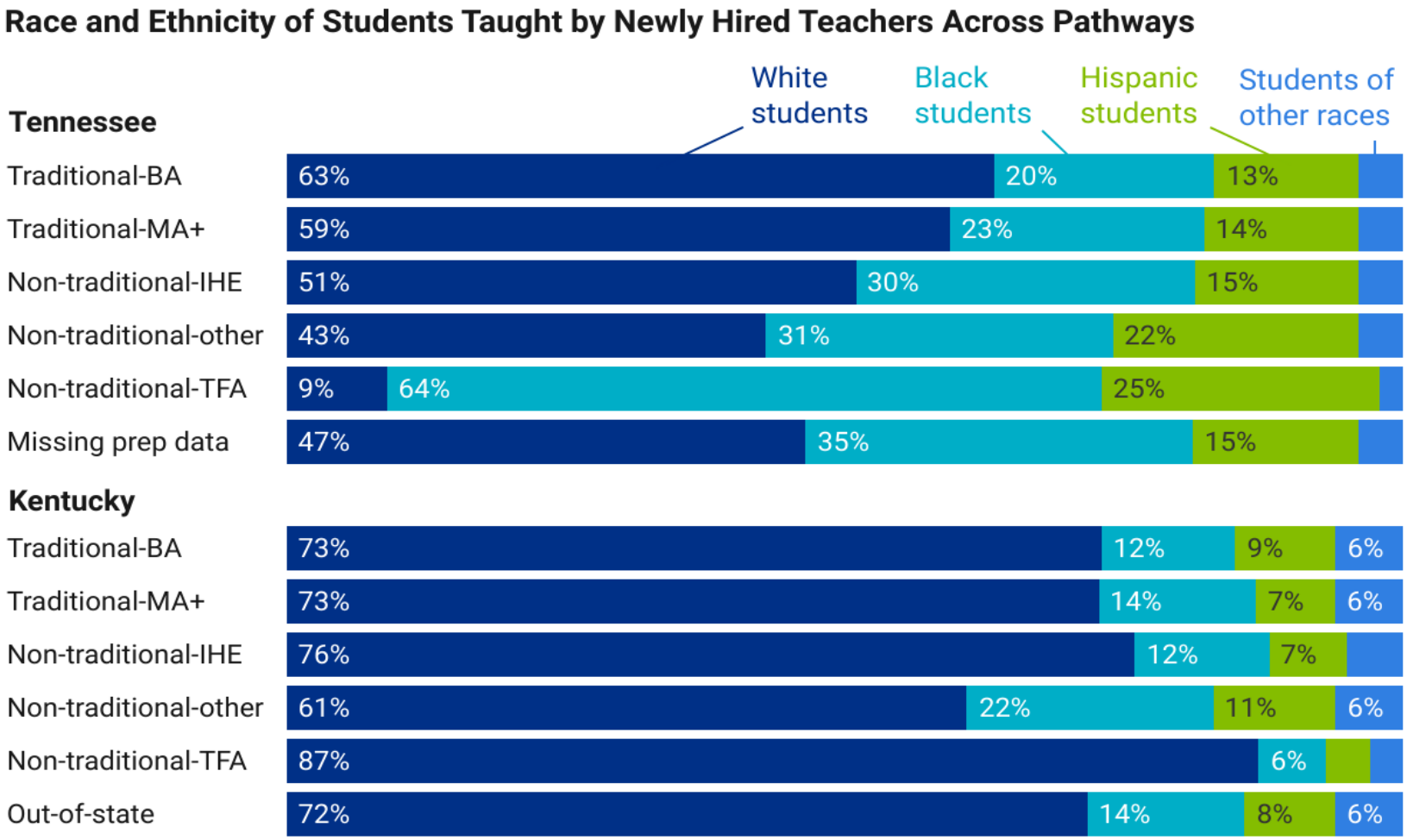
Non-traditionally prepared teachers work in schools with greater proportions of students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds.



Data show the average proportion from 2017 to 2023.

Chart: SREB/Vanderbilt University • Source: TDOE & KDE • Created with Datawrapper

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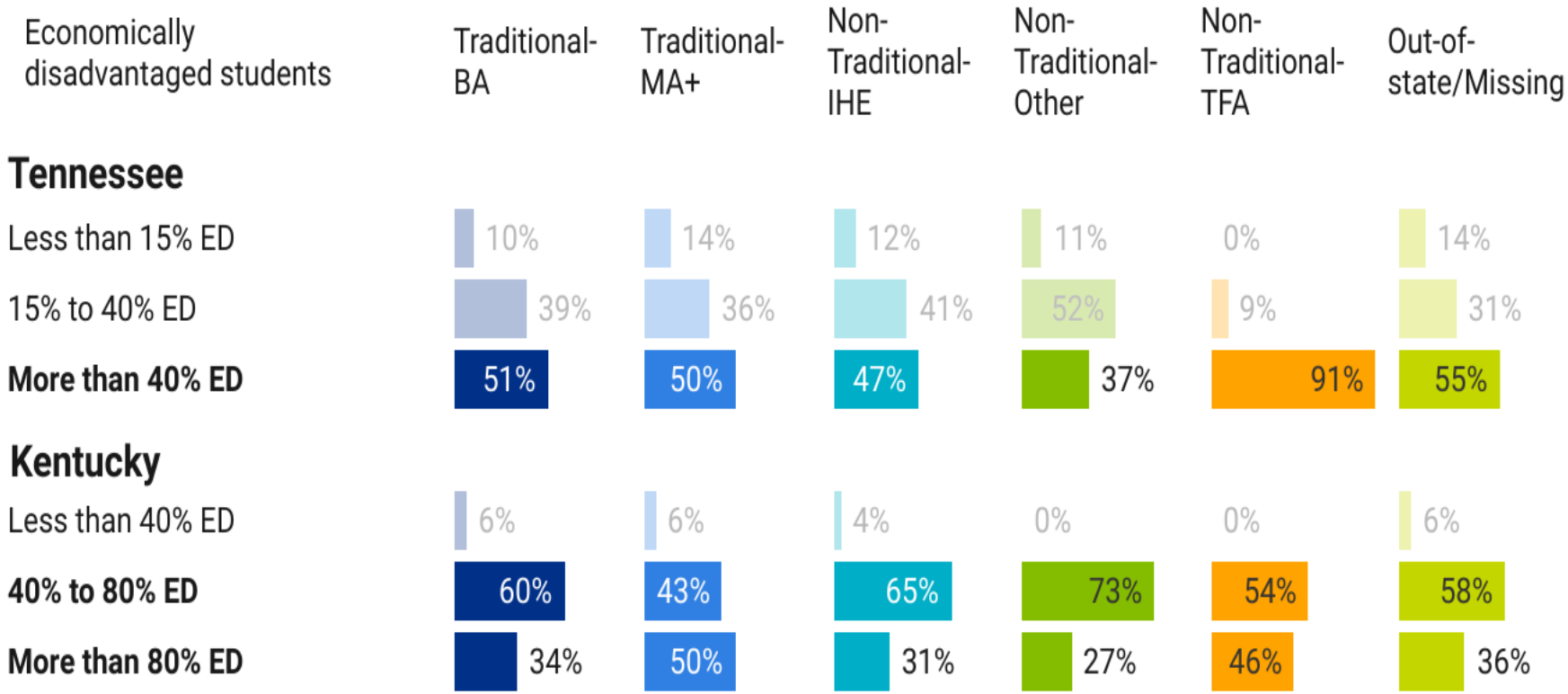
Teachers who enter through non-traditional programs serve greater proportions of students who are economically disadvantaged.

Newly Hired Teachers by Pathway and Student Socioeconomic Status



Data show the average proportion from 2017 to 2023. In 2017, both Tennessee and Kentucky used a measure of Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) as a proxy for economic disadvantage (ED). Both states adopted new measures in 2018. TFA teachers predominantly work in schools serving high proportions of economically disadvantaged students. This is reflective of the program's target of placing teachers in high-needs schools.

Chart: SREB/Vanderbilt University • Source: TDOE & KDE • Created with Datawrapper

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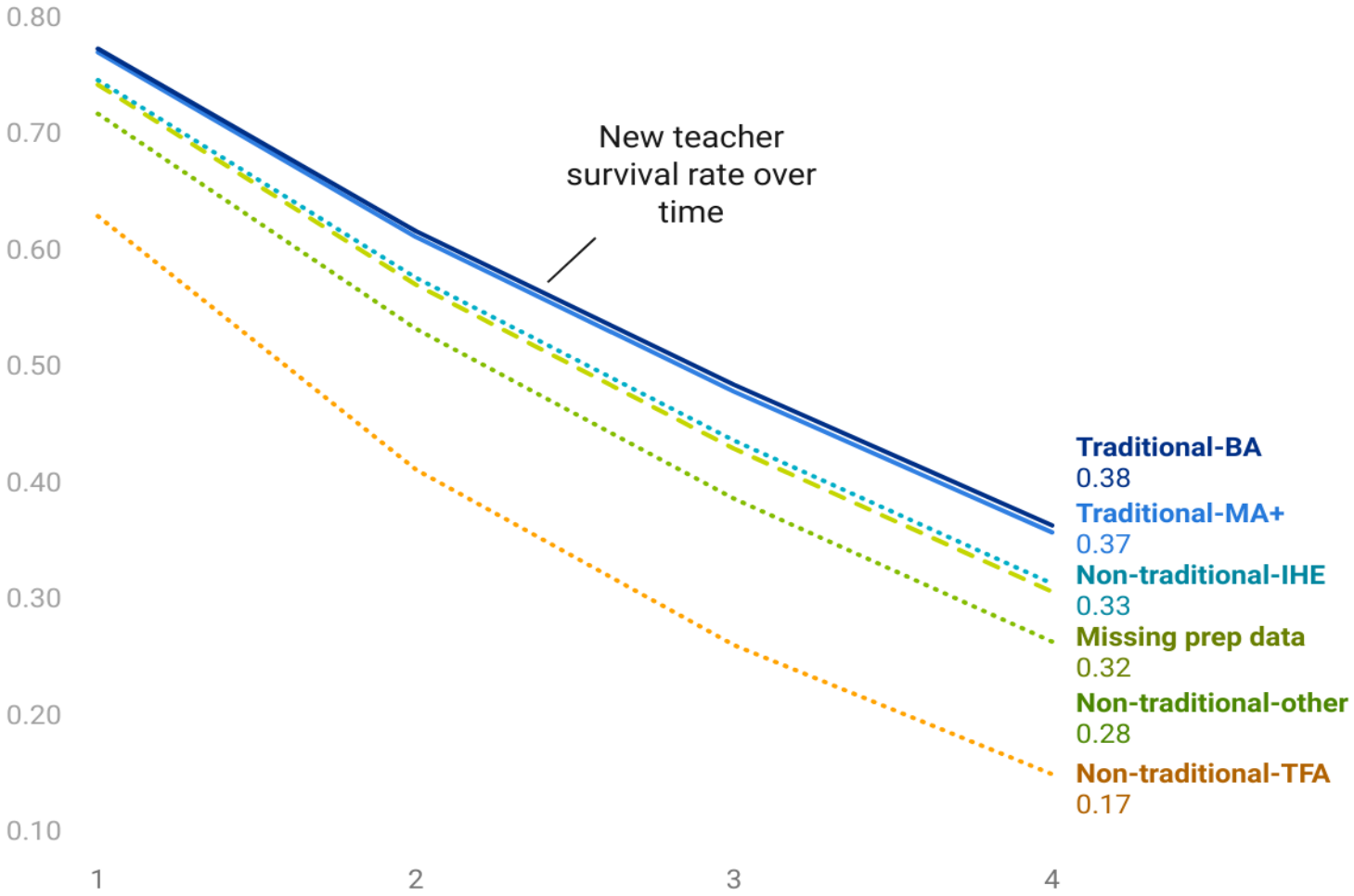
Some preparation pathways are significantly associated with teacher retention even when controlling for individual and school characteristics.

Effects of Experience by Preparation Pathway on Teacher Retention, Tennessee



Cox proportion hazard model's outcome of interest is a binary measure of retention (1=retained). Failure is measured when retention is 0. The observed time interval is experience. Model covariates include preparation pathway individual characteristics (sex, race, age, logged salary), and school characteristics (student race, % special education, % economic disadvantaged, % immigrant or English learner, student sex, school locale, logged enrollment, school level). Standard errors are clustered at the school level. Graph plots the survival function (retention) holding covariates constant at the mean. See TERA working paper Appendix Table 1 for full list of covariates.

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SREB TN EDUCATION RESEARCH ALLIANCE VANDERBILT Peabody College

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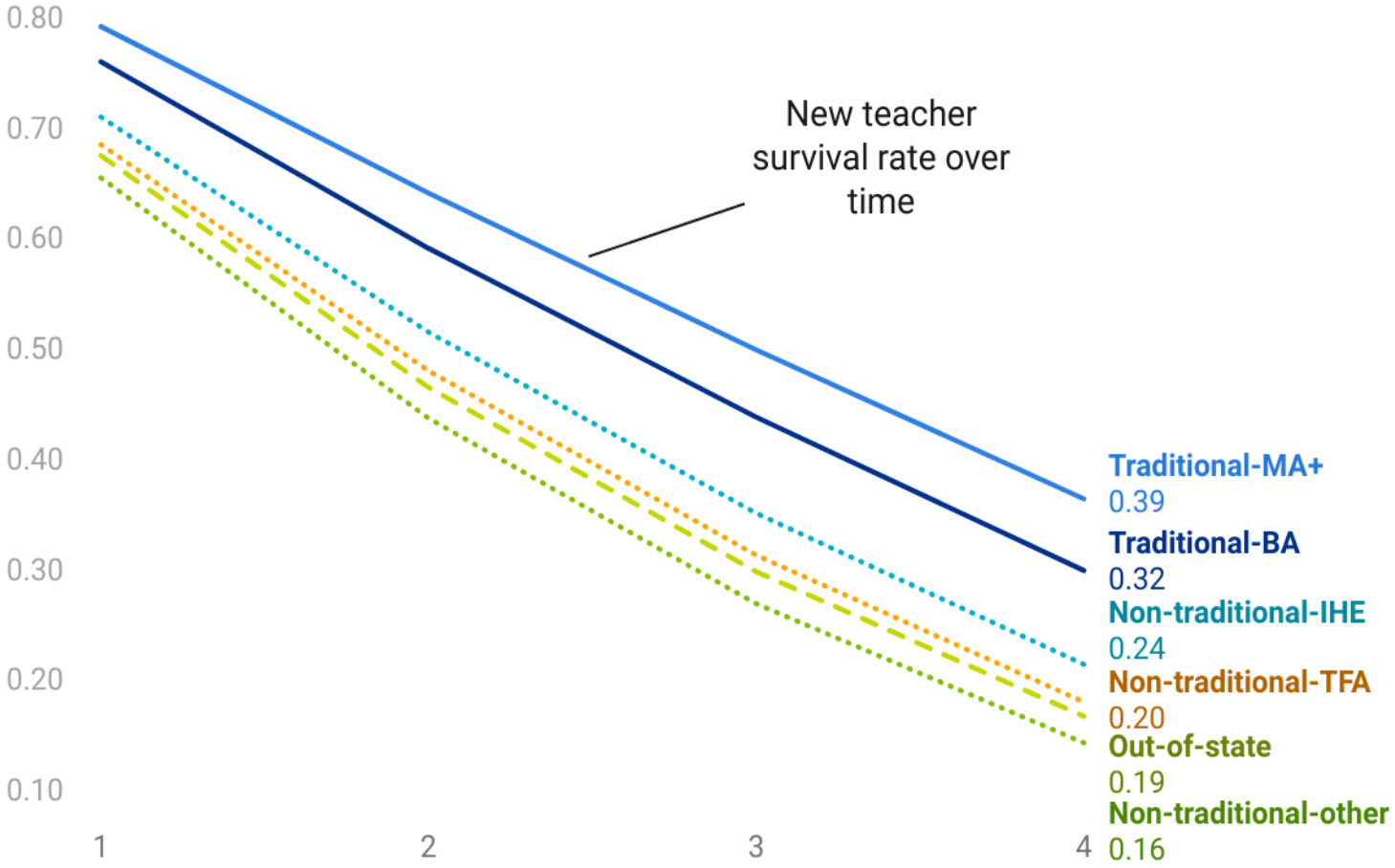
Effects of Experience by Preparation Pathway on Teacher Retention, Kentucky



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SREB TN EDUCATION RESEARCH ALLIANCE VANDERBILT Peabody College

The risk for novice teacher turnover increases with certain conditions.

- Teaching in - Low performing schools
  High poverty schools
  Secondary schools
- Lower starting salary
- Younger starting age
- Less effective instructional abilities

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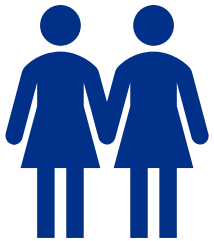
Sources: SREB & Vanderbilt University, 2025

Beginning teachers feel better equipped to deal with challenges related to entering and remaining in the profession when fully supported by their preparation program.



Not all preparation programs provide the same types of supports and resources that beginning teachers need.

Beginning teachers who received support from their preparation programs expressed fewer challenges transitioning into the classroom.

The expectation that teachers sacrifice personal time for their work often begins in preparation programs and continues into their early careers, making the job less sustainable long term.

"I often think that too much is expected of and handed to teachers. We think, 'We can do it, we're teachers, we're miracle workers.' But I think we need acknowledgment that we're humans. We have our families. We have other priorities."

"It's overwhelming… The third year gets easier, but those first two years are so hard. I'm a super organized, hyper-efficient human and I struggled, especially since I have a family. It's just hard. It's really hard."

Traditional route teachers say student teaching was more helpful than their coursework, although most beginning teachers say their preparation programs did not adequately prepare them for the realities of the job.

"I've had different jobs and this is the most difficult job to walk into and be able to complete. You're supposed to walk in day one and know exactly what you're doing — no other job is like that."

SUPPORTING PREK-12 EDUCATORS

(particularly novice educators)

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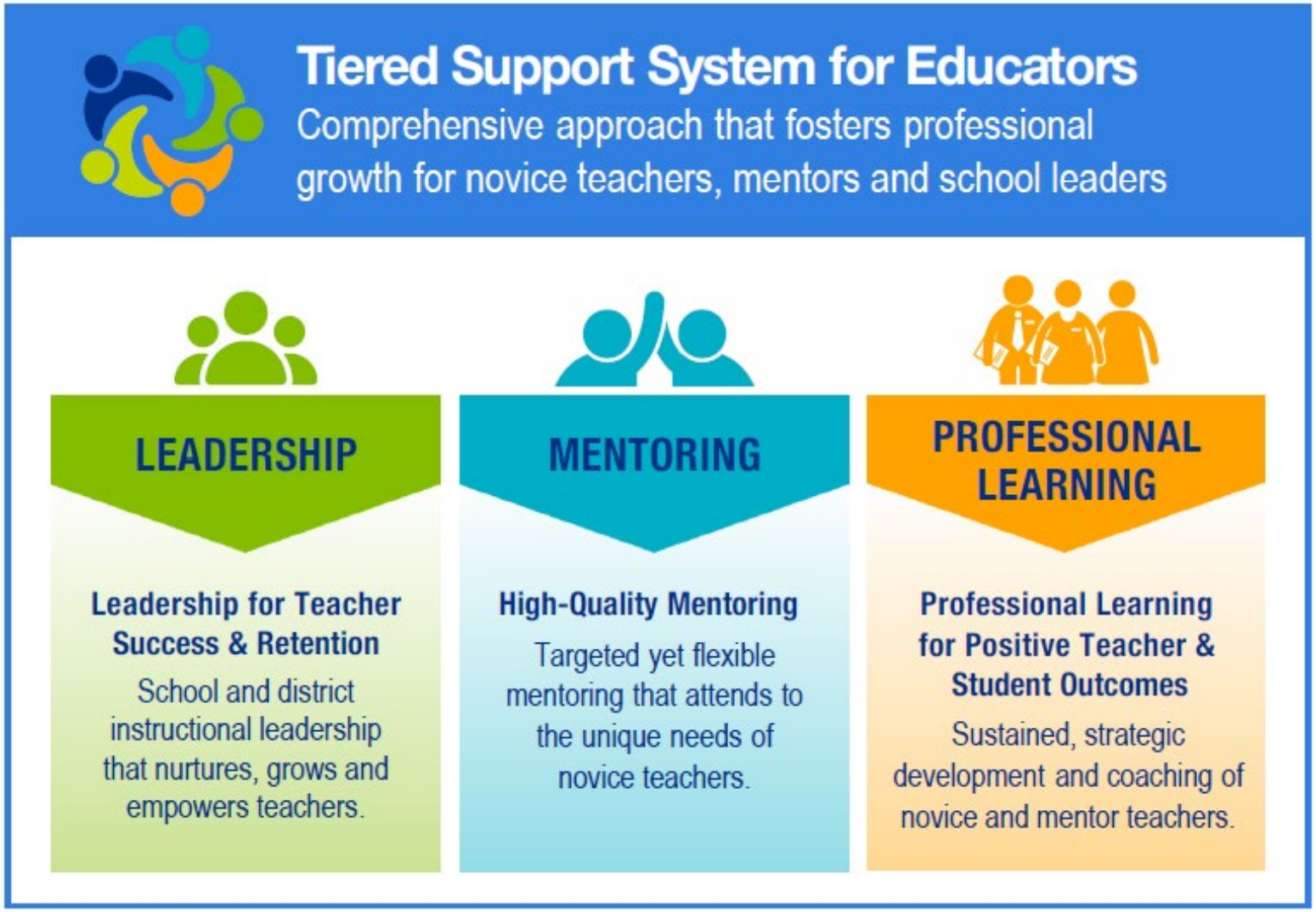
SREB Teacher Induction Framework



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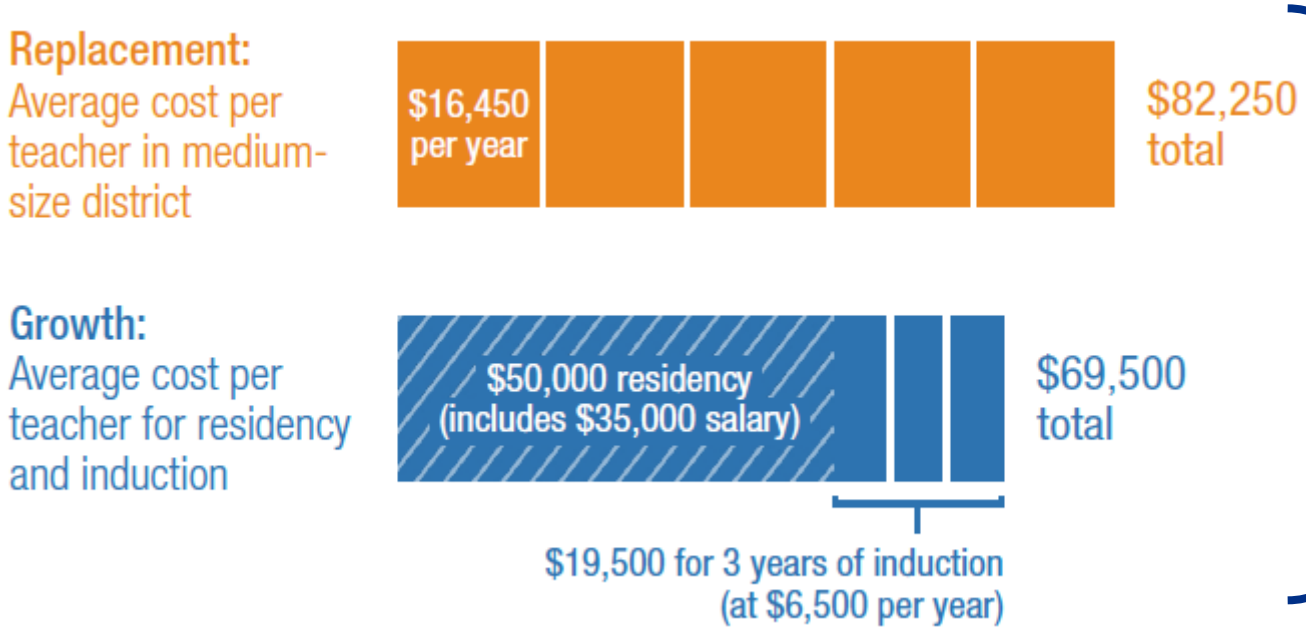
Induction can save schools, districts and states millions of dollars.

Five-Year Novice Teacher Replacement vs. Growth Cost

U.S., 2024



$12,750 savings
per novice teacher

Example

Maryland could save up to **$238 million** every 5 years

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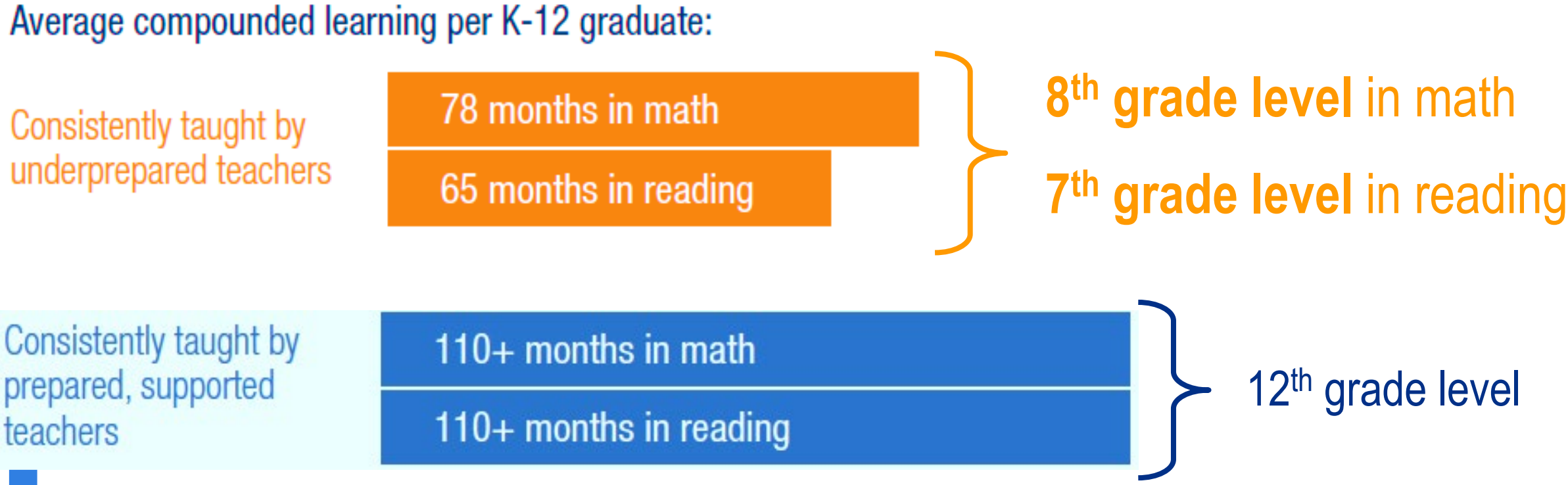
Sources: SREB analysis, based on data from Kirksey, J., 2025; Learning Policy Institute, 2024; National Center for Teacher Residencies, 2024; New Teacher Center, 2024

Teaching supports can improve student learning.



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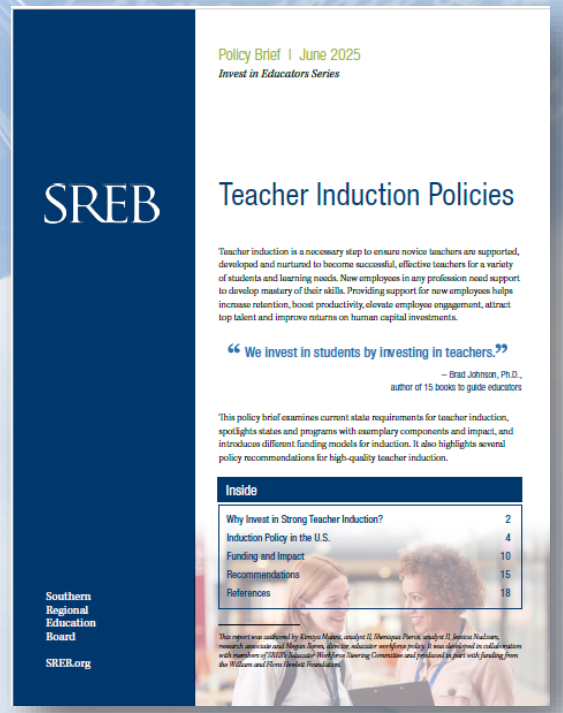
Sources: SREB analysis, based on data from Kirksey, J., 2025

NEW TEACHER SUPPORT POLICES



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Policy Recommendations

Teacher Induction

Invest in induction support

Allocate resources for:

- ❑ Support for school leaders, mentor teachers and teacher leaders, growing novice teachers
- ❑ Layered & tiered support for novices
- ❑ Smaller, rural and low-income districts need additional support

Policy Recommendations

Teacher Induction

Require state-supported comprehensive teacher induction

- ❑ Two+ years of support for novice teachers
- ❑ Clear policies for implementation
- ❑ Support and guidance for leaders, mentor and novice teachers

Policy Recommendations

Teacher Induction

Align induction policy with licensure and compensation policies

Create a **career continuum** structure

- ❑ Licensure levels for differentiated roles - teacher apprentice, resident, novice teacher, advanced teacher and mentor teacher
- ❑ Differentiated pay and educator support scaffolding
- ❑ Enable innovative, strategic staffing

Policy Recommendations

Teacher Induction

Evaluate induction efforts for impact and return on investment

- ❑ Assessment for impact and return on investment
- ❑ Continuous improvement of district support systems
- ❑ Resource allocation for evaluations are needed

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TAKEAWAYS

- **Both traditional and alternative pathways** to certification are needed to diversify and fill the teacher pipeline BUT
- **Preparation quality matters –** there are disparities in support that teachers receive across both traditional and non-traditional pathways
- Positive relationships, collegial support, mastery and professional working conditions are **crucial drivers of teacher retention**
- **Consistent, high-quality support structures** are needed for all incoming teachers throughout teacher prep and the early years of teaching… or they will leave!

To reverse the negative workforce trends, teaching must be an attractive, accessible and supported career.

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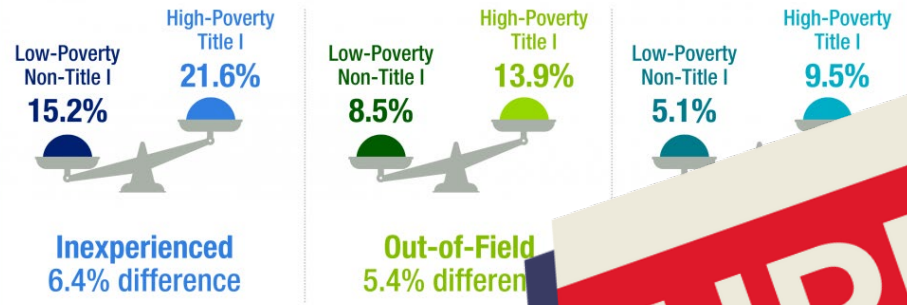
Teacher Workforce Data

SREB STATES
2019-2023

Like previous years, there was a higher distribution of inexperienced, out-of-field and uncertified teachers at schools with higher concentrations of poverty in the SREB region during the 2022-23 school year.



SREB.org/Teache Data

UPDATE
COMING SOON

Data by State

Teacher Preparation Program Completions

State	Change between 2012-13 and 2021-22	2012-13	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
AL	-841	2,965	2,417	2,391	2,001	1,862	1,897	2,124
AR		2,349	1,908	1,739	1,748	1,787	1,865	1,842
DE		746	459	437	396	425	647	529
		7,021	7,840	5,392	4,790	4,555	4,771	4,916
		5,443	3,921	3,807	4,054	4,341	4,683	4,678
		3,206	2,073	2,407	2,189	2,231	2,235	2,702
		2,574	2,365	2,106	2,050	1,759	1,789	1,590
		2,774	2,382	2,092	1,904	1,902	1,929	1,827
	+5	305	1,687	1,583	1,653	1,639	2,374	2,850
	-665	9	4,308	4,222	4,023	4,228	4,987	4,830
			1,398	1,314	1,239	1,178	1,147	1,092
SC	-344	2,447	2,207	2,106	2,168	2,089	2,382	2,103
TN	-1,767	4,447	2,904	2,803	2,705	2,409	2,803	2,680
TX	-4,155	20,828	22,574	21,598	20,069	19,968	20,633	16,673
VA	-780	3,954	3,372	3,208	3,167	2,995	2,786	3,174
WV	-593	1,182	895	994	794	775	754	589
Total	-15,693	69,892	62,710	58,199	54,950	54,143	57,682	54,199

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Teacher Compensation Data

SREB STATES
2013-2023

TAKE HOME PAY

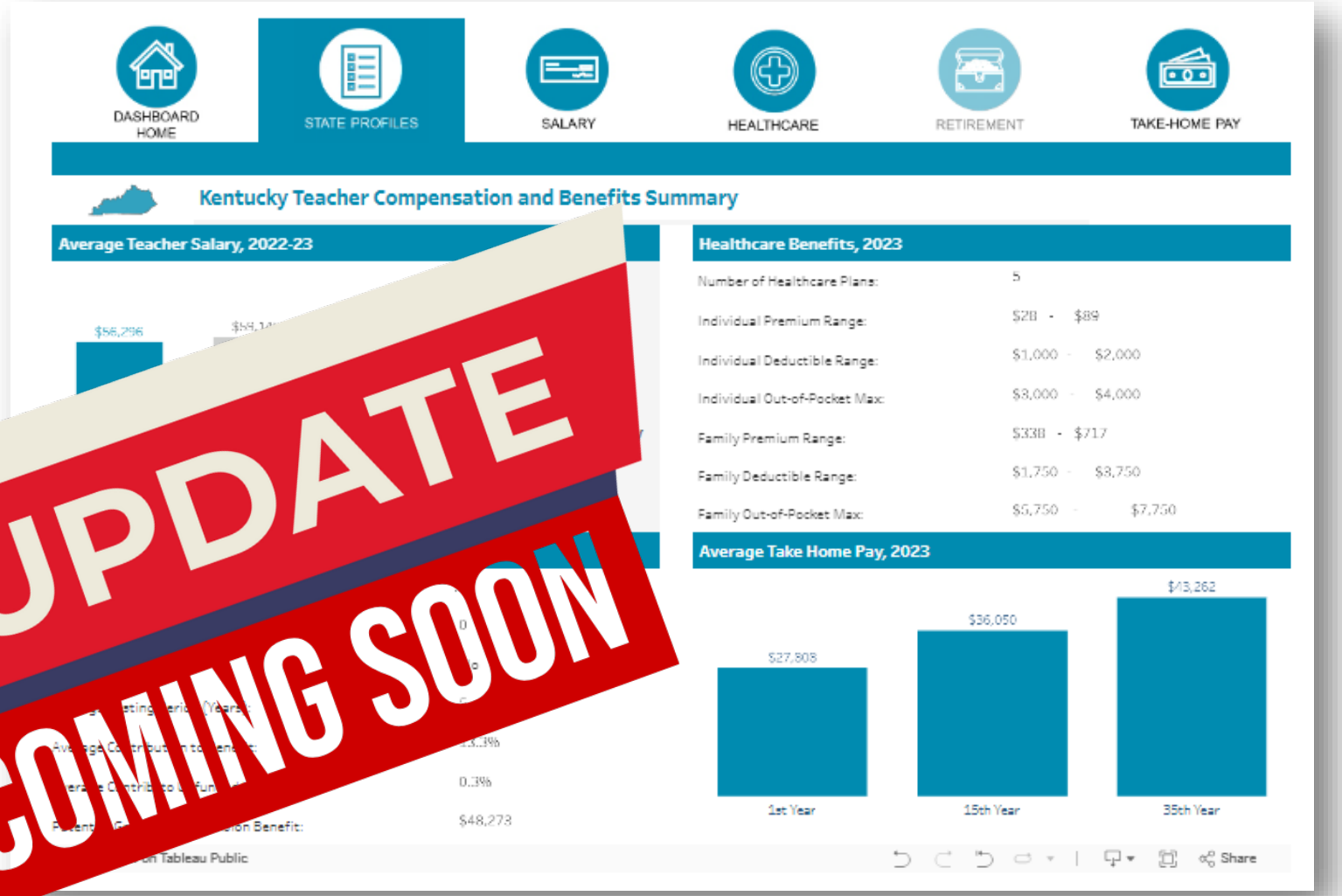
Average Annual **Net** Salary in Region, 2023

YEAR 1 — $30,490

YEAR 15 — $39,806

YEAR 35 — $50,233

SREB.org/TeacherCompensatio



UPDATE COMING SOON

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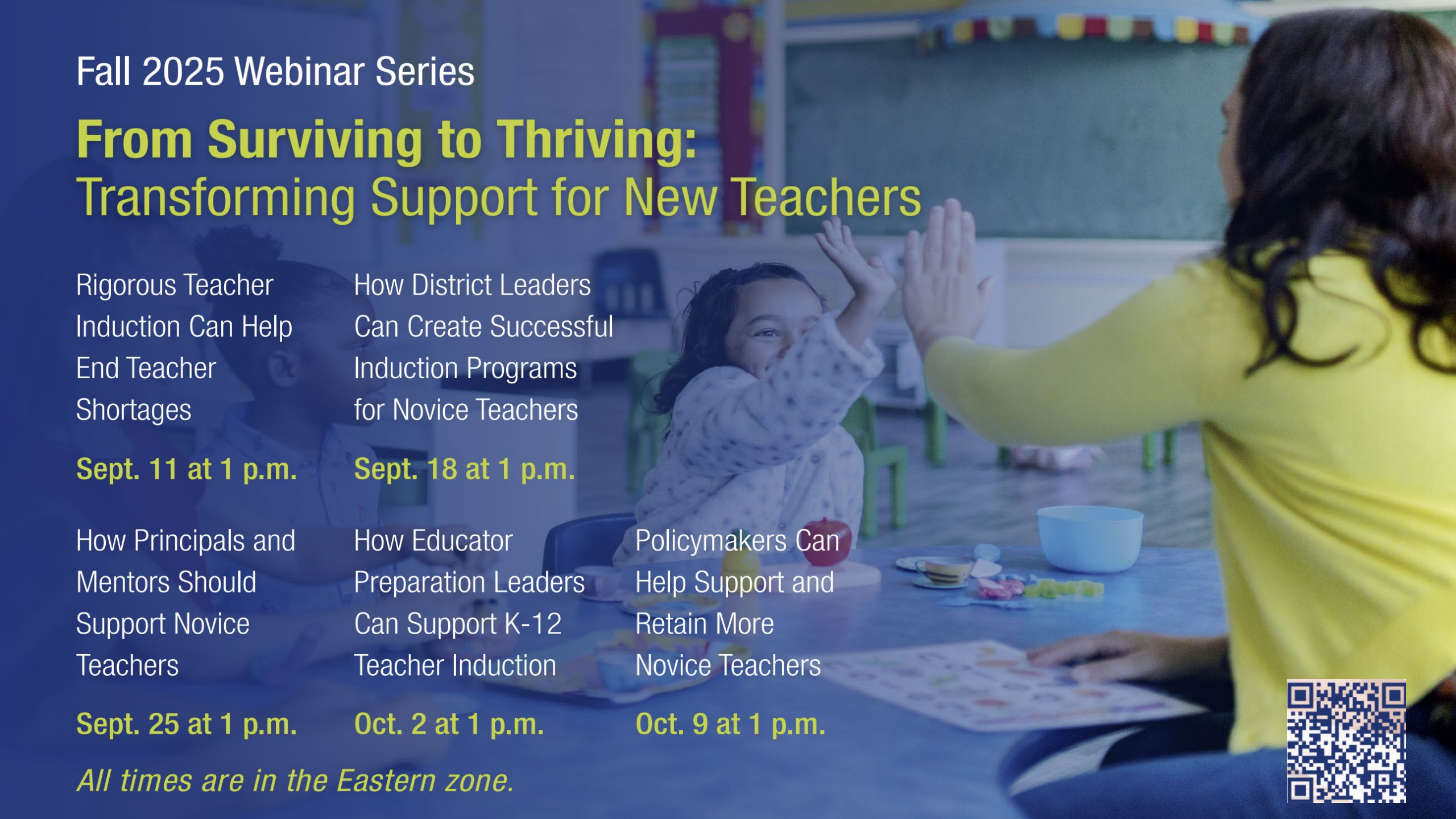
Fall 2025 Webinar Series

From Surviving to Thriving:
Transforming Support for New Teachers



Rigorous Teacher Induction Can Help End Teacher Shortages

Sept. 11 at 1 p.m.

How District Leaders Can Create Successful Induction Programs for Novice Teachers

Sept. 18 at 1 p.m.

How Principals and Mentors Should Support Novice Teachers

Sept. 25 at 1 p.m.

How Educator Preparation Leaders Can Support K-12 Teacher Induction

Oct. 2 at 1 p.m.

Policymakers Can Help Support and Retain More Novice Teachers

Oct. 9 at 1 p.m.

All times are in the Eastern zone.

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Southern Regional Education Board

SREB.org

For More Information:

- SREB.org/post/educator-workforce-research
- SREB.org/induction
- SREB.org/teacherworkforce

Contact:

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