

# Rural Teacher Pathways Findings

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Western Oregon University received a GYO grant in 2021 to formalize a [Rural Partnership Pathways Program \(RP3\)](#), a “grow-your-own/stay-at-home” degree completion and licensure pathway for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) elementary teachers with ESOL or Special Education endorsements. The project conducted listening sessions with residents in 17 rural districts and two tribes. Here are highlights from 65 participants during two rounds of listening sessions.

## Identified Barriers

- ⇒ *The barrier mentioned most by participants was access to easy to understand and accurate information on teacher pathways.*
- ⇒ *Other needs included information on scholarships and financial aid, program costs, required coursework, licensing requirements, endorsements, and time commitments.*
- ⇒ *Some talked about the difficulty in getting started, especially if they are first generation students or returning to school after a long period of time. They expressed the need for a person or navigator who they could reach out to for assistance.*
- ⇒ *Financial costs pose a real barrier for many. Not only is there a reluctance to take on additional debt, there are also concerns about loss of income due to reduction in hours or losing primary and/or secondary jobs while in a program.*
- ⇒ *Participants shared the value they place on being a parent and their commitment to family. Single parents shared how difficult it is to not only balance work, school, and family but the high cost of quality childcare, particularly during evenings and weekends when classes are typically offered.*
- ⇒ *Time was frequently mentioned as a barrier. Some rely on more than one job to support their families and they worry how they will be able to work, especially during student teaching.*

## Helpful District Supports

- ⇒ *Many individuals who could become teachers employed in lower salaried positions and have no guarantee of a job after earning a license. Classified employees would like districts or ESDs to support specific pathways towards teacher licensure.*
- ⇒ *Classified employees would like to see districts help cover costs for their career advancement and professional development.*

- ⇒ *Classified employees want districts to encourage them to pursue teacher pathways, even suggesting IAs be hired with teacher pathways in mind for career advancement. Districts need to share pathway opportunities annually with employees.*
- ⇒ *Classified employees need flexibility around work schedules while in a GYO program and protection of job placements when possible.*

### **Curriculum Needs**

- ⇒ *Diversity needs to be manifested throughout a program, starting with the diversity of faculty and instructors, modeling of Culturally Responsive Practices, and validation of different languages.*
- ⇒ *Preparation programs need to include topics relevant to teaching in rural communities, particularly related to trauma and addressing students' social and emotional needs.*
- ⇒ *The curriculum needs to address ways to connect with families and how to access and leverage community resources.*
- ⇒ *Participants want to see ESOL integrated into teacher licensure programs along with Indigenous Curriculum and Ethnic Studies.*

### **Delivery Model Needs**

- ⇒ *Attending college in person schooling is out of reach for those who live a distance from campus and can't commute regularly.*
- ⇒ *More online community college course offerings are needed.*
- ⇒ *Asynchronous program models are a popular choice. When face-to-face class meetings are required, needed support include gas vouchers, overnight accommodations in residence halls, child care, access to support services, and thoughtful use of time.*
- ⇒ *Participants value meeting as a cohort and attending synchronous meetings virtually from a local facility.*
- ⇒ *Synchronous online instruction should be reserved for interactive learning, not lectures that could be watched independently.*
- ⇒ *Participants want online programs to communicate time commitments and costs, provide tech support, and schedule time for talking one-on-one with instructors.*