

**Reimagining Teacher Preparation: Implementing Teacher Launch Academy (TLA) to
Support Novice and Alternate Route Educators in High-Need Districts**

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Curriculum Overview

This proposal introduces Teacher Launch Academy (TLA), a comprehensive year-long induction and professional learning model designed to bridge the gap between initial certification and long-term instructional mastery for novice and alternate route educators. TLA was developed in response to the growing disconnect between traditional teacher preparation programs and the practical realities educators face when entering classrooms, particularly in high-needs urban school districts.

Unlike traditional induction models that often rely on one-time orientation sessions or fragmented professional development workshops, TLA provides a structured continuum of support that extends throughout an educator's first year of teaching. The program integrates five core pillars: clinical mentorship, evidence-based classroom management, instructional coaching, technology integration, and artificial intelligence (AI) readiness.

The curriculum is designed for implementation in high-needs urban school districts that frequently rely on alternate route candidates to fill instructional vacancies. The target population includes educators in their first three years of teaching across grades K–12. Recognizing that instructional responsibilities vary by discipline and student population, TLA provides differentiated pathways for elementary educators, secondary content teachers, special education teachers, and multilingual learner educators. To provide district leaders and stakeholders with a concise visual summary of Teacher Launch Academy's program model, implementation timeline, and projected outcomes, an executive one-page overview was developed to accompany this proposal (see Appendix A).

The duration of implementation spans 12 months and begins with a four-week summer onboarding institute followed by ten months of embedded coaching, mentorship, and

professional learning. Grounded in adult learning theory, the program emphasizes self-directed, job-embedded learning experiences that allow educators to immediately apply new knowledge to classroom practice (Knowles, 1984).

Rationale and Context

Teacher shortages continue to impact school districts nationwide, compelling many local educational agencies to rely on novice and alternate route teachers to fill critical instructional vacancies. While these pathways expand entry into the profession, many educators enter the classroom feeling acutely underprepared for the multifaceted demands of modern pedagogy. As the Academic Director of New Pathways to Teaching in New Jersey, I observe this "reality aftershock" (Hobson & Ashby, 2012) firsthand. Alternate route candidates who must balance full-time instructional responsibilities with rigorous certification requirements frequently report significant challenges in classroom management, differentiated instruction, and the integration of emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI).

The urgency of this issue is most pronounced in high-needs urban schools, where teacher turnover remains high, and students require consistent, high-quality instructional support. Research indicates that the teacher is the most influential variable in student achievement (Hattie, 2009). However, novice teachers often lack the self-efficacy required to manage complex classroom dynamics and effectively implement evidence-based strategies. Andrews and Quinn (2005) found that structured mentoring is essential to mitigating these feelings of isolation and increasing teacher confidence. Furthermore, the transition for alternate route teachers requires intentional "professional integration" to ensure long-term retention and instructional quality (Jorissen, 2002; Nagy & Wang, 2006).

Beyond foundational management, the modern classroom demands a sophisticated level of Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK). As Mishra and Koehler (2006) argue, effective teaching requires a complex interaction between content, pedagogy, and technology. Despite this, many preparation programs continue to fall short in equipping educators to bridge the "digital use divide" (U.S. Department of Education, 2024). Quantitative research by Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2010) demonstrates that teacher self-efficacy is the primary determinant of whether technology is used innovatively or avoided entirely. This is particularly critical in underserved communities where, as Warschauer (2011) emphasizes, equitable access to devices must be paired with effective instructional facilitation to prevent the widening of opportunity gaps.

The rise of generative AI adds a new layer of complexity to teacher readiness. Teachers must now navigate the promises and implications of AI-driven personalization while maintaining ethical and instructional integrity (Holmes et al., 2019; Miao & Holmes, 2023). Teacher Launch Academy addresses these systemic gaps by creating a comprehensive support model that blends clinical practice, structured mentorship, and technology readiness. By centering on the educator's ability to leverage digital tools, rather than mere access to them, this study contributes to the dialogue on digital equity and provides data-driven insights for strengthening teacher preparation in diverse urban contexts.

Detailed Proposal and Goals

The primary objective of Teacher Launch Academy is to improve teacher retention, instructional efficacy, and classroom management confidence among novice and alternate route educators. Rather than helping teachers simply survive their first year, the program is designed to

foster long-term professional growth by developing instructional competence, technological fluency, and leadership capacity.

Specifically, TLA seeks to reduce teacher turnover in high-needs districts, strengthen instructional planning and differentiation practices, improve classroom management effectiveness, enhance technology integration skills, build AI literacy, and increase student engagement and achievement outcomes (Hattie, 2009). The five core pillars of Teacher Launch Academy including clinical mentorship, classroom management training, instructional coaching, technology integration, and wellness support are visually represented in an executive implementation flyer designed for district stakeholders and prospective partners (see Appendix A).

Learning Outcomes

By the conclusion of the program, participants will be able to implement evidence-based classroom management practices, design differentiated instruction for diverse learners, integrate instructional technology in meaningful ways, utilize AI tools ethically and responsibly, build strong family-school partnerships, and demonstrate increased confidence in their instructional decision-making.

These outcomes align with the growing expectation that educators serve as facilitators of innovation, equity, and student-centered learning.

Program Components and Implementation Phases

Phase I: Summer Launch Institute

Before the academic year, participants engage in a four-week onboarding experience focused on helping teachers transition from theory to practice. Training includes lesson planning, differentiation strategies, IEP and 504 compliance, classroom management simulations,

culturally responsive teaching practices, trauma-informed instruction, parent communication, educational technology integration, and foundational AI literacy.

Phase II: Instructional Coaching Cycles

Throughout the academic year, teachers engage in ongoing clinical coaching grounded in the work of Darling-Hammond (2014). Teachers participate in collaborative lesson planning, classroom walkthroughs, peer observations, co-teaching opportunities, and real-time instructional feedback. These coaching cycles promote reflective practice while reducing professional isolation.

Phase III: Mentorship Triad Model

Each teacher is paired with three layers of support: a veteran mentor teacher, an instructional coach, and an administrative mentor. Weekly mentorship meetings and monthly observations provide teachers with instructional support while helping them navigate school culture and organizational expectations. Andrews and Quinn (2005) emphasize that structured mentoring significantly improves novice teacher retention.

Phase IV: Technology and AI Innovation Lab

This phase focuses on building teacher confidence in digital instruction and emerging technologies. Grounded in the TPACK framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), teachers receive hands-on training using Google Classroom, Nearpod, Canva Education, MagicSchool AI, and Microsoft Teams. This phase emphasizes ethical AI integration, digital equity, and meaningful student engagement rather than simply digitizing traditional instruction (Miao & Holmes, 2023; Warschauer, 2011).

Phase V: Teacher Wellness and Retention Support

To address burnout, TLA includes wellness workshops, affinity groups, stress management resources, and work-life balance coaching. These supports recognize that teacher sustainability is essential to long-term retention. Because Teacher Launch Academy operates as a year-long induction model, districts require a clearly defined implementation roadmap that outlines onboarding expectations, monthly coaching milestones, mentorship responsibilities, and professional development benchmarks. A comprehensive implementation timeline was developed to provide districts with a structured overview of program delivery from summer onboarding through end-of-year evaluation (see Appendix D).

Differentiation, Accommodations, and Modifications

Teacher Launch Academy intentionally rejects a one-size-fits-all approach to professional development. Elementary educators receive additional support related to literacy instruction and classroom routines. Secondary teachers receive discipline-specific instructional support. Special education teachers receive training aligned with Universal Design for Learning principles (CAST, 2018), while multilingual learner educators receive targeted support related to language acquisition and culturally responsive instructional strategies. This differentiated structure ensures that professional learning remains relevant and responsive to teachers' unique instructional responsibilities.

Implementation Considerations

Implementation requires district-issued laptops, Chromebooks, Smartboards, learning management systems, AI software licenses, classroom observation software, and instructional materials. Reliable internet access is also necessary to ensure effective digital learning experiences.

Funding Strategies

TLA would utilize a braided funding model that includes Title II funding, district professional development budgets, New Jersey Department of Education grants, university partnerships, and remaining ESSER allocations. This diversified funding model increases sustainability while reducing dependence on a single funding source. To establish implementation accountability and ensure alignment between school districts and program leadership, a formal district partnership agreement was created to outline responsibilities, program expectations, financial commitments, and implementation requirements for participating districts (see Appendix B).

Professional Development for Mentors and Leaders

Mentors and administrators participating in TLA must receive training in adult learning theory, coaching models, culturally responsive leadership, technology integration, and ethical AI implementation. This ensures that those supporting novice teachers are equipped to provide meaningful guidance.

Evaluation Plan

Although TLA focuses on teacher development, student outcomes remain central. Student success will be measured through academic growth data, attendance rates, classroom behavior referrals, student engagement surveys, and classroom climate surveys.

Measuring Program Success and Sustainability

Program effectiveness will be measured through teacher retention rates, classroom observation data, teacher self-efficacy surveys, technology implementation metrics, mentor evaluations, and administrator feedback. Longitudinal data collection will help determine whether the program produces sustainable outcomes over time. Teachers who successfully complete all program requirements, mentorship benchmarks, and professional learning

expectations will receive formal recognition through a Teacher Launch Academy Certificate of Completion, which serves as documentation of professional growth and program completion (see Appendix C).

Integration of Course Readings

The development of Teacher Launch Academy (TLA) is grounded in a synthesis of contemporary educational scholarship that expands the program beyond a traditional teacher retention model into a transformative framework for educator development. While the initial motivation for this proposal emerged from observing the challenges novice and alternate route teachers face in high-needs districts, the literature helped deepen my understanding of what effective teacher preparation should encompass. These scholarly works collectively informed TLA's emphasis on teacher identity development, interdisciplinary innovation, creativity, and technology integration.

The mentorship and reflective practice components of TLA are strongly influenced by *The Heart of a Teacher: Identity and Integrity in Teaching* Palmer's (2015) assertion that "we teach who we are." This perspective challenged me to think beyond technical teaching strategies and recognize that instructional effectiveness is deeply connected to teacher identity, authenticity, and integrity.

Traditional induction models often prioritize procedural compliance, classroom logistics, and performance expectations while neglecting the emotional and relational aspects of teaching.

Palmer's work reinforced the importance of creating professional learning spaces where novice educators can engage in reflection, develop self-awareness, and build meaningful professional relationships. As a result, TLA includes reflective coaching sessions, mentorship structures, and

teacher wellness supports that acknowledge the emotional demands of teaching and help educators cultivate sustainable professional identities.

STEM to STEAM: Art in K–12 is Key to Building a Strong Economy John Maeda's work on STEM to STEAM significantly influenced the interdisciplinary design of TLA. Maeda argues that innovation requires integrating creativity, design thinking, and interdisciplinary learning rather than isolated subject-area instruction. His work expanded my thinking about what novice teachers need to succeed in modern classrooms.

Today's students must be prepared to solve complex, real-world problems that require collaboration across disciplines. Therefore, teachers must also be equipped to design learning experiences that integrate literacy, STEM, creativity, and technology. This perspective directly influenced the development of TLA's Technology and AI Innovation Lab, where teachers learn how to create interdisciplinary, technology-enhanced instruction that reflects real-world applications of learning.

The Creativity Imperative: A National Perspective by Deborah L. Wince-Smith (2006) further strengthened the rationale for this proposal by emphasizing the growing importance of creativity and innovation in a global economy. Wince-Smith argues that national competitiveness depends on individuals who can think critically, solve complex problems, take risks, and collaborate across disciplines.

This reading reinforced my belief that teacher preparation programs must move beyond traditional instructional models that emphasize content delivery and compliance. Instead, educators must be prepared to cultivate creativity, entrepreneurial thinking, and innovation in students. TLA reflects this perspective by preparing novice teachers to create classroom

environments where students are encouraged to think critically, collaborate, and develop innovative solutions to real-world challenges.

Collectively, these scholarly perspectives transformed my understanding of teacher preparation. Initially, I viewed teacher induction primarily as a strategy for improving retention among novice educators. However, this literature broadened my perspective and revealed that effective teacher preparation must also prioritize identity development, interdisciplinary thinking, creativity, innovation, and equitable technology integration.

Teacher Launch Academy was intentionally designed not simply to help educators survive their early years in the profession, but to prepare them to become transformative leaders capable of designing meaningful learning experiences for students in an increasingly complex, interconnected, and technology-driven world.

AI Critique Section

To critically evaluate the role of artificial intelligence in curriculum design, I prompted ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2025) with the following request: “Create a year-long professional development curriculum for novice teachers in urban school districts.”

The AI-generated response revealed several significant limitations. First, the recommendations were overly generic and failed to address the unique challenges experienced by novice and alternate route educators in high-needs school districts. Second, the response emphasized generalized professional development workshops while overlooking the importance of sustained, human-centered mentorship structures that are essential to teacher retention. Third, the recommendations failed to adequately address culturally responsive teaching practices, differentiated instructional support, and ethical AI integration.

To address these limitations, I revised the AI-generated recommendations by incorporating my professional experiences as an educator and Academic Director, current district realities, and research-based best practices. This process ensured that the final Teacher Launch Academy proposal reflected both innovation and equity while maintaining a strong emphasis on practical implementation and human-centered support systems.

Conclusion

Teacher Launch Academy reimagines teacher preparation by shifting from isolated certification coursework to a comprehensive year-long support ecosystem. By integrating mentorship, instructional coaching, technology innovation, AI readiness, and wellness support, TLA offers a scalable solution to teacher shortages while improving educator retention and student outcomes. Supplemental implementation materials, including district-facing program documents and participant recognition materials, are included in the appendices to further demonstrate the scalability and practical application of Teacher Launch Academy.

Ultimately, this proposal positions teacher preparation as an ongoing developmental process that empowers novice educators to become innovative, reflective, and equity-focused leaders in 21st-century classrooms.

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Appendix A: Teacher Launch Academy One-Pager

TEACHER LAUNCH ACADEMY

Reimagining Teacher Preparation for New Teachers

BUILD CONFIDENCE. STRENGTHEN RETENTION. TRANSFORM CLASSROOMS.



LAUNCH YOUR TEACHING CAREER WITH CONFIDENCE

Teacher Launch Academy (TLA) is a 12-month induction and professional learning model designed to help new teachers in their first three years succeed in today's classrooms through mentorship, instructional coaching, technology training, AI readiness, and wellness support.



FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS

Support for educators entering their first year of teaching.



ALTERNATE ROUTE TEACHERS

Designed for educators completing certification while teaching full-time.



CAREER CHANGERS

Professionals transitioning into education careers.



HIGH-NEEDS DISTRICT EDUCATORS

Support for teachers serving high-need school communities.

WHY TEACHER LAUNCH ACADEMY?

-  **STRUCTURED MENTORSHIP**
Veteran teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators provide ongoing guidance and support.
-  **CLASSROOM READINESS**
Evidence-based strategies for classroom management, instruction, and student engagement from day one.
-  **TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION**
Hands-on training with digital tools to enhance instruction and improve student learning.
-  **AI READINESS**
Build AI literacy and learn to use emerging tools ethically and effectively in education.
-  **TEACHER WELLNESS**
Burnout prevention, affinity groups, stress management, and work-life balance support to help teachers thrive.

YOUR TEACHER SUCCESS JOURNEY

- 1**



SUMMER LAUNCH INSTITUTE

4-week intensive institute to prepare teachers for a successful start.
- 2**



CLASSROOM SIMULATIONS

Practice strategies through real-world scenarios and model lessons.
- 3**



INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

Ongoing coaching cycles with lesson planning support and feedback.
- 4**



MENTORSHIP SUPPORT

Paired with veteran mentors for guidance and encouragement.
- 5**



TECHNOLOGY + AI TRAINING

Build digital fluency and AI readiness through targeted training.
- 6**



CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

Feedback, reflection, and growth through observations and peer support.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- ✓ Classroom Management Training
- ✓ Lesson Planning Support
- ✓ Differentiation Strategies
- ✓ Family Engagement Training
- ✓ Trauma-Informed Practices
- ✓ Culturally Responsive Teaching

TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

-  Google Classroom
-  Nearpod
-  Canva Education
-  MagicSchool AI
-  Microsoft Teams

WELLNESS & RETENTION SUPPORT

- ✓ Burnout Prevention Workshops
- ✓ Work-Life Balance Coaching
- ✓ Affinity Groups
- ✓ Professional Mentoring
- ✓ Emotional Wellness Support

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

TEACHER OUTCOMES

- Higher retention rates
- Increased confidence
- Stronger instructional practices
- Improved technology fluency
- Reduced burnout

STUDENT OUTCOMES

- Higher engagement
- Improved academic achievement
- Stronger classroom culture
- More equitable learning opportunities

12 MONTHS

OF STRUCTURED SUPPORT

FOR NEW TEACHERS

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ Research-based induction model
- ✓ Aligned with best practices and NJDOE standards
- ✓ Scalable for districts of all sizes
- ✓ Equity-centered and inclusive approach
- ✓ Leadership development for long-term growth

READY TO TRANSFORM TEACHER RETENTION?

Partner with Teacher Launch Academy.

Barbara Etheredge
Academic Director
New Pathways to Teaching in New Jersey

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☎ (201) 200-3344
🌐 www.nptnj.org/tla



SCAN TO LEARN MORE

Appendix B: Teacher Launch Academy District Partnership Agreement



TEACHER LAUNCH ACADEMY

OFFICIAL DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Formal Implementation Partnership for School Districts

BUILDING CONFIDENCE • STRENGTHENING RETENTION • TRANSFORMING CLASSROOMS

PURPOSE OF AGREEMENT

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishes a formal partnership between Teacher Launch Academy (TLA) and participating school districts to implement a structured 12-month induction and professional learning model designed to support new teachers.

Through this partnership, districts will receive comprehensive support focused on:


CLINICAL MENTORSHIP


INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING


CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT


TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION


ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE READINESS


TEACHER WELLNESS & RETENTION SUPPORT

DISTRICT RESPONSIBILITIES

- ✓ Identify eligible first-year teachers
- ✓ Provide administrative support
- ✓ Allow classroom observations
- ✓ Support mentor collaboration
- ✓ Participate in program evaluation
- ✓ Promote teacher retention initiatives

DISTRICT BENEFITS

- ✓ Increased teacher retention
- ✓ Stronger instructional practices
- ✓ Improved classroom readiness
- ✓ Technology & AI training
- ✓ Reduced teacher burnout
- ✓ Higher student achievement outcomes

PARTNERSHIP TERM

☐ One-Year Partnership
☐ Multi-Year Partnership

Implementation Start Date: _____
 Implementation End Date: _____

DISTRICT INFORMATION

District Name: _____
 School/Organization: _____
 District Representative: _____
 Title: _____
 Email: _____
 Phone: _____

AUTHORIZATION

By signing below, both parties acknowledge their commitment to successful implementation of Teacher Launch Academy and agree to uphold the responsibilities outlined within this partnership.

DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

TEACHER LAUNCH ACADEMY

Barbara Etheredge

Academic Director
New Pathways to Teaching in New Jersey

Signature: _____

Date: _____



TEACHER LAUNCH ACADEMY

READY TO TRANSFORM TEACHER RETENTION?

Partner with Teacher Launch Academy today.

✉ info@teacherlaunchacademy.org ☎ (973) 951-0817

🌐 www.teacherlaunchacademy.org



LEARN MORE

Appendix C: Teacher Launch Academy Certificate of Completion



Appendix D: Teacher Launch Academy Year-Long Implementation Timeline

Program Duration:

12-Month Induction Model

- ✓ 4-Week Summer Onboarding Institute
- ✓ 10-Month Academic Year Coaching Model
- ✓ Ongoing Mentorship + Retention Support

PHASE 1: SUMMER LAUNCH INSTITUTE

July–August (4 Weeks)

Week	Focus Area	Training Topics
Week 1	Classroom Foundations	Classroom routines, behavior expectations, classroom culture
Week 2	Instructional Planning	Lesson planning, differentiation, assessment design
Week 3	Student Support	Trauma-informed teaching, IEP/504 accommodations, family communication
Week 4	Innovation Readiness	Technology tools, AI literacy, digital learning platforms

PHASE 2: ACADEMIC YEAR COACHING TIMELINE

September–June (10 months)

Month	Coaching Module	Key Deliverables
September	Building Classroom Routines	Classroom procedures implementation
October	Behavior Management Systems	Behavior intervention plans
November	Instructional Planning	Lesson design refinement
December	Data-Driven Instruction	Assessment analysis
January	Family Partnerships	Parent communication plans
February	Teacher Wellness	Burnout prevention strategies
March	Technology Integration	Digital lesson implementation

April	Observation Cycles	Peer observations
May	Student Engagement	Classroom engagement strategies
June	Reflection & Leadership Growth	End-of-year portfolio

PHASE 3: MENTORSHIP MODEL

Ongoing (Year-Round)

Each participant receives:

- ✓ Veteran Teacher Mentor
- ✓ Instructional Coach
- ✓ Administrator Mentor

Support Structure:

Weekly Check-ins

Monthly Observations

Quarterly Performance Reviews

Goal Setting Meetings

PHASE 4: TECHNOLOGY + AI INNOVATION LAB

Embedded Throughout Academic Year

Training Platforms:

Google Classroom

Nearpod

Canva

MagicSchool AI

Microsoft Teams

Training Topics:

Ethical AI integration

Digital assessments

Student engagement tools

Differentiated technology instruction

PHASE 5: TEACHER WELLNESS + RETENTION SUPPORT

Quarterly Wellness Model

Quarter	Support Focus
Q1	Stress management
Q2	Work-life balance
Q3	Burnout prevention
Q4	Career advancement planning

DIFFERENTIATED SUPPORT TRACKS

Elementary Teachers

Literacy instruction
Behavior routines

Secondary Teachers

Content-area instructional support

Special Education Teachers

IEP implementation

ESL Teachers

Multilingual learner supports

REQUIRED RESOURCES

District laptops

Chromebooks

Smartboards

LMS systems

AI software licenses

Observation tools

Reliable Wi-Fi access

END-OF-YEAR OUTCOMES

Teacher retention

Improved instructional confidence

Technology fluency

Reduced burnout

Higher student engagement

Leadership pipeline development