



News Release

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Subject: New report details positive impact of Ozarks Teacher Corps

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View the full report: https://issuu.com/ruralschoolscollaborative6/docs/otcorps_study_19

A new study shows participants in a Community Foundation of the Ozarks' scholarship program to develop rural educators have a 92 percent placement rate, with three-quarters of them still teaching in the districts they joined after graduation and most planning to continue their careers in a rural setting.

These are among the key findings in a report on the program released this month during the Rural Schools Partnership Forum at Missouri State University-West Plains. The Ozarks Teacher Corps is a centerpiece of the Rural Schools Partnership, a CFO program to connect rural schools and the communities they anchor through the principles of place-based education.

Conducted by the Rural Schools Collaborative of Cambridge, Wisc., "Ozarks Teachers Corps: Placement, Retention & Perceptions, 2010–2019" surveyed participants in the scholarship program to support teacher-education majors willing to commit to teaching in a rural district for at least three years after graduation. Since its inception in 2010, the Ozarks Teacher Corps has grown to 89 members. Currently, 18 teacher-education students from MSU, MSU-West Plains, Drury University and Evangel University are involved in the program.

"This report gives us a great update on the careers of our Ozarks Teacher Corps graduates," says Dr. Julie Leeth, education liaison for the CFO and coordinator of RSP and Ozarks Teacher Corps. "It also gives us needed insight on what we can do to improve the program to have an even greater impact on rural education in the Ozarks."

Other key findings from the report:

- Of the 71 participants who should have graduated, gained certification and transitioned to teaching, 65 successfully completed the program and are currently teaching in a rural school or have honored their three-year commitment. This represents a 92% placement rate.
- 73.5 percent of participants are still teaching in the school districts that hired them out of college.

- About 20 percent of respondents are math and science educators.
- 77.1 percent of respondents said the Ozarks Teacher Corps “definitely” helped them develop a better understanding of rural issues.
- Two-thirds have implemented place-based education in their classroom or promoted it in their schools. Place-based education is a fundamental focus of the Ozarks Teacher Corps.
- Nearly 60 percent are teaching in or within 30 miles of their hometown.
- Almost 90 percent of respondents indicated they plan to remain in a rural setting throughout their career.

The report also revealed several areas of concern. Though many are still early in their careers, more than 40 percent of participants have not taken any graduate-level courses and only three are currently serving in administrative roles. Furthermore, nearly 60 percent have not received external funding, a strong focus of the program, to support their instructional activities.

Participants also provided feedback in the form of suggestions for the program and reflections on their careers in education. “I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the Ozarks Teacher Corps, and although I did not know if I would stay at my original school, I have,” writes one participant. “I love working at this school and felt that my choice to work in a rural district has been affirmed over and over again.”

Since its inception in 2010, the Ozarks Teacher Corps has awarded more than \$800,000 in scholarships and placed more than 60 teachers in rural Ozarks schools. The program is funded by the Chesley and Flora Lea Wallis Trust. Beginning with the 2019–20 school year, the scholarship program will be offered in partnership with MSU-West Plains.

The Community Foundation of the Ozarks is a regional public charitable foundation established in 1973 that provides asset and resource development, grantmaking and public leadership through a network of donors, 49 affiliate foundations and some 600 nonprofit partners across central and southern Missouri.