

\$176,493

FY 2024 Grant Award

McLean County Unit District 5

The Challenge

McLean County Unit District 5 has experienced difficulty filling special education and English as a second language (ESL) positions. Attrition among special education teachers previously resulted in more unfilled positions each year.

Strategic Local Investments

Strategy 1: Investing in Teacher Preparation and Growth to Align with Hard-to-Fill Positions

Unit 5 invested \$100,000 in tuition to upskill current staff to earn the qualifications necessary to teach in the district's hard-to-fill positions. The district made payments to universities for current staff to complete the special education teacher licensure program and for staff to obtain certification to teach dual credit classes and ESL and bilingual classes.

Outcomes

- **Twenty-one** current staff completed the interest form for funding for teacher preparation or growth.
- **Five** staff completed programs by December 2024 to obtain endorsements to allow them to teach in hard-to-fill positions (ESL and special education/Learning Behavior Specialist 1).
- **Two** staff obtained short-term approvals and used funding to complete coursework to allow them to teach in hard-to-fill positions (special education).
- **Seven** staff began coursework for first-time licensure as special education teachers, slated for completion in fall 2026.
- **Three** staff obtained enhanced licenses to teach dual credit courses for fall 2026.



Strategy 2: Resources Provided to Early Career Teachers

District 5 provided funding for first- and second-year teachers to obtain supplies for classrooms to enhance student learning, while alleviating out-of-pocket expenses for new staff.

Outcomes

- A total of \$150,000 was allotted for supplies for **195 staff/classrooms**.
- Retention of over **75% of staff** provided with supplies in Year 1 of funding from the grant.