

Youth Plan

This past month, I attended a Regional Convening to Support State Action to Advance the Education Professions. I was joined by staff from the Department of Public Instruction, the Education Standards and Practices Board and the University of North Dakota. Eleven different states attended the convening, where we all learned from each other and developed action items for the state to consider. The following is a snapshot of work done at the convening.

We decided we would like the state to focus on pathways into the profession, by encouraging Middle and High School Students to Pursue Education Careers

Problem Statement

Education is vital to the development of society, yet we face a growing challenge in recruiting young individuals into the teaching profession. Despite the crucial role teachers play, enticing middle and high school students to consider a career in education remains a significant problem. This article explores the problem of attracting future educators and outlines strategies to build a robust teacher pipeline from an early age.

Root Causes

To effectively address this issue, it is essential to understand the root causes:

Cause #1: Lack of Statewide Programs

One of the primary obstacles is the absence of a coordinated, statewide program to guide students toward the teaching profession. High school pathway programs that introduce and prepare students for careers in education are not widely available, leaving a gap in early professional guidance.

Cause #2: Competition with Other Professions

Students are frequently exposed to various career options through presentations and programs from sectors like manufacturing, healthcare, and construction. These professions often seem more appealing due to perceived stability, higher salaries, and public visibility. The education sector struggles to compete with these attractive alternatives.

Cause #3: Parental and Public Perception

Parents and the general public sometimes hold unfavorable views of the education profession. Concerns about job security, salary, and working conditions contribute to this perception. As a result, parents may be reluctant to encourage their children to pursue careers in education, perpetuating a cycle of disinterest.

Desired Outcome

The goal is clear: to increase the number of students entering the education profession by creating compelling pathways that begin in middle and high school. By doing so, we can ensure a steady influx of passionate, well-prepared educators to meet future demands.

Strategies and Activities for Implementation

To achieve this desired outcome, a multifaceted approach involving research, pre-apprenticeships, and the establishment of teacher academies at the high school level is proposed.

Strategy #1: Research Educators Rising Program

Activities:

- Ascertain interest among students and schools.
- Compile data on effective programs from other states and integrate best practices.

Strategy #2: Implement Pre-apprenticeships

Activities:

- Secure Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions and funding for staff to assist the North Dakota Office of Apprenticeship.
- Offer a virtual education pathway option to ensure statewide accessibility.
- Provide resources to Career and Technical Education (CTE) centers and high schools to facilitate program adoption.

Strategy #3: Create Teacher Academies at the High School Level

Activities:

- Develop a curriculum that includes pedagogy, classroom management, and educational psychology.
- Partner with local colleges and universities to offer dual-credit courses.
- Provide internships and shadowing opportunities in local schools.

Next Steps

The immediate next step involves sharing the proposed plan with various stakeholders and leadership to garner support and initiate the first phase of implementation. This collaborative approach will ensure that all parties are aligned and committed to the shared goal of building a robust teacher pipeline.

Conclusion

Addressing the shortage of educators begins with creating enticing pathways into the profession for middle and high school students. By understanding and tackling the root causes, implementing strategic programs, and securing necessary resources, we can build a future where passionate and well-prepared teachers are readily available to inspire the next generation.

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