

Gov. Lamont Announces Connecticut Expansion of ‘Educators Rising Academy’ for High School Students Aspiring to Become Teachers

Program Is Integral to Strengthening and Diversifying Local Teaching Pipelines

(Hartford) – Governor Ned Lamont and Education Commissioner Miguel Cardona today announced that school districts across Connecticut will be implementing the [Educators Rising Academy curriculum](#), which introduces high school students early on to careers in education and diversifies pipelines to the state’s teacher workforce. Connecticut received a grant through the Peter and Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation to introduce school districts throughout the state to the Educators Rising program. [Research](#) shows that pre-college engagement that includes supplemental support, financial incentives, and targeted exposure for young, prospective teachers allows districts to invest in current students of color while also cultivating future educators.

“As a student and educator, I have had mentors who motivated me to continue my passion for learning and teaching to engage students in a meaningful way. By providing comprehensive support and authentic experiences that cultivate an interest in the profession starting at an early age, we can ensure our teacher candidates have the backing they need throughout their journey to becoming highly effective educators who shape and inspire their own students,” said Commissioner Cardona. “The expansion of Educators Rising will be a game changer in our efforts to advance culturally responsive educational practices and address the statewide gap between educators and students of color so the workforce better reflects the diversity of the students they serve. Having a common framework in place to recruit, develop, and retain a highly-effective, diverse workforce will enable the best possible outcomes for everyone – students and adults.”

Developed by teachers for teachers, with the generous support of the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards PDK International’s [Educators Rising](#) program emphasizes fundamental professional practices that are critical for the next generation of aspiring teachers to develop and take their first steps on the path to realizing their full potential. The program, which includes curriculum, teacher training, and “Beginning to Teach” micro-credentials for students, is a centerpiece of a “grow your own” teacher recruitment strategy in a state where 60 percent of teachers work within 20 miles of where they attended high school. In-service teachers who aim to mentor and inspire high school students to teach in their own communities are critical to the program’s success.

“Despite the challenges of Covid, PDK remains committed to helping communities find smart, system-level solutions to elevate teaching and learning, address the teacher shortage and prepare the next generation of highly skilled professionals who look like the students they serve. We couldn’t be happier to debut the EdRising Academy curriculum in Connecticut to help educators and leaders across the state grow their own teachers in a sustainable, research-backed way,” said Joshua P. Starr, Chief Executive Officer of PDK International.

“I’ve had the opportunity to work in districts with ‘grow your own’ models for several years. I’ve seen what they can do. Today, I am beyond excited that CT now has a statewide model to engage students in pursuing careers in education which will assist in diversifying our educator pipeline. Thanks to the Buck Foundation and EdRising for partnering with the CSDE,” said Shuana Tucker, CSDE Chief Talent Officer.

“Building on CCSU’s longstanding partnership with New Britain schools, the Educators Rising program has been a welcome addition. Its “grow your own” pipeline is helping to increase the diversity of the city’s educator workforce,” said Zulma R. Toro, president of Central Connecticut State University. “Another added benefit is that high school students interested in pursuing a career in teaching are provided with the opportunity to get an early start. At no-charge, they can enroll in a CCSU education course and earn credits toward their degree before arriving on our campus.”

“This program is a much-needed catalyst for change and is a wonderful addition to our school communities,” said Dr. Sal Pascarella, Superintendent of Danbury Public Schools. “Danbury is one of the most diverse districts in the state and we can only benefit from this opportunity to encourage even more diversity among our teachers. While this will help to narrow that gap between minority students and educators, I believe that all students benefit from having diverse role models. Diversity should be the norm and programs such as this are the best ways to cultivate that growth.”

“We have been working for years at New Britain High School to develop a program that introduces students to the possibility of considering teaching as a career option. We were introduced to Educators Rising three years ago and have had a great deal of success with the program. We believe it’s important to adopt a ‘Grow Your Own’ model when studies show that 60% of teachers work within 20 miles of where they went to high school. There will be a shortage of teachers in years to come, and this gives us a firsthand opportunity to diversify our teacher pipeline,” said Sandy Fraioli, teacher and EdRising Coordinator for New Britain Public schools. “I am a product of the Consolidated School District of New Britain and have spent 35 years teaching here. The district, families, teachers, and students have made this the most fulfilling profession I could have ever chosen. We now have the opportunity to grow this program in 10 school districts throughout the state of Connecticut. Although this is a challenging year, we hope that students from across this state will fill our colleges with future teachers that will head back to the communities they come from.”

There is a wide range of [evidence](#) to support the benefits of a diverse teacher workforce, including its positive impact on strengthening schools and resulting in better outcomes for students of all races/ethnicities, including reduced dropout rates, improved college admissions, and achievement gains. Yet, in 2019-20, Connecticut’s teacher workforce was made of 9.6 percent of educators of color while more than 45 percent of the state’s students identify as people of color. With 52 percent of Educators Rising’s current members being students of color, the program aligns with and supplements the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) priority to build an educator workforce that reflects the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of its students.

The new cohort includes the school districts of Stamford, Hamden, Meriden, Hartford, New London, Danbury, New Haven, Waterbury and Windsor who will join the Consolidated School District of New Britain which has been implementing the program for three years. Despite COVID-19, Connecticut will move forward with implementation of the program during this first year. The state plans to expand the program to the collegiate level so there will be a level of support and mentorship for students as they progress to postsecondary education, and has secured a commitment with Central Connecticut State University.

In addition to the expansion of Educators Rising Academy, the CSDE Talent Office’s [ongoing work](#) to recruit, develop, and retain a highly-effective, diverse workforce and address and diminish the statewide gap between educators and students of color includes:

- [EdKnowledge](#) online repository of promising practices and models of success to attract, support, develop, and retain educators of color for educator preparation institutions and local school districts to seek potential ideas for replication.
- [Increasing Pathways to Certification](#) by providing ongoing support to both traditional and alternate route educator preparation programs specific to persistent shortage areas and/or align with the CSDE goal to increase the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of Connecticut's educator workforce.
- [Creating a District Plan to Increase the Racial, Ethnic and Linguistic Diversity of Your Educator Workforce: A Guidebook for Hiring and Selection](#)
- [TEACH Connecticut](#): online platform for recruiting teachers and elevating the profession, has a goal to support 175 future teachers in applying to an educator preparation program (EPP) between September 2019 and August 2020. The initiative is on track to meet this goal and surpass results from 2018-2019. TEACH Connecticut has already hosted about three times the number of one-on-one advising calls this year compared to last. More than 50% of advising call participants are people of color, and this service is one of the most impactful of those offered. From March 2020 to present, TEACH Connecticut is continually seeing record-breaking interest and engagement from potential future teachers on several key metrics. This critical moment for digital recruitment has led to testing out new strategies and tactics to support future teachers of color.

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About Educators Rising

Educators Rising, a division of PDK International, is transforming how America develops aspiring teachers. Starting with high school students, we provide passionate young people with hands-on teaching experience, sustain their interest in the profession, and help them cultivate the skills they need to be successful educators. The result is a pipeline of accomplished teachers who are positioned to make a lasting difference — not only in the lives of their students, but also in the field of teaching more broadly. Learn more at educatorsrising.org, info@educatorsrising.org and [800-766-1156](tel:800-766-1156).