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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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PDK International/Educators Rising Offers Webinar on Advocating for Recognition and Funding for Teacher Pathway Programs

Discussion will feature advice from Illinois Teacher of the Year on expanding educator pipelines and increasing teacher diversity.

(SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS) – The Illinois State Board of Education is partnering with PDK’s Educators Rising to host a webinar on how to grow teacher pathway programs through advocacy and activism in order to address teacher shortages and lack of teacher diversity.

The free webinar will take place Feb. 16, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. EST. Those interested in attending can register at: https://members.pdkintl.org/events/

The event will highlight the Illinois Educators Rising state affiliate as an example of how teachers can advocate for state recognition for their own programs. Lindsey L. Jensen, the 2018 Illinois Teacher of the Year, and Marci Johnson, CTE and Innovation Director and State CTE Director at the Illinois State Board of Education, will discuss how Illinois’ Educators Rising state affiliate got state recognition as a Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO) and tips to secure funding.

The webinar is part of a series focused on how different states throughout the nation
have established and grown Educators Rising programs. The first webinar highlighted educators in Connecticut and their work establishing and funding an educator pathway program. The second showcased Arkansas’ work to expand their Educators Rising teacher pathway through local grant funding.

In October, the State of Illinois recognized the Illinois Educators Rising Program as a Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO). The status allows for further state and federal funding for chapters in Illinois schools, which expands pathways for students to pursue careers in education. Educators Rising programs can now be implemented with funding across the state, and the program is designed to fit in any district, including rural, suburban, and urban.

Educators Rising’s state recognition is the culmination of the hard work and dedication of Illinois educators. Jensen has been instrumental in achieving CTSO status for the program. After attending an education conference in California, Jensen was struck by the Educators Rising program and its work in addressing the teacher shortage and increasing diversity in the work force.

As part of her Teacher of the Year platform, Jensen advocated for Educators Rising in her district and the state. She worked with the Illinois State Board of Education to allocate funding for the program to allow districts across the state to have access to the academy curriculum. Though the board approved the plan, the funding was diverted due to COVID-19. In July 2020 Gov. JB Pritzker announced $2 million in education career pathways grants to recruit future educators. Schools that received these grants will be eligible to implement their own Educators Rising programs.

“We have seen significant outcomes from school districts already implementing Education Career Pathways. We are excited to support the growth of this successful model across the state, especially in regions with the highest demand for teachers and in the greatest need for additional resources," said State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carmen I. Ayala. “I personally found my way into teaching after having early experiences in the classroom as a teenager. I fell in love with teaching after experiencing the magic firsthand and having access to the kind of mentorship, encouragement, and hands-on learning that Education Career Pathways provide.”
The Feb. 16 webinar will follow how the Illinois chapter secured CTSO status and tips on how educator career and technical education (CTE) programs can advocate in other states.

“Educators Rising is excited to partner with Illinois to offer a webinar on the great success teacher pathway programs are having in the state,” said Dr. Joshua P. Starr, Chief Executive Officer of PDK International. “In our webinars, we like to bring out real stories of hardworking educators who make Educators Rising the great program that it is. We’re looking forward to sharing the story of Illinois educators achieving state recognition, securing funding, and expanding the program to schools across the state.”

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 is a centerpiece of a “grow your own” teacher recruitment strategy.

About Educators Rising

Educators Rising is a community-based initiative, in which chapters at schools feed teacher preparation programs at institutes of higher education with the support of district leadership, State Departments of Education, and local philanthropists. These entities come together to provide pathways to grow and diversify the profession.

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