Arkansas Expands Educators Rising Initiative to Build Career Pathways for High School Students

Statewide partnership to increase teacher diversity receives $999,945 from Walton Family Foundation.

LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS (November 22, 2021) – Educators Rising, a Grow Your Own career and technical education (CTE) program that inspires high school students to become educators, announced that a partnership with the Arkansas Department of Education to expand to 30 schools across the state, with an emphasis on serving high-needs areas and recruiting diverse students into the profession. The partnership, partially funded through a generous grant from the Walton Family Foundation, more than doubles the potential footprint of the program in the state.

With chapters in all 50 states, Educators Rising offers students the opportunity to develop necessary classroom skills and experience teaching through co-curricular learning and supervised clinical experiences while still in high school. The program can be set up as an extra-curricular activity or as a co-curricular experience, and offers a classroom-ready curriculum that can also be implemented at the school level. Educators Rising helps increase teacher diversity through tools and resources designed to address the needs of diverse students and broaden the types of students who explore teaching as a profession.

Since the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) first affiliated with the Educators Rising movement in 2017 as part of the Teach Arkansas campaign, the initiative has grown into a partnership between the ADE, high schools and institutes of higher education that allows students to earn an industry-recognized credential as a Certified Teaching Assistant (CTA) upon completion of their high school career coursework and passing the ETS ParaPro Assessment.

A previous grant from the Walton Family Foundation supported a pilot program for 13 schools during in the 2020-2021 school year with an emphasis on recruiting students from underrepresented populations such as males and students of color. During the 2020-2021 school year, 157 students participated in the program, despite the challenges of the pandemic.

“We are excited to strengthen our partnership in Arkansas through a generous grant from the Walton Family Foundation. The successes our partner schools had in helping educators and leaders across the state grow their own teachers during the last school year were outstanding and building on these is a top priority. We hope to continue cultivating aspiring teachers who look like the students they will serve in a sustainable, research-backed way for the foreseeable future,” said PDK International CEO Dr. Joshua P. Starr.
Last school year, according to a report done by TNTP, there were more than 1,300 non-licensed teachers in the classroom in Arkansas - approximately 4% of the workforce. According to the report, students of color were “five times more likely to attend school in a high-shortage district than white students.”

“We greatly appreciate the continued support from the Walton Family Foundation for the Educators Rising program,” said Dr. Ivy Pfeffer, deputy commissioner for the Arkansas Department of Education’s Division of Elementary and Secondary Education. “Educators Rising is unique in that it opens the door to a rewarding career in education for both high school and college students, while providing a curriculum to help students achieve those goals. The Educators Rising program has been embraced across the state, and these additional funds will help expand its footprint in critical areas where we have the most teacher shortages. We are excited to see the initiative grow in the near future.”

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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