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Cultivating Future Educators While Elevating the Teaching Profession

Students Speak out at National Conference, Highlighting Grow Your Own Educator Pathway

ARLINGTON, Va., Oct. 24, 2023—The persistent challenge of teacher shortages in communities across the nation continues to demand innovative solutions. Grow Your Own educator programs are increasingly recognized as both a viable and cost-efficient means of ensuring that students have access to highly qualified educators who truly understand and represent their communities.

Educators Rising, one of the nation's largest Grow Your Own programs, fosters student learning and development while actively working to elevate the teaching profession itself.

At the Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE) annual conference in Chicago, Illinois (held from Sept. 14-16), a group of current and former Educators Rising students took center stage: Brooke Hess (WI) EdRising National Officer; Maya Moneze (IL) EdRising Illinois State Officer; and Mary Kate Gebhart (OH) Former EdRising National Officer.

These future education leaders shared their personal journeys and experiences in elevating the teaching profession and embracing the paths that led them to become involved. They discussed the profound impact that *Educators Rising* has had on them and the significance of serving as community-based role models. The students also highlighted the critical importance of youth mental health. They detailed their involvement with *Educators Rising* and explained how these experiences have served as powerful motivation to become educators themselves, driven by a shared commitment to supporting the next generation of students.

Lisa D. Rollins, Ed.D., National Director of Outreach and Partnerships for PDK, emphasized the importance of hearing from students, stating, "Student voice is so essential and often adults forget to listen to what students really need instead of what they think they need. Hearing from current students aspiring to be future educators was eye-opening and inspiring. Our Educators Rising students represented the true meaning of student voice."

Christine Schweitzer, Assistant State Coordinator for Educators Rising Illinois, echoed this sentiment, saying, "It was inspiring to hear this talented panel of students talk about their experiences with Educators Rising and their reflections on the impact mental health has on students and educators."

"While creating policy and working on the future of education, adults sometimes forget where the rubber hits the road and leave out student voices," said CUBE Chair Gill Garrett, who is also President of Pontiac School District Board of Education in Michigan. "We are truly grateful to the representatives from PDK's Educators Rising program for sharing their personal journeys and offering their insights on youth mental health, elevating the teaching profession, and creating more pathways into teaching. The

school board members and other education leaders who attended the 2023 CUBE Annual Conference were enlightened by the students' ideas and inspired by their stories.”

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About PDK International

Established in 1906, PDK International supports P-20 educators, researchers, and policy makers by strengthening their commitment to the profession throughout the entire arc of their careers. We are committed to elevating the profession through the intersection of research and practice. Through our core values of social justice, engagement, excellence, and results, we encourage educators and stakeholders to elevate the discourse and change the narrative around teaching and learning to ensure that every student has a high-quality equitable education. www.pdkintl.org

About Educators Rising

In 2015, PDK International – in its 115-year commitment to the profession of education – launched Educators Rising, formerly the Future Educators Association (FEA). Today, Educators Rising is cultivating a new generation of highly skilled educators by guiding young people on a path from high school through college and into their teaching careers. By working with aspiring educators who reflect the demographics of their communities and who are passionate about serving those communities through public education, Educators Rising is changing the face of teaching. <https://educatorsrising.org/>