



PREPARING FUTURE TEACHERS

Local **EDUCATORS RISING** chapters set out to solve teacher shortage

Educators Rising Wisconsin, a student organization with a growing number of chapters across the state, may prove to be the key to turning the tide of the teacher shortage. Educators Rising focuses on supporting high school students who are considering a career in teaching and works to strengthen the high school to teacher prep program pipeline. While

districts are using creative means to fill staff vacancies in the short term, investment in a long-term grow-your-own solution may get overlooked. Nationwide 60% of educators teach within 20 miles of where they attended high school.¹ Future teachers are sitting in grades 9-12 classrooms right now, waiting to be noticed.

In 2016, Wisconsin became an affiliated member of the Educators

Rising national organization. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction played an invaluable role in getting the ball rolling and continues to support the organization. In DPI's recently released Education & Training Career Pathway, Educators Rising received an important nod through its inclusion as a "Career Exploration Program." Educators Rising is proving

Educators Rising members learn about the profession by touring schools of education.



to be a natural complement to existing Family, Consumer, and Career Leaders of America chapters in local high schools, or as a successful stand alone club for budding educators.

Leadership of Educators Rising-WI transitioned to the Wisconsin Education Association Council in 2019. Despite Covid-related setbacks, its presence has grown rapidly during the recovery. WEAC President Peggy Wirtz-Olsen explains WEAC's commitment to the cause, "Educators Rising is important to the Wisconsin Education Association Council because we believe that attracting and retaining high quality professionals into the education profession is critical to the success of our students and public education in Wisconsin." WEAC promotes new chapter development, supports advisors through monthly check-in calls, and organizes an annual summit for high school students.

Through hands-on involvement and conference sponsorships, other education stakeholder groups have acknowledged the potential of Educators Rising. Kim Kaukl, former executive director of Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WiRSA), commented, "...[WiRSA is]

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confident Educators Rising will provide our rural schools a great opportunity to fill their needs, overcome our teacher shortage and to begin to refill the Wisconsin teacher pipeline again. WiRSA has sponsored the Educators Rising Annual Conference...and plans to do so in the future. We feel it is of great value to support programs, like Educators Rising, that bring professionalism back to education and to rebuild the Wisconsin teacher ranks to the great level we

once held nationally." Kaukl has been a regular attendee at the annual student summit and has served as a judge for the competitions.

But what are the benefits for Wisconsin's students? Educators Rising chapters provide a supportive environment where students can declare their interest in a career in education. Sadly, one advisor reports, "At a recent club meeting I asked for a show of hands from those who had ever received a negative reaction from an adult when they shared their interest in teaching. It broke my heart when nearly every hand went up. These kids need our support." Students shared that negative reactions come from school personnel as well as family members. According to a New America report, 54% of parents openly state that they do not want their children to consider a career in education.² Under the guidance of advisors who are passionate about the profession, rising educators can decide if the career is right for them. In a 2020 report by George Washington University, 60% of students noted an increase in their interest in teaching after participating in an Educators Rising program.³ Dayonna Bolton, a second-year teacher in Reedsburg, was a



Every year, Educators Rising members from around the state gather for a summit. This year, that event will be March 1 at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

member of one of Wisconsin's first chapters in 2016. She states, "The incorporation of Educators Rising in my high school experience equipped me with the tools to take with me to college and into my career. It helped me prepare and get ahead of the game in education."

Educators Rising members have the opportunity to attend a high caliber summit each March. Sessions are led by Wisconsin's Teachers of the Year, other educational leaders, and aspiring educators from the university serving as the host site. Approximately 20 percent of attendees participate in competitions which allow them to showcase their developing career-related skills. There are 22 competition categories including: Job Interview, Children's Literature, TED Talks, Lesson Planning and more. The 2023 Summit will be held at the University Wisconsin-Stevens Point on March 1st. Registration opened on the

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WEAC website at the end of December.

The cost to operate a local chapter of Educators Rising is minimal. There are no state or national fees for the school. Registering on the national website opens up a plethora of free support materials for advisors and administrators. Registering on the state website puts the advisor in direct contact with the state coordinator and garners an

invitation to the Summit. There are no state dues for students, but students will need to pay the \$10 national dues if they plan to attend or compete at the Summit. An official chapter only needs to include one adult and one student.

School board members understand the value of investing in Wisconsin's future. They are dedicated to strengthening their communities through quality experiences. In the case of Educators Rising, districts can provide a quality career exploration experience and develop a long-term solution to their local teacher shortage. Kaitlyn Asdigian, a second-year teacher in Hillsboro and Educators Rising alumni shares, "Through my Educators Rising experience, for the first time, I was able to be recognized and praised for choosing this career. We need to recruit high quality teachers, and I see no better way than to praise young people



Educators Rising members create snowflakes in a crafting activity.

for wanting to enter this field and providing them with diverse experiences early on to best prepare them.”

Would you like to learn more about starting a chapter of Educators Rising? Contact WEAC’s Educators Rising State Coordinator Leah Luke at lukel@weac.org or visit <https://weac.org/resources/professional-resources/educators-rising/>. ■

Leah Luke is state coordinator for Educators Rising-Wisconsin. She is a teacher in Mauston.

1. PDK International. (2018). The 50th annual PDK Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward the Public Schools. [pdkpoll.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/pdkpoll50_2018.pdf](https://www.pdkpoll.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/pdkpoll50_2018.pdf)
2. Muñiz, J. (2018, February 28). Diversifying the Teacher Workforce with ‘Grow Your Own’ Programs. New America. [newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/diversifying-teacher-workforce-grow-your-own-pathways/](https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/diversifying-teacher-workforce-grow-your-own-pathways/)
3. educatorsrising.org

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