



The Teachers Our Children Deserve

As the school year begins, schools in Wisconsin are still struggling to find qualified teachers to meet specific needs. Consequently, news stories proclaiming that Wisconsin is now experiencing a teacher shortage are becoming more frequent. A careful analysis of the extent and causes of this “teacher shortage” is needed because some proposals designed to staff classrooms in shortage areas could result in appointment of under-qualified teachers who could do more damage to children and schools than those making these proposals realize.

The Wisconsin Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (WACTE) has serious concerns regarding several specific policy proposals offered recently to help schools provide teachers for all of their students. We ask Wisconsin’s political and community leaders to join us in conversation about how the state can address teacher shortages in specific fields and geographic areas and proceed in developing a new population of highly-qualified professional educators for Wisconsin’s classrooms. We are eager to join with others to address this problem.

To initiate that conversation, it is important to remind ourselves of the essential qualities all teachers should possess; whether they teach our own or other people’s children. Based on extensive research on effective teaching practice, WACTE offers the following vision of the *Teachers Our Children Deserve*, whether they live in Milwaukee, Bayfield, Madison, Shawano, Fond du Lac, or anywhere else in the state.

Our children deserve teachers:

- Who are committed to the art and craft of teaching, possess a strong set of teaching strategies and skills, have a deep understanding of the subjects they teach, and demonstrate the ability to help students connect school learning to the outside world
- Who understand that the role of education in a democracy is to prepare young people to be responsible citizens and provide them with the skills and knowledge they need to create satisfying work and personal lives
- Who respect youth and families and have a positive, caring, and protective disposition
- Who bring joy, passion, and perseverance to their teaching and to their students’ learning
- Who are adaptive experts and lifelong learners, skilled at crafting learning experiences that fit student’s current interests, innate ability, and personal circumstances and goals
- Who are creative critical thinkers, committed to fostering learning environments and opportunities that help each child learn and understand the power of learning
- Who are knowledgeable about the issues and problems we face today, able and willing to engage their students in critical conversations about those issues
- Who understand how to use culturally responsive teaching practices that lift up all of our students
- Who are not afraid to respectfully challenge the education system on behalf of and with their students to ensure all children have the chance to learn and grow and succeed
- Who are committed to a career in education and to being sustaining members of local school communities and the profession
- Who are respected and honored, so that they may respect and honor their students, and thus, the future of Wisconsin.

Significant research indicates that the learning of all students is enhanced when schools are staffed with well-prepared teachers who collaborate and learn with one another to create a vibrant and stable learning environment. It is clear at this point that there are emerging teacher shortages in specific fields (e.g., technical and special education) and that some schools (e.g. high poverty urban and rural) have greater difficulty attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers than others. The teacher shortages is an equity issue that Wisconsin must address; in the process it is essential that decision makers keep in mind the importance of ensuring that all students and school communities have equal and consistent access to high quality teachers. Through WACTE, the professional teacher educators of this state are eager to work with all education stakeholders to develop policies, programs, and practices to address this critical issue.