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OFFICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS & MEDIA CONTENT

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For Immediate Release

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Pittsburgh Public Schools Receives State Approval to Launch Educator Registered Apprenticeship Program in 2026

PITTSBURGH, January 15, 2026 — Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) has received state approval to establish an **Educator Registered Apprenticeship Program (ERAP)**, a new “grow-your-own” educator pipeline designed to address critical staffing needs while expanding access to the teaching profession. Launching in the 2026–2027 school year, the program is supported by a \$362,409 award as part of the Commonwealth’s \$7.76 million statewide investment in teacher apprenticeship programs and is fully funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

“This approval marks an important step forward in how Pittsburgh Public Schools builds a strong, sustainable educator workforce,” said Superintendent Wayne N. Walters EdD. “By creating a clear, supported pathway into teaching, this registered apprenticeship program allows us to grow our own educators, strengthen staffing stability, and expand access to high-quality teaching careers for people who reflect the communities we serve. This partnership-driven approach is an investment not only in today’s needs, but in the long-term success of our students and schools.”

Developed in partnership with the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers, the program is part of Pennsylvania’s Supporting Certified Teacher Registered Apprenticeship (CTRA) initiative, administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Addressing Critical Staffing Needs

PPS currently faces significant staffing shortages in Special Education (SPED) and English Language Development (ELD) - two areas where student need has grown substantially. Over the past three years, the population of students requiring SPED services has increased by 2.5%, while the number of students requiring ELD services has increased by 48%.

The establishment of an **Educator Registered Apprenticeship Program** represents a strategic response to these challenges. The program is designed to build a sustainable educator pipeline within the District’s talent management framework with a focus on individuals who aspire to become professional educators but lack the required credentials. Through ERAP, PPS will support paraprofessionals in earning full Pennsylvania teacher certifications in elementary education or special education while remaining employed in district classrooms. Apprentices will participate in a structured, mentor-supported model that combines paid, on-the-job training with aligned postsecondary coursework.



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Strengthening and Extending the Educator Pipeline

ERAP also builds directly on the District's **Emerging Educators** program, a three-year Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathway launched in fall 2024 at Pittsburgh Brashear High School. The program replaced the former Teaching Academy magnet, which successfully prepared future educators but did not consistently lead graduates back to PPS classrooms.

To strengthen that connection, the District's CTE Department is developing a pre-apprenticeship model that will allow students to earn postsecondary credit while in high school. With ERAP in place, Emerging Educator graduates will be able to enter the PPS workforce as paraprofessionals immediately after graduation and then transition into ERAP—continuing to build the skills, competencies, and credentials needed for teacher certification and long-term careers with PPS.

Advancing Equity Through Teacher Diversity

ERAP is also a key strategy in advancing educator diversity across the District. While approximately **70% of PPS students identify as people of color, 83% of the District's teaching staff is white.** At the same time, **60% of PPS paraprofessionals are people of color**, representing a critical opportunity to strengthen representation within the certified teaching workforce.

A growing body of research demonstrates that students of color, particularly Black students, experience meaningful academic, social-emotional, and behavioral benefits when taught by at least one same-race teacher. With this evidence in mind, PPS recognizes that any effort to address teacher shortages must intentionally emphasize the recruitment and retention of teachers of color. ERAP is a key strategy in advancing that goal.

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