



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA ALERT – Thursday, October 1, 2026

Fargo Public School District #1

THREE K-12 SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERS ANNOUNCE RECEIPT OF \$2.48 MILLION GRANT AWARD TO STRENGTHEN EDUCATOR WORKFORCE

WHAT: Educator Workforce Innovation Partnership Grant Announcement

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Officials from Fargo Public Schools, West Fargo Public Schools, Valley City Public Schools, Valley City State University, Concordia College and Arizona State University's Next Education Workforce initiative announce that Fargo Public Schools has received a \$2,483,300 [U.S. Department of Education Teacher Quality Partnership Program](#) grant to launch the Educator Workforce Innovation Partnership (EWIP). The five-year project has a total approved cost of \$3,483,300. Federal funds will cover 71.29% of the cost. The remaining \$1,000,000, or 28.71%, will be provided as nonfederal governmental matching support. The EWIP will create a comprehensive educator workforce pipeline to strengthen North Dakota's teacher workforce. The partnership is one of seven grant awardees in the nation.

"This grant will fund a collaboration between higher education and K-12 education that demonstrates the power of what can happen when organizations work together to create the next great generation of educators," Dr. Cory Steiner, superintendent of the Fargo Public Schools, said. "Education is the foundation of our society and these partnerships will not only lift up the profession, but also create viable, relevant, and authentic pathways to becoming an educator."

The EWIP is a five-year initiative, led by Fargo Public Schools, that will build the future education workforce locally. The partnership pairs the three K-12 school districts with three partner institutions of higher education – Concordia College, Valley City State University and Arizona State University's Next Education Workforce initiative. Concordia College and Valley City State University will provide a redesigned, literacy-rich teacher preparation program aligned with North Dakota's Science of Reading requirements.

The partnership will recruit paraprofessionals, high school students, college students, and career-changers who are already connected to the communities and schools they will serve.

"This partnership reflects a shared commitment to recruit and prepare high-quality teachers for our schools and communities," said Dr. Allen Burgad, interim president of VCSU. "We are committed to our role in providing additional support and a stronger career pathway for teacher candidates, while addressing the growing need for educators."

Candidates will participate in a full year of clinical practice in Fargo, West Fargo or Valley City schools, followed by two years of structured mentoring and induction after they are hired. This support will help new teachers enter the profession well prepared and build successful, lasting careers. In partnership with [Arizona State University's Next Education Workforce](#) initiative, participating schools will develop team-based strategic staffing models. These models create opportunities for teachers to grow as mentors and lead teachers, assume greater responsibility, and advance professionally without having to leave the classroom.

Over the next five years, the EWIP will support:

- Scaling high school education pathways (e.g., [Educators Rising](#)), and [Grow-Your-Own](#) and [Registered Teacher Apprenticeship](#) pathways to a teaching career.
- Delivering a literacy-rich, research-based teacher preparation curriculum aligned to North Dakota's Science of Reading requirements.
- Funding costs associated with high school students taking Advanced Placement and dual credit courses related to the teaching profession.
- Providing paid teacher apprenticeships and clinical residencies.
- Offering two-year induction support for new teachers.
- Developing Mentor Teachers and Lead Teachers and launching strategic staffing models focused on collaboration.
- Building a self-sustaining educator preparation and retention system across communities.

The goals of the EWIP include:

- Recruiting 150 teacher candidates
- Enrolling 75 Registered Teacher Apprentices
- Preparing 200 clinical residency completers
- Developing 100 mentor teachers and 75 lead teachers
- Reaching a 95% licensure-attainment rate, and 90% one-year and 85% three-year retention rate

The shortage of fully licensed teachers is no longer confined to a few subjects or school districts in North Dakota. For the 2025-26 school year, the ND Education Standards and Practices Board declared every content area a critical shortage area. Schools cannot rely on traditional recruitment efforts alone to fill educator vacancies. The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction is a supporting partner in the EWIP.

“Too many classrooms across our state are without the teachers they need,” Levi Bachmeier, North Dakota state superintendent, said. “Knowing that every content area currently meets the definition of a critical shortage, we can only tackle this challenge by working together. This collaborative effort among school districts, teacher preparation programs, and national experts gives us an opportunity to learn what works, build sustainable models, and ultimately strengthen education for students across North Dakota.”

The EWIP aims to create a sustainable pathway into teaching, preparing educators to succeed, and building rewarding careers that allow excellent teachers to continue making a difference for students.

About ASU Next Education Workforce

Arizona State University's Next Education Workforce™, an initiative of [Mary Lou Fulton College for Teaching and Learning Innovation](#), offers a thoughtfully designed roadmap of experiences to help school districts explore the potential of team-based staffing, plan their first pilot teams and successfully implement strategic staffing models.

Through professional learning and personalized virtual and on-site coaching, ASU supports districts at every stage of the journey – empowering them to lead meaningful school transformation, improve student outcomes and build a more joyful, sustainable educator workforce.

About U.S. DOE Teacher Quality Partnership Program

The purpose of the Teacher Quality Partnership program is to improve student achievement; improve the quality of prospective and new teachers by improving teacher preparation and enhancing professional development to hold teacher preparation programs at institutions of higher education accountable for preparing teachers who meet applicable State certification and licensure requirements; and recruit highly qualified individuals into the teaching force. The TQP program also supports the use of Registered Apprenticeships as a high-quality, work-based learning pathway for preparing and credentialing new teachers based on demonstrated skill and merit, particularly in high-need schools and subject areas experiencing teacher shortages.



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