

The Benefits of Strong, Comprehensive Teacher Preparation Programs in Secondary Schools

New Research from Phi Delta Kappa International



Dr. James F. Lane, CEO

Levi Bohanan, Research Consultant



A History at Supporting Teaching and Teachers

PDK International

Phi Delta Kappa has a **rich tradition of supporting some of the nation's most distinguished teachers** and today is a leader in addressing teacher shortages through its Educators Rising program, providing a **standards-aligned curriculum** to middle and high schools addressing the teacher pipeline with grow-your-own programs.

PDK was established in 1906 with the mission to **support teachers, engage educators, and strengthen education for every child**. For more than a century, we have been on an ongoing journey toward improving student learning and striving for **overall achievement in the education sector**.

In 1994, PDK acquired **Future Educators of America** and was re-branded as Educators Rising in 1995.

In addition to Educators Rising, PDK International conducts the annual **PDK Poll** and publishes **Kappan Magazine**.

Addressing the National Teacher Shortage

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**.

Through a **CTSO chapter model**, coupled with a strong curriculum product, students have access to early experiences in teaching and learning.

In **2016**, Educators Rising started work the **Educators Rising Standards, Curriculum, and Microcredentials**, which were launched in 2017.

In 2024, Educators Rising is **increasing its capacity for professional learning and support** for our curriculum customers and will launch a new Educators Rising Assessment product.

“When districts reach out for hiring, they want to find candidates who were in Educators Rising, because they know that these students are that much more established than the standard new educator.”

- Lindsey Jensen, 2018 Illinois State Teacher of the Year

Methodology

Methodology

PDK contracted with **Bohanan Strategies** to analyze the impacts of its Educators Rising program. At the time of writing, Educators Rising serves more than **20,000 students nationwide**, of which **52% are students of color**.

Interviews were conducted including Educators Rising staff, state departments of education, institutions of higher education, school systems, and educators.

Interviews focused primarily on Educators Rising's impact on:

- local communities,
- field of educator preparation through a series of questions about the curriculum and student organization

Interview data was analyzed using an inductive and deductive coding scheme that sought to identify trends.

Membership data was reviewed, as collected by PDK International, which enabled Bohanan Strategies to examine student participation via student groups and enrollment.

Research Questions

1. How does integrating a student organization as a component of a teacher preparation program impact the development of pre-service teachers' pedagogical skills and classroom management abilities?
2. Does the Educators Rising curriculum impact the pre-service teachers' understanding of the profession? In particular, how does the curriculum affect pre-service teachers' understandings of diverse learning needs and their ability to differentiate instruction effectively?

Impacts on Students

Educators Rising Chapters Provide Positive Student Impacts

- Students demonstrate increased engagement, enhanced leadership skills, and a deep understanding of educational principles.
- Chapters give students a sense of community and shared responsibility for academic success.
- Students experience a long-term effect on career aspirations by pursuing higher education, particularly in the field of education.
- Chapters provide teachers a dynamic platform to extend learning outside the normal classroom, with discussions, projects, and extracurricular activities.
- Chapters are effective in promoting peer mentorship and collaborative learning within an inclusive setting.



Impacts on Students

Pre-Service Training is Effective

- Teachers are happy with the quality of pre-service training students can achieve through program participation.
- Teachers see an improvement in student attitudes through mentorship, and an increase in understanding the broad educational landscape.

“...getting to network with others across the state, submit proposals and lead sessions at conferences, learning about education in ways they might not have known about before and preparing them to teach.”



Impacts on Students

Social & Emotional Growth

- Interviews consistently highlighted the development of interpersonal skills, empathy, and a strong sense of community
- Program creates a supportive network that extends beyond the confines of the classroom.

“These kids have learned how to participate in K12 education advocacy, rather than feeling like victims in a system that drowns out their voices...”

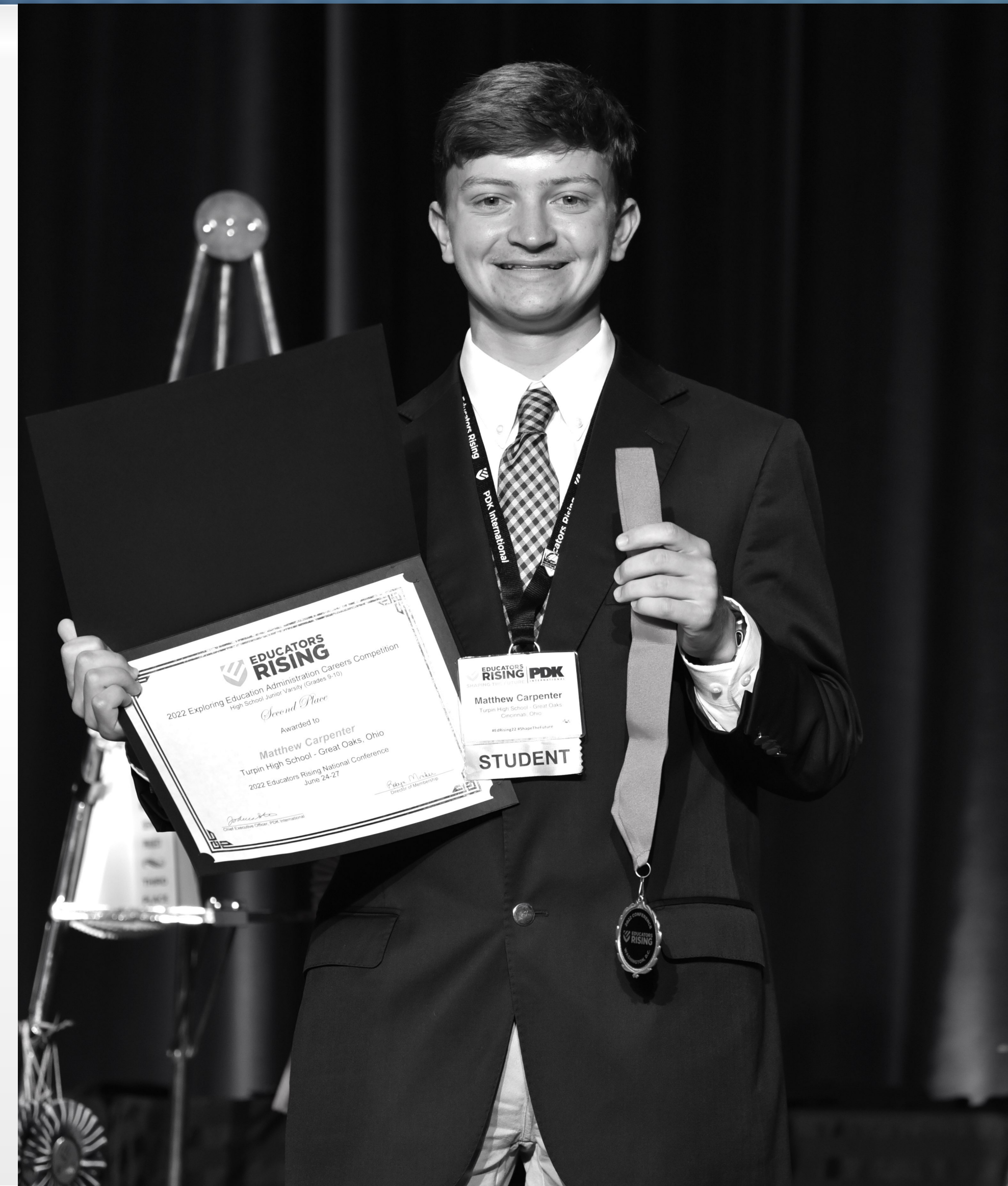


Impacts on Students

Catalyst for Future Educators

- Students who initially joined the program with a general interest in teaching often solidified their career aspirations through practical experiences and mentorship
- High school-based teacher preparation programs have the potential not only to address immediate staffing needs but also to contribute to the long-term sustainability of the teaching profession by inspiring the next generation of educators.

“[Educators Rising] is having a direct impact in elevating the profession and stoking the pipeline”



Impacts on Educators

Professional Growth and Efficacy

- Mentor teachers indicated a heightened sense of purpose and job satisfaction as they guided aspiring educators through their developmental journey.

“[Educators Rising] is breathing new life for [my] peers without leaving the classroom.”



Impacts on Educators

Collaborative Learning Communities

- Teachers noted the value of interdisciplinary collaboration created and facilitated by Educators Rising, and shared best practices, fostering a culture of continuous improvement

“[Educators Rising is] very intentionally bringing chapter sponsors or teacher leaders together, to communicate with other teacher leaders and sponsors, learn from one another... creating a database for them, engaging in resource sharing, through planned time for teacher leaders to communicate with one other.”



Impacts on Educators

Sustainability of Teacher Retention

- Qualitative findings suggest a potential positive correlation between participation in the high school-based teacher preparation program and teacher retention
- The program's emphasis on professional support and mentorship emerged as a key factor in creating an environment conducive to sustained commitment to the teaching profession

“For instructors who have been teaching for a while, they enjoy the opportunity to lead and coach in this way. So many have told me how reinvigorated they have become in the profession and that speaks volumes...”



Impacts on Communities

Sustainability of Teacher Retention

- One notable finding is the positive impact of the teacher preparation program on community engagement and empowerment.
- The program not only drew community members into the educational sphere but also provided a platform for collaboration between schools and local residents
- The program empowered community members to actively participate in the educational process, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for student success.



Impacts on Communities

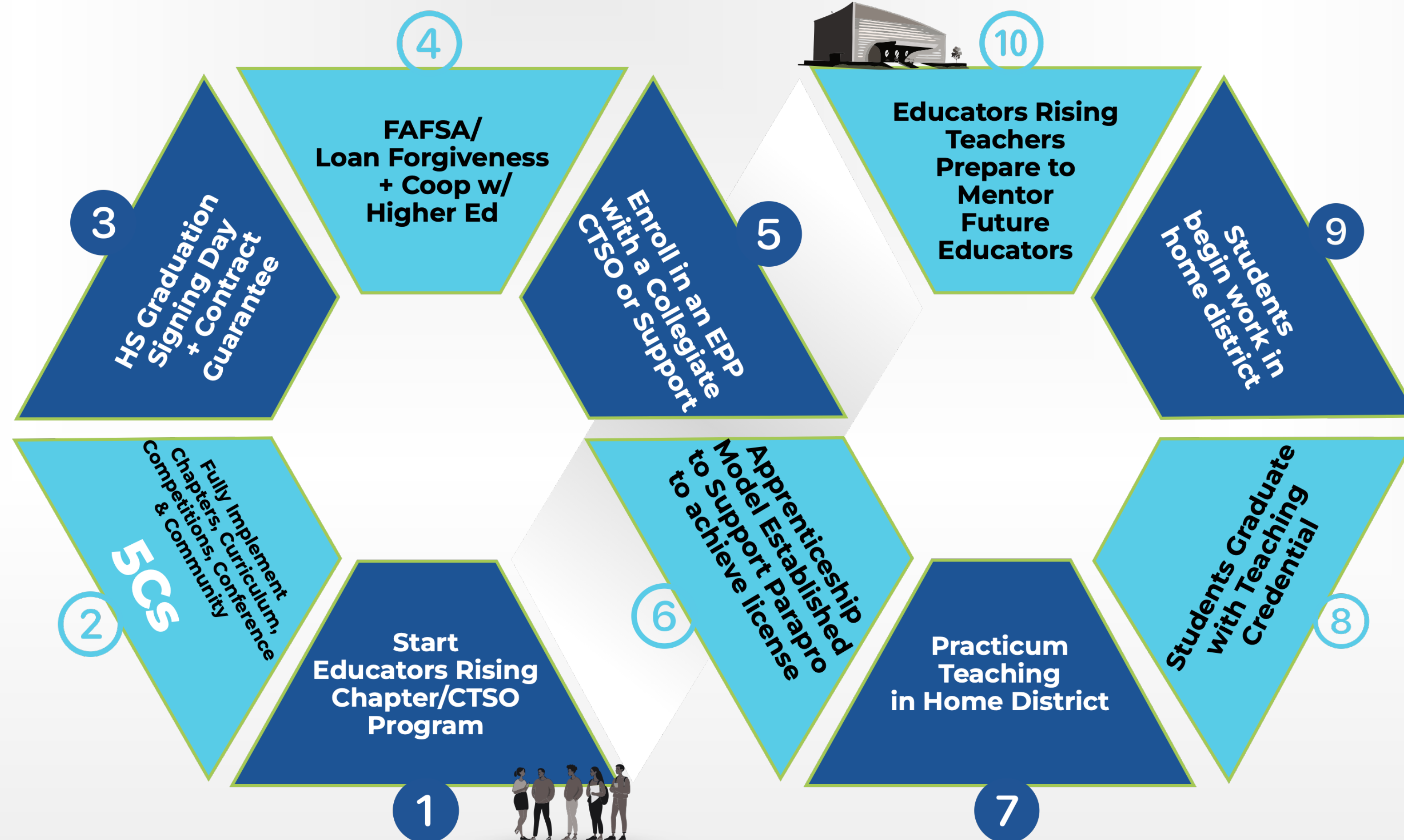
Strengthening Community-School Relationships

- Strengthened collaboration because of the program was evident in increased attendance at school events, enhanced communication channels, and a shared commitment to the success of both individual students and the broader educational community.

“For instance our high school chapter, is helping to plan an elementary STEM enrichment event; another high school in [the district] saw it and then replicated it themselves. I don’t think that would have happened without Educators Rising.”



AN IDEAL PROCESS FOR GYO



Schools, LEAs, SEAs, IHE Partners, Legislators

Supporting GYO Programs

To maintain a seamless and collaborative ecosystem, schools, districts, and institutions of higher education should unite to create partnerships by implementing:

- college and high school signing days,
- guaranteed admission,
- contractual commitments with graduating students.

Toward Community-Centric Programs

Include intentional efforts to involve community members in program design, ongoing communication strategies to maintain community engagement, and the integration of community needs into the program's curriculum.

Educators Rising is a GYO program that works

Findings

- Educators Rising encourages, supports, and trains future educators through curriculum and student groups,
- Educators Rising invigorates participating current educators who serve as mentors and coaches to the program,
- Educators Rising may help to address community-specific needs,
- Mentorship, as a component of Educators Rising, emerged as a critical factor in its success, highlighting the importance of investing in supportive relationships between experienced educators and aspiring teachers.



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info@pdkintl.org

