

Recruiting future educators

We need you!

By Dr. Jeanne DelColle



The New Jersey Center for Future Educators brought high school students, working educators, NJEA Preservice members, and NJEA staff together for a conference on March 16.

Why did you decide to become an educator? While there is plenty of research to explain why people leave the profession, we need to examine why students decide to become educators in the first place.

Everyone's path to education is different whether it was a seed planted at a young age or a decision to change careers to make more of an impact on the world. No matter the path, most educators got into the profession because they had the confidence to see themselves in the role and the belief that they could make a difference in the lives of young people.

Other than confidence, one of the most influential factors on whether a student considers becoming an educator is when someone significant in their life encourages the student to become a teacher. Even if the student never thought about the possibility of becoming a teacher, having

someone they trust believe in them is enough to make them investigate the possibility. That is where we come in.

The Center for Future Educators (CFE) at The College of New Jersey is a statewide organization funded by NJEA that works to recruit the next generation of educators. Our goal is to work with middle and high schools across the state to get students thinking about entering the profession while they are still in school. We especially want to make sure that our future educators are diverse and representative of the rich cultures and traditions in New Jersey. The CFE provides future educators

with experiences that help students see themselves on college campuses in pursuit of a career in education, but we can't do the job alone.

WHAT CURRENT EDUCATORS CAN DO

There are a few things that you can do to help inspire the next generation of educators.

Grow your own programs

If you work in a middle or high school, start a New Jersey Future Educators Association (NJFEA) chapter. This extracurricular club is a great starting point for growing your own programs within your district and allows students to take on local leadership responsibilities and work in their communities through service projects.

Membership in the NJFEA provides students with access to conferences on college and university campuses, the NJEA Convention, statewide student leadership opportunities, and more. If you work in a high school, make sure your building offers a Tomorrow's Teachers course, an elective for the upper high school grades that serves as an introductory education course and is also a dual credit option for several New Jersey universities. We need dynamic teachers to lead these clubs and courses to inspire the next generation of future educators. Yes, we need you!

Build a team

If you have an NJFEA chapter or Tomorrow's Teachers course, who are your champions and collaborators in the community and in the district?

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At the Future Educators Conference on March 16, NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty addresses high school students who are considering a career in education



In a workshop at the Future Educators Conference on March 16, a panel of NJEA Preservice members discusses how to manage stress.

Recruiting students takes a team effort. We need teachers, school counselors and administrators working together to recruit future educators, especially those who have not considered the profession before. The CFE will be hosting a weeklong, overnight education academy this summer for students who would like to explore the possibility of being a future educator.

Tell them why

Great teachers recognize the characteristics needed to be successful and can see those characteristics in others. How many times have others seen things in you that you had not seen in yourself? It is important that when we see characteristics in our students that would make them great educators

we let them know, especially students from underrepresented populations. Is the student good at coaching, mentoring or helping? Does the student have a passion for social activism? Don't just tell a student they could be a great educator, tell them why they would be successful.

Let them see themselves in the role

The CFE provides programming that allows students to explore the profession through experiences that feature diverse educators. The CFE Speaker Series is a virtual opportunity to speak with honored educators every month about their journey and work. NJFEA conferences provide students the opportunity to work with college faculty and staff while also hearing from NJEA Preservice students about what it is like to take the next step toward teacher certification.

Encouraging students to join NJFEA or Tomorrow's Teachers can give students an opportunity to engage with the community in service learning projects and observe education behind the scenes through field placements in district classrooms.

Turn to CFE as a resource

There has never been a more important time for us to think about what we want the legacy of education to be. At a time when education is politicized, and the media shows how hostile people can be toward schools and teachers, many students do not even consider education as a possible profession even though they have the qualities of great teachers. That is why it is important that schools grow their own future educator programs.

There are so many students who want to make a difference in this world, let's encourage them to do it in a classroom. The CFE has many programs and resources to help, including recordings of events to help inspire the next generation of students. You can find more information about our programming on futureeducators.tcnj.edu or email us at cfe@tcnj.edu.