



Teacher Recruitment Crisis in Rural Montana

Earlier this fall my friend Eric Feaver thought it was time, again, to express his dismay about rural schools exercising their authority to hire the best educator they can find to teach the children in their communities. Eric is my friend and he and his organization have worked together with MREA on several important pieces of legislation and state policy that have served our mutual interests, obviously this is not one of those areas.

I have intentionally described the issue in broad terms because in the teacher recruitment crisis, that continues to be the greatest challenge for rural schools in Montana today, using every available strategy and resource has become an absolute necessity.

To the point, a concern was raised again that a small handful of rural school districts in Montana are hiring educators from the Philippines when other efforts have failed to attract qualified applicants or on many cases no applicants.

This practice is not unique to Montana. As recently as October 6, 2019 CNN reported on this very issue focusing on the state of Arizona and bringing the national teacher recruitment issue into their discussion. [Click Here](#) to read the article.

The school leaders I have spoken to personally who have hired educators from the Philippines have indicated that these teachers are fully licensed to teach in Montana. After being hired, as with any educator, local administrators and school boards are responsible for the ensuring that the educator is fulfilling their duties in a manner consistent with local expectations.

There are many factors to address as we all work toward providing relief to rural schools when it comes to teacher recruitment. Some factors are long term such as salary and health care benefits. Other factors are short term and will very likely disappear as relief is realized.

Hiring teachers from other countries is not taking away jobs from educators looking to work in Montana. If there were educators to be hired, they would be. The teacher recruitment crisis begins with a shortage that is nationwide. In 2018, the Learning Policy Institute reported that the US had an estimated shortage of 112,000 teachers. As of November 4, 2019, there were 67 licensed positions still being advertised in Montana that were posted in September, October, or November and were listed as 'Open Until Filled' or had a closing date after November 12. (source – OPI Jobs for Teacher)

Local school districts are within their authority to hire teachers from the Philippines as a few districts have done. Despite criticism and compliant, this is an option that rural school districts will continue to consider as we all work to find short term and long term solutions to teacher recruitment.

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