



INSPIRE & IMPACT
Arkansas Educators, Their Career Choices and Goals

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EPIISODE PROFILE: ARKANSAS TEACHER CADETS

What can Arkansas schools do to address the shortage of licensed teachers? It is a simple question, but there is no simple answer. Each school year, a growing number of public school administrators are faced with the challenge of hiring qualified teachers to fill hard-to-staff positions.

Districts and states use a variety of strategies to attract and retain teachers, and Grow Your Own (GYO) programs are becoming increasingly popular. Research shows that GYO programs come in many shapes and sizes in terms of recruitment, financial assistance, curriculum and support.

GYO programs are viewed as a long-term solution to addressing teacher shortages. The programs offer students the opportunity to explore their interests in becoming classroom teachers, while giving schools the opportunity to expand the pool of available teachers in the future.

One of these GYO programs is the Teacher Cadets Program.

Often resembling the "introduction to teaching" courses common in colleges and universities, high school teacher cadet courses are usually taught by exemplary teachers from the students' own schools. Students take one or more elective courses about the teaching profession and have "practice teaching" experiences that include tutoring and mentoring younger students.

The South Carolina Teacher Cadets program is seen as the premier national model. The program was piloted in four of the state's high schools in the 1985-1986 school year. In South Carolina, more than 68,500 students have participated in the program in its 32-year history.

The Arkansas Teacher Cadets program, which is based on the South Carolina program, is proving to be a win-win for students and schools. Over 800 Arkansas students are currently participating in the program 75 high schools.



**Teacher
Cadets**
ARKANSAS

To participate in the program, students must meet certain qualifications, including being a junior or senior and having a minimum 3.0 grade point average. Additionally, participating districts partner with a college or university to offer Teacher Cadet students concurrent credit for college-level courses.

"The Arkansas Teacher Cadets program gives students the opportunity to learn more about the teaching profession and the positive experiences they can have as teachers," said Jeff Dyer, program advisor for ADE's Teacher Recruitment and Retention Office. "It also gives schools the opportunity to build their future teacher pipeline by encouraging students to enter the teaching profession."

For more information, email Dyer at jeff.dyer@arkansas.gov, or call him at 501-682-6349.



EDUCATOR PROFILE: BETHANY HOLT

There are very few children who know for certain which career they want to pursue as adults. However, that is not the case for Bethany Holt. “I’ve wanted to be a teacher ever since kindergarten,” she explains with a smile. “I’ve always loved education. I loved going to school.” Holt achieved her goal and is now working to encourage Arkansas high school students to pursue careers as educators.

She began her career as a first-grade teacher, but currently teaches Freshmen Seminar and is a Teacher Cadet instructor at Wynne High School. Nestled between fields of cotton and soybeans in east Arkansas, the school has an enrollment of nearly 800 students.

Holt’s enthusiasm for her school and the Teacher Cadet program is quite evident. Her patient demeanor clearly demonstrates why the students at Wynne count her among their favorite teachers. On a recent morning, she moved quietly between groups of students in her Freshman Seminar class as they worked on a writing assignment. She constantly moved around the classroom, answering questions and observing each student’s

progress. She easily shared a quick laugh or two with the ninth-grade students. However, her voice just as easily took a stern tone as she tossed a no-nonsense look in the direction of a student not on task.

When she was a student in the Introduction to Teaching class at Marion High School, Holt said the course gave her hands-on teaching experiences. For example, she wrote and illustrated a story, which she then read to a class of kindergarten students. “That class just confirmed my desire to become a teacher,” she said.

Inspirational quotes about teaching and learning are displayed on each wall of her classroom. “Being in charge of the Teacher Cadet program at Wynne gives me such a strong feeling of responsibility and pride,” she said. “What I love is that I get to share the amazing experience of being a teacher with



Bethany Holt, Teacher Cadet instructor at Wynne High School, discusses how the program encourages students to pursue teaching careers in Arkansas.

my students.” Holt explains that she tries not to “sugar coat” things for the Teacher Cadets. “I try to let them know the good, the bad and the ugly. There are some bad days,” she said. However, those days are greatly outnumbered by the good days, she added. “As long as the good outweighs the bad, then you know you’re in the right spot.”

All of the students in the program will not become teachers, she explained. “But they’re all going to become community members and parents. These are going to be some of the strongest advocates for our school system even if they are not in the classroom,” she said.