STATE OF ARKANSAS
House of Representatives

Newsletter From Rep. Mark Perry
District 66

October 10, 2025

Recruiting and Retaining Arkansas Teachers

The House and Senate Education Committees met this week to review the Arkansas Department of Education's (ADE) comprehensive plan to strengthen the state's teacher workforce through recruitment, retention, and recognition initiatives.

ADE outlined how these three areas work together to address teacher shortages and improve educator support across Arkansas. Recruitment efforts focus on removing barriers to entry and encouraging homegrown talent to stay in their communities. Financial incentives include the Arkansas Teacher Academy Scholarship, which offers up to $6,000 per semester for teacher candidates or current educators pursuing advanced degrees, as well as the State Teacher Education Program for student loan repayment and the Teacher Opportunity Program for tuition reimbursement.

The department is expanding "Grow Your Own" programs to attract and train future teachers from within Arkansas schools. Apprenticeship programs allow participants to earn a salary while completing coursework and training, while the Certified Teaching Assistant program gives high school students a head start toward teacher licensure.

Retention remains one of ADE's biggest challenges, as teacher retention rates have not returned to pre-pandemic levels and vary widely among districts. Surveys show that most teachers are proud of their work but face challenges such as student behavior issues, limited planning time, and lack of input in decision-making.

To strengthen retention, the legislature has increased minimum salaries through the LEARNS Act, expanded merit pay, and promoted year-long teacher residencies to improve preparation and support.

Committee members also traveled to Marianna, where they toured Anna Strong Elementary, Lee High School, and a new teacher housing project designed to help attract and keep educators in the community. Teacher housing, they noted, is becoming another key tool in the state's efforts to recruit and retain high-quality teachers.