

Prompt: School districts throughout Missouri and the nation are facing a shortage of teachers. In your essay, identify and explain how best to recruit students to pursue a teaching career. Reflect upon those teachers whom you consider to be excellent teachers. What skills are needed to be a high-quality teacher? Please provide examples of how high-quality teaching inspired you to succeed as a student.

Abdication of Education

The next generation is in trouble. We're facing many challenges at home and abroad, and we expect the leaders and thinkers of tomorrow to solve them. Yet, the number of teachers available to foster the proper learning environment is dwindling. People are scared to enter perhaps one of the most respected professions there is, and society is doing nothing to reassure them. So what can we do? How can we help? In what way can we empower future undergraduates to take up education and dedicate themselves to mentoring the students responsible for fixing the world's problems?

It starts with a shift in mindset. Nobody wants to work in a system that's looked down upon and dishonored by the public. The first step should be letting teachers know that they are heard and showing them we care by passing legislation allowing them to live their lives and run their classrooms in the way they see fit. It's through this measure that we create the *desire* to be a teacher.

Next, provide incentives. The shortage isn't coming, it's here. The country needs teachers, and it needs them as soon as possible. It has been proven that through the use of university partnerships and industry sponsorships, different fields will be packed with graduating students, ranging anywhere from medicine to law to computer science. Teaching should be no exception. If we have the means to provide special opportunities in a time of crisis, why wait? Let's give more college students the support they deserve, and in turn, they'll be more willing to support the schools.

Lastly, plant the seed in their minds while they're young. One of my goals is to one day be an educator for a school similar to the one I grew up with. I realized that dream when I was able to help my peers with little things like speech critiques and homework assignments throughout junior high and into high school. Schools should allow for the exploration of different career paths and the ability for students like myself to see if these aspirations are right for them at an early age. If we can give kids the motivation and the eagerness to be teachers, while also removing the stigma of the profession being "the easy way out," the rest of the pieces should fall into place.

I was lucky enough to have had some very influential teachers growing up that I can safely say played a large role in my intentions of being an educator. A teacher should recognize differences in their students, like my second grade teacher, Mrs. Fairchild, who would provide different levels of assistance to different groups of the class based on how they were performing. It was because of her that I truly grasped the potential I had within me. A teacher should push you to learn as much as you can, like my gifted education teacher, Mrs. Stuhlman, who allowed her classes to explore many different content areas and research what stood out to them the most. It was because of her that I am as prepared for my coursework as I am. A teacher should be approachable to those they teach, like my eighth grade history teacher, Mr. Krietemeyer, who made a point of talking with his students about their lives and taking a genuine interest in who they were and what they wanted to do. It is because of him that I believe I will

not only have a mentor to guide me after graduation, but also a friend. And lastly, a teacher should believe in their students to their maximum capabilities, like my AG teacher and FFA advisor, Mrs. Haeberlin, who I am honored to have been coached by and to have won a National Championship with. It was because of her trust and support that I knew I could achieve my goals.

I owe those men and women a great deal. I'm the man I am today because of them. I'm truly saddened by the loss of enthusiasm regarding education, but I believe that if we can raise our kids to be like the teachers I grew up with, the next generation of scholars is going to be in good hands.