

# Replenishing teacher ranks is new concern

Second of two parts

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

On paper it looks like a massive job: Replacing as many as 20,000 of Michigan's 98,000 professional school personnel who are eligible to retire by 1998.

"We may have to reverse the flow of people from the Sunbelt," suggested Hugh Jarvis, a Macomb County history teacher serving as president of the Michigan Federation of Teachers (MFT).

Scott Westerman disagrees. "I think it's going to be awhile before we have to recruit from other states," said Westerman, dean of Eastern Michigan University's education college.

TWO THINGS are certain as suburban schools get set for a wave of early retirements under a liberalized law passed by the Legislature last year: • The supply of replacement teachers is ill-defined. There are a number of possible sources, but no one knows for sure what kind of numbers each source will produce.

• Everyone is concerned about quality. It's a long-standing principle that when supply is being expanded rapidly, quality can suffer. Educators were badly burned by charges in the '80s that school quality had deteriorated, and they don't want to be burned again.

The Michigan Association of Colleges for Teacher Education recently held a day-long conference on the topic. Besides Jarvis, speakers included EMU's Westerman, who doubles as president of the association, and Larry Chunovich, a former Southfield math and science teacher serving as president of the Michigan Education Association (MEA).

TO UNION LEADERS Chunovich and Jarvis, top priority is pay.

"Pay equity is essential," said Chunovich, meaning that teachers' salaries ought to be based on training and expertise, and comparable to other professionals.

MEA advocates a 30-60-90 plan: \$30,000 starting salary, \$60,000 for experienced master teachers, by the year 1990. "It's a lot of money, but we deserve it," he said.

Jarvis said the number of years it takes teachers to reach top of the scale should be reduced from the present 10-15 to three or four.

Jarvis advocated expanding career opportunities by setting up a system of "mentor teachers" — those who would guide other teachers. He asked for union involvement in the process.

Job sharing, he suggested, would allow recent retirees who don't want to teach full time to teach only part time.

"We have to recognize," said Chunovich, "that teaching competes with industrial jobs that pay more, have shorter hours and command more respect."

WESTERMAN, the EMU dean and a former school superintendent, agreed with them on everything except the notion that teaching is held in low esteem. "Our applications were 266 a year ago and 566 this year — a 110 percent increase. That does not suggest people are avoiding education. It is still prestigious," he said.

He pointed to the certified teachers graduated in the '70s and early '80s who couldn't get teaching jobs and took other jobs. "We have 700 graduates

paying for our career bulletin," he said.

"I think it's going to be awhile before we have to recruit from other states. A good one-third of our graduates are going to other states now. Many would have preferred to stay here."

Looking to recruit teachers, EMU at Christmas time wrote to the homes of 100 math and physics majors "to see if they would be interested in adding a teaching certificate to their degree." At least half expressed some interest.

WHILE MANY teachers make mid-career switches into other lines of work, the odds are slimmer that accountants might be able to become business teachers and laboratory chemists become science teachers.

A big hurdle, they agreed, is that there must be room to become a teacher not taking education courses at night. One must also do a half year of unpaid

student teaching in a live classroom under the guidance of an experienced teacher.

But that hurdle could be jumped, Chunovich said, if school districts or the state paid the student-teachers intern wages, at least.

"All kinds of schemes are going on to bring people in from industry," Jarvis said. "There ought to be great emphasis on testing and retraining."

The union leaders said teachers should not only be competent in their subject areas, but should understand classroom management, learning methods and curriculum design.

THE EDUCATORS did some brainstorming on methods for recruiting high-school graduates and older persons into teaching. Besides higher salaries, they included:

• Asking high school and college

counselors to promote teaching as a career choice.

• Organizing high school Future Teachers Clubs.

• Offering scholarships, loan forgiveness plans and other financial rewards to those who go into teaching. Chunovich said MEA will offer a scholarship in memory of Christa McAuliffe, the New Hampshire teacher killed on the space shuttle Challenger.

• Recruiting from the Sunbelt. Jarvis said he was concerned by the possibility that superintendents might invoke an "emergency certification" clause and turn unqualified "warm bodies" into teachers.

But EMU's Westerman was unworried because: "Our education majors have a grade-point average of 3.05. The university-wide average is 2.89. Our (education) students are better than they've ever been before."



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