



AMA ESD EXPANDS “GROW YOUR OWN” GRANT PARTNERSHIPS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Alpena, January 10, 2024] – The Alpena-Montmorency-Alcona Educational Service District (AMA ESD) is proud to announce its expansion of Education Preparation Partnerships through the Grow Your Own grant, finalizing a collaboration with Western Governors University (WGU). The approval for this partnership was granted late last week by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), marking a significant milestone in the AMA ESD's commitment to addressing the critical shortage of educators in the region.

In the fall of 2023, the AMA ESD secured a \$3.5 million grant under the [Grow Your Own initiative](#), aimed at supporting efforts to develop more teachers within the region. Over the past several months, the AMA ESD has worked alongside WGU and the Michigan Department of Education to finalize the partnership agreement.

"Our application to partner with an out-of-state provider was the first among Grow Your Own Grant recipients. Regionally, we have seen a large increase in WGU graduates because of the multiple online teacher education pathways and their competency-based approach that allows candidates to progress through courses as soon as they've mastered the material," AMA ESD Superintendent, Justin Gluesing said.

"The educator shortage continues to be the most critical issue facing our schools," Gluesing added. "Expanding available pathways for candidates in our region was a priority, and we are excited to begin this partnership with Western Governors University."

The AMA ESD service area encompasses all of Alpena, Montmorency, and Alcona Counties, including Alpena Public Schools, Alcona, Atlanta, and Hillman Community Schools.

WGU is the first out-of-state education provider to participate in Michigan's Grow Your Own Initiative. There are currently more than 5,950 WGU alumni, and more than 2,940 current WGU students, across the state of Michigan.

"It's imperative that we continue to address the ongoing teacher shortage that has immensely strained schools and classrooms. The Grow Your Own initiative in Michigan is a tremendous

step toward providing a solution to this crisis and we are proud to be included in this important endeavor,” WGU Regional Vice President Alison Bell said. “While the needs specific to school districts across the country are varied and complex, I applaud state leaders in Michigan for creating this pathway to up-skill and license school employees so that we have quality educators in the classroom setting our children up for success.”

The [WGU School of Education](#), the largest nonprofit, accredited school of education in the country, is a champion of next-generation teaching, learning, and leading. The school currently offers 30 graduate and undergraduate programs, including several programs for initial licensure preparation, and currently enrolls about 43,000 active degree-seeking students. In Michigan, there are nearly 1,100 students currently enrolled in WGU’s School of Education.

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