

My name is Emma Kennedy, and I am a third-year undergraduate student majoring in Middle Childhood Education at The Ohio State University. As I approach my student teaching experience, I feel a growing sense of anxiety about what lies ahead. The expectations placed on student teachers are immense. We are required to perform full-time professional responsibilities: acting as the classroom teacher, writing and delivering lesson plans, communicating with families, attending meetings and professional development, and managing daily classroom operations, while simultaneously completing our remaining coursework to earn our degree. We are both full-time teachers and full-time students.

Despite completing responsibilities that mirror those of a licensed educator, student teachers receive no compensation. In fact, we are paying tuition to complete this experience. While we gain valuable experience and serve students in our communities, we are losing income and sacrificing opportunities to work elsewhere during this time. This creates significant financial strain, more than a college student already faces.

As an aspiring educator who hopes to teach in an inner-city school, I deeply value being present and involved in the community I serve. Living within the district I teach in allows me to build meaningful connections with students and their families. However, requiring full-time professional commitment without compensation creates financial barriers that directly limit my ability to live and work in the community I hope to serve. Without pay during student teaching, and without the flexibility to pursue outside employment, I will struggle to support myself as an adult. I am currently living with my parents and saving as much as possible in preparation for this financially challenging year ahead.

Providing compensation for student teachers recognizes that we are not simply learners, but valuable contributors to the success of schools and students in the state of Ohio. Paying student teachers would reduce financial barriers and demonstrate respect for the essential work we are already doing.