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WATERTOWN PUBLIC OPINION

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Watertown business wants to train leaders to succeed

A.J. Kaufman
Special to the Watertown Public Opinion | USA TODAY NETWORK

A new Watertown business just launched, with a mission to help individuals, leaders and organizations succeed through leadership development and workforce training.

While The Pulse Advantage is new, owner Melissa Meidinger, who holds a doctorate in leadership, tells the *Public Opinion* that “the work behind it has been



Meidinger

years in the making, through my experiences in higher education, workforce development, economic development and business consulting.”

Throughout her career, Meidinger has worked with students, entrepreneurs, business owners and organizational leaders; she says that one theme

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Second grade teacher Krista Baartman holds up her classroom number for her students to find her during the first day of school on Aug. 21, 2025, at Marcella LeBeau Elementary School in Sioux Falls. SAMANTHA LAUREY/ARGUS LEADER

South Dakota seeks to fix rural teacher shortages

Makenzie Huber
South Dakota Searchlight | USA TODAY NETWORK

Teacher shortages in rural and tribal schools are driving the South Dakota Department of Education to explore alternatives to licensing exams.

State Education Secretary Joe Graves asked members of the state Indian Education Advisory Council for their input on the possibility last month. He did not offer a timeline for the possible change.

Statewide, the number of teacher openings fell recently to 290, down from a high of 410 at the same time in 2023. But district-specific data show elevated vacancies in rural and tribal districts such as Sisseton, Todd County and Oglala Lakota schools. Those three school districts reported average full-time staff vacancies of 2.64, 3.83 and 7.23, respectively, at the start of the school year from 2019 to 2025. The average school district in South Dakota reported 0.59 vacancies.

Graves said willing, educated teachers with relevant “cultural backgrounds” — particularly Native American teachers — are especially in need but are often failing the licensing exam.

“Meanwhile, we’re replacing them with people not just lacking their cultural background, but people we’re recruiting from across the Pacific Ocean,” Graves said.

In 2025, 446 teachers hired from overseas were leading classrooms statewide. Many of those educators are “high quality people,” but it’s “galling” to some educators observing the situation that they can’t fill that role, Graves told South Dakota Searchlight after the council meeting. Meanwhile, some school districts are relying on untrained, long-term substitutes.

Offering an alternative certification pathway for some local teachers could help solve the problem, Graves said during the meeting. The state has required teachers to pass a certification exam — the Praxis Series, a standardized test of academic skills and subject knowledge — since 2005.

Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Tribal Education Director Sherry Johnson partnered with a national nonprofit to conduct research on alternatives after years

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Brown County Fair. PROVIDED BY BROWN COUNTY FAIR

Brown County Fair returns in August with free admission

A.J. Kaufman
Special to the Aberdeen News | USA TODAY NETWORK

A great Aberdeen tradition dating back nearly 150 years returns to the region soon.

With the theme of “Gettin’ Rowdy in the Stix in 2026,” the Brown County Fair runs from Aug. 10-16 and offers a full week of entertainment and live music, day or night. As always, there are exciting activities for all ages.

Brown County Fair & Parks Manager Rachel Kippley recently told the *Aberdeen News* that some of the highlights this summer include grandstand concerts; Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association Rodeo; \$2 Tuesday; Zeus - the biggest thrill ride ever; the Farmers Union Ag Education Expo, which is an interactive learning space designed to connect children and families with agriculture; contests, like chicken chuckin’, hot dot eating and more.

Four decades ago, the “Booster Button” concept was introduced, providing quality, well-known grandstand entertainment for the week at one price. Those no

longer are offered but low concert prices on the grandstand remain and can be found at browncountysdfair.com/grandstand/.

Brown County Grandstand

- Dacotah Bank Stampede Rodeo 7 p.m. Aug. 10-11/Mon. & Tues.
 - Cooper Alan & Jackson Dean 8 p.m. Aug. 12/Wed.
 - Tyler Hubbard & Blackhawk 8 p.m. Aug. 13/Thurs.
 - Theory of a Deadman & Sevendust 8 p.m. Aug. 14/Fri.
 - Lee Brice & George Birge 8 p.m. Aug. 15/Sat.
 - Ranch Games 2 p.m. Aug. 16/Sun.
- “We are excited to welcome our annual 280,000 guests,” Kippley, who has been in her role with the fair for four years, explained. “It’s pretty unique to have a Free Admission Fair of our caliber. It’s only

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