



## **Pittsburgh Launches 1-Year Residencies as Alternative Certification**

**BY Eleanor Chute, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette***  
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In Pennsylvania, nearly every public school teacher takes a similar path to certification: a teacher preparation program at a college or university.

But for the first time since 2002, the state board Thursday approved an alternative route, this time a year-long residency program to be offered by Pittsburgh Public Schools.

Pittsburgh's goal is to increase the diversity of its teaching force, provide an option for second-career teachers and have more candidates for hard-to-fill positions.

John Tarka, president of the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers, said, "I think that what Pittsburgh designed will be one of the very best programs."

The program will be part of the Teacher Academy scheduled to open next fall at Pittsburgh Brashear High and Pittsburgh King PreK-8.

The certification program will be operated in partnership with The New Teacher Project, which currently prepares teachers for certification in five states and the District of Columbia. About 2,100 teachers have been certified by TNTP.

The district has hired the project for \$2.7 million through Nov. 1, 2013 to, among other things, establish a Pittsburgh Teaching Fellows program to attract and train about 30 to 50 teachers a year, focusing on math, science, special education and English language arts.

Participants already would have earned a bachelor's degree, and some may be certified teachers seeking an additional certificate in special education. Those without certificates will earn dual certification in the program, one in a secondary subject area and the other in special education.

Emily Silberstein of TNTP said the participants will be paid a salary but also will have to pay tuition of about \$5,000 for two certificate programs and about \$3,000 for one. They will have to teach five years in the district or else pay back \$20,000.

State board member Sandra Glenn of Philadelphia, chair of the state board's Teacher and School Leader Effectiveness Committee, said the state board is interested in ideas aimed at improving teacher effectiveness and found Pittsburgh's idea is "a great approach" to filling gaps in the candidate pool, both in certification areas and diversity.

According to district figures, only half of the 1,300 applicants for teaching jobs met the minimum criteria for consideration in 2010. There was only one candidate for each physics opening, two for each opening in chemistry and five for each in special education.

Nine of 10 new Pittsburgh teachers are white while more than 60 percent of the district's students are non-white.

Pittsburgh Schools superintendent Mark Roosevelt said, "Very high end African-American candidates are far more likely to come in the district through this alternative route than they are in the traditional route."

This particular alternative also provides a paycheck while in residency, making teaching a more realistic possibility for career changers.

When Pittsburgh opened its Science and Technology Academy 6-12 last year, Mr. Roosevelt said some candidates with "phenomenal" science backgrounds couldn't teach because they weren't certified.

Pittsburgh's plan was approved as a pilot program, with the state Department of Education to conduct a review within two years.

State board member Karen Farmer White of Fox Chapel, a member of the teacher effectiveness committee, said, "I think it's a great model that other school districts should look at in the future going forward."

Ms. Glenn said, "There need to be other routes into the classroom than we do think of traditionally."

In 2002, the state board granted permission for alternative routes to certification to two other organizations: the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence and Teach for America.

Since then, 72 ABCTE candidates were recommended for certification in Pennsylvania, said Adam Schott, executive director of the state board. Teach for America instead has worked through colleges and universities.

The state accepts ABCTE preparation only in three of ABCTE's 10 areas: secondary math, secondary English language arts and elementary. ABCTE spokesman Mike Holden said 208 Pennsylvania residents have completed ABCTE's program, but Pennsylvania has additional requirements.

In Pennsylvania, 93 colleges and universities have teacher prep programs.

Pennsylvania traditionally trains many more certified teachers than there are openings in the state.

In the most recent figures available from the state Department of Education, there were 14,534 newly certified teachers in 2009-10. In 2008-09, there were 8,456 first-year teachers in the state.

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