

Teacher Leadership Cohorts

At the Board of Education meeting held on October 4, 2010, the concept and implementation plan for a **Teacher Leadership Cohort** program were introduced. The following will provide information on what that is and why it will be important for Pitt County Schools.

What it is:

On the school district website, a vacancy posting for new Teacher Leader positions for the 2011-2012 school year will soon be found. The school district expects to hire and train thirty-five Teacher Leaders who will be placed in cohort groups of five in the lowest performing schools next year. Teachers will not be hand-picked for these positions; they must apply. Teachers may apply individually or with a group of other interested individuals with whom they already have team camaraderie. To qualify, teachers must have four or more years of experience, must have a track record of three years of positive student growth data, and must have evidence of school leadership. An Advanced Degree is preferred, but not required.

The desired outcome is to attract teachers who have a passion for teaching and who respond to the challenge of working with and improving the academic performance of low-performing students. These Teacher Leaders will be expected to become positive role models who will provide team-building leadership within the school and who will provide instructional support both for beginning and veteran teachers.

Teachers who apply will be interviewed and observed in a classroom/team environment(s) as a component of the application process. Input from the current school principal will also be sought. Individuals will be selected for participation in April, will receive training, and will be placed as a cohort in a low-performing school at the beginning of next school year.

Teachers selected will be afforded **incentives**. In addition to a \$3000 per year stipend, Teacher Leaders will be provided two weeks or more of additional summer employment for training, will receive individual Ipads for instructional use, and will maintain the employee benefit of having their children attend their current school, if applicable and desirable.

It will be the district's intent to "drop-in" a cohort of five teachers in each of the lowest performing schools with the belief and expectation that student performance will improve substantially. Quantitative measures will be used to evaluate the annual results.

As a footnote, there is a pilot program for Northwest Elementary School being implemented for this current school year. The difference is that at Northwest, the three Teacher Leaders will be supplemental to the existing classroom teachers and will be used as an additional teaching resource. Beginning with full implementation in 2011-2012, Teacher Leaders will replace teacher vacancies due to turnover or non-reappointment.

Why is this step important for Pitt County Schools?

Several forces are coming together which make this initiative a very important one for Pitt County Schools at this time.

Unitary Status - The school district is currently collecting historical data and current data that will be submitted to the Court on or before December 31, 2012, in support of having Pitt County Schools declared a unitary school district. A school district is unitary when it has eliminated the effects of past segregation to the extent practicable.

Although Unitary Status is most often discussed in terms of student assignment and busing of students, a unitary status review includes a look at staffing of teachers, staffing of administrators and other groups of employees, delivery of instructional services, student services, transportation, facilities, technology, extra-curricular, and others. Each of these areas must be examined from a historical and current viewpoint and if deficiencies are determined, then action must be taken to address those areas of concern.

The first area studied in depth and discussed with the Board of Education recently was staffing. It was no surprise to find that the lowest performing schools are also the schools that have (and have historically had) the highest percentage of teacher turnover and the lowest percentage of veteran teachers.

Additionally, the State and Pitt County Schools have applied for and have been approved to receive **Race to the Top** funding. Participation in Race to the top will require teacher evaluations be tied to student performance.

This new Teacher Leadership Cohort Program is seen as one step that can be taken immediately to help students achieve while at the same time aligning district efforts appropriately with Unitary Status targets and Race to the Top requirements.