

VERNON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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Vernon Public Schools Join CT Teacher Residency Program with Goal of Increasing Diversity in the Teaching Ranks

VERNON, Connecticut – The Vernon Public Schools announced this week that the district will participate in the CT Teacher Residency Program beginning in the 2021-2022 school year.

The CT Teacher Residency Program began in 2019 and is an alternative route to certification program designed to recruit, train, certify and retain elementary school teachers of color. The 18-month long program includes intensive course work during the summer, on some weekends and at night. The centerpiece of the program is a year working in the classroom, side by side with an experienced mentor teacher. Teacher trainees, who are referred to as residents, receive a salary and benefits during the school year.

Residents who successfully complete the program and earn state certification are guaranteed a teaching position in the district in which they received training with a starting salary of about \$47,000.

“The Teacher Residency Program is an innovative way for schools to bring people of color into the teaching ranks,” said Vernon Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary. “We know that having a diverse teaching staff is good for our schools and our students.”

Candidates have to meet a variety of standards for admission to the program, including having a grade point average of 3.0 or higher.

“About a third of Vernon’s students are members of minority groups and research shows that having more teachers who are members of minority groups is a way to close the achievement gap,” Assistant Superintendent of Schools Robert Testa said. “We want and expect all students to achieve at a high level and

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our teachers and principals focus on that every day. We think the teacher residency program is another way for us to achieve our goal of increasing minority representation in our teaching ranks and helping all of our students meet or exceed state standards.”

Teachers of color can be role models for students, and can help inspire students to pursue careers in education, Testa said. “We want our students to see themselves as teachers, leading and inspiring students to do their best and to learn,” Testa said.

Vernon’s resident teacher will work at Lake Street School with a “strong and capable teacher who will set the resident teacher on a path to success,” Lake Street School Principal Terese Duenzl said.

Duenzl said she would love to see a Vernon resident be picked as Vernon’s first resident teacher. “The position is open to all people, but it would be great to have someone from our community join our school system and become a role model for our students,” Duenzl said.

“Recruiting, hiring and retaining educators of color in our district will make us better by increasing diversity and inclusion in the Vernon Public Schools,” Duenzl said.

The teacher residency program begins with a six-week intensive summer course to prepare residents for their year in the classroom. They continue to take classes through the school year, the following summer and into the fall.

The Capital Region Education Council said its goals with the program are to focus on minority candidates and their potential to work with diverse students, provide quality training and minimize barriers to traditional teacher certification programs.

“We are thrilled to be able to bring this model to Vernon,” said Marlene Megos, the Director of the program for CREC. “We have had 26 teacher residents go through the program and look forward to doubling that number in the coming year.”

CREC and the participating districts hope to help the state reach its goal of increasing the number of teachers of color across Connecticut by 1,000 in the next year. The program eliminates barriers to certification for teachers of color, such as the high cost of graduate school tuition, standardized test requirements, and inadequate preparation for candidates.

“Embracing diverse teacher candidates with existing connections to students and their community is the key to stronger, more welcoming schools,” said Miguel A. Cardona, Connecticut’s former Commissioner of Education and now the U.S. Secretary of Education. “Case in point is CREC’s innovative ‘grow your own’ Teacher Residency Program that provides mentorship and support to school staff on their path to certification.”

Vernon’s commitment to increasing staff diversity is in line with the state’s commitment to increasing racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of Connecticut’s teaching workforce, Testa said.

More information about the CT Teacher Residency Program can be found at www.crec.org/c/trp.

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