MDE Approves DPSCD to Provide Alternative Route to Teacher Licensure

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January 13, 2021

LANSING – The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) announced today that it has approved a request by the Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD) to offer a Michigan alternative route to interim teacher certification program.

“In our continued efforts to grow and diversify Michigan’s educator workforce and reduce educator shortages, we need to reach beyond conventional methods,” said State Superintendent Dr. Michael Rice. “We wanted to continue to expand current flexibilities to help address the very real teacher shortages in the state. DPSCD developed a thoughtful, strong, home-grown proposal that we believe will help our state’s largest district. As this program develops, it may well serve as a pilot for the state in similar partnerships to meet the needs of children and local districts with grow your own programs.”

This is the first of its kind alternative route program in Michigan run by a local school district, Dr. Rice said.

“I want to deeply thank Dr. Rice and MDE for sharing in the problem-solving process to continue our commitment to provide all of our students with certified teachers. This announcement demonstrates best how MDE can reduce policy barriers and empower districts that are willing to do more to solve deep challenges such as teacher shortages. I have always believed that districts have so much untapped teacher potential within their own schools but struggle to directly develop them into certified teachers,” said DPSCD Superintendent Dr. Nikolai Vitti. “This allows us to be in better control of our talent pipeline and more strategically fill our remaining and future teaching positions with diverse professionals who are committed to our mission and trained based on our vision of excellent instruction.”

DPSCD will offer On the Rise Academy, an alternative route to teacher certification program to support aspiring teachers, including para-educators and academic interventionists currently employed by DPSCD in earning initial teacher certification, as well as certified teachers currently employed by DPSCD who wish to earn additional endorsements in mathematics, science, and elementary education.

DPSCD’s program is grounded in research-based, core teaching practices and will offer ongoing, job-embedded professional learning and coaching for early-career teachers—all of which is in alignment with the Michigan Department of Education’s program standards.

Recruitment for the program will begin in February for launch in summer 2021. Members of the first cohort of candidates may begin teaching in the 2021-22 academic year.

In January 2020, MDE issued a call for proposals for new educator preparation institutions to meet significant Michigan-specific needs. DPSCD proposed a program to support district employees in qualifying for teacher certification in high-needs areas, such as elementary education, science, and mathematics, where the local demand exceeded the available supply of new teachers.

MDE supported the district in developing a model with a unique research-based approach to teacher preparation, certification, and mentorship throughout the crucial years of induction into the profession. MDE will continue to work collaboratively with DPSCD to ensure program applicants are supported as they learn to teach and work with children, and the program gathers data to demonstrate its success and sustainability.

DPSCD's initial approval is for a period of five academic years (2021-22 through 2025-26). The district will report annually to the Michigan Department of Education on program enrollment, key assessment data in support of the program efforts, and any program changes or modifications made in response to analysis of key assessment data.

Full program approval will be contingent on fulfillment of program efforts as demonstrated by positive outcome data on the key assessment data.

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