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New Preparation Program Puts Math, Science and Bilingual Teachers in Residence at High Need Schools

University of San Francisco wins Department of Education grant to support teacher residency training

SAN FRANCISCO — (Oct. 14, 2011) The San Francisco Teacher Residency (SFTR), a unique partnership between the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), the University of San Francisco (USF), Stanford University, the United Educators of San Francisco (UESF), the San Francisco Education Fund, and AmeriCorps, has been awarded one of 30 Transition to Teaching grants from the U.S. Department of Education to recruit and prepare teachers for SFUSD’s hardest to staff schools and most challenging subjects to teach.

Urban districts across the country struggle to recruit, prepare, and retain excellent teachers to serve in high-need schools and to teach the subjects of math, science, and bilingual education. Recognizing this need, the U.S. Department of Education’s Transition to Teaching initiative has awarded grants for programs to recruit mid-career professionals and recent graduates who do not have degrees in education, and help them become teachers through alternative certification routes. The University of San Francisco will receive $2,151,961 over the course of five years from the U.S. Department of Education to support the work of the San Francisco Teacher Residency (SFTR).

Based on the medical school training model, new and accomplished teachers collaborate in teaching academies to improve the student teacher’s learning process. SFTR teacher candidates (known as residents) integrate master’s level coursework at the University of San Francisco or Stanford, with a full year apprenticeship alongside expert teachers (known as demonstration teachers) in SFUSD classrooms before they become the teachers of record the following year.
“SFTR aims to prepare teachers who can be successful in the urban schools where they are most needed,” said Dr. Peter Williamson, the University of San Francisco faculty advisor for the program and the university sponsor of the Transition to Teaching grant.

“As we recruit teachers who are committed to working in San Francisco’s public schools, we can tailor their professional preparation so that they are really ready to be highly successful with San Francisco’s diverse urban youth.”

In addition to their regular coursework and fieldwork, SFTR residents participate in monthly instructional rounds where they visit other classrooms in their school and around SFUSD to broaden their views of good teaching. They also attend a course where they learn about the structures, policies and practices within the school district.

“Because our candidates are in the classroom from the first day of school until the last, they can link what they are learning in their university coursework to real-life practice,” says SFTR Director and former SFUSD principal, Dr. Debbie Faigenbaum. “As a result, they are better prepared to deal with the challenges of teaching and more likely to stay in the classroom.”

The SFTR program began last year with a small cohort of 14 residents. Among its first round of graduates is Lianne Kim, who now teaches at James Lick Middle School. With her PhD in Chemistry, Lianne wanted to make a career change and felt pulled toward the teaching profession. She says that she combines the teaching skills she learned from the residency program with her science background.

“I had the opportunity to learn how to think like a scientist and I wanted to share this with young people,” says Lianne Kim. “The residency program gave me the opportunity to learn from some incredible middle school teachers and allowed me to take on the responsibility of being a teacher gradually.”

The Department of Education grant will help SFTR educate more teachers like Lianne Kim. This year, SFTR expanded from 14 to 25 residents. Next year’s goal is 30 residents, and possibly an added component of special education training. The Department of Education grant will strengthen SFTR’s work by providing resources for mentors, additional training for supervisors and demonstration teachers, and the funds needed for instructional rounds and program evaluation.

About the San Francisco Teacher Residency

The San Francisco Teacher Residency is a partnership between San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), the San Francisco Education Fund, University of San Francisco, Stanford University, United Educators of San Francisco, and AmeriCorps. The program is committed to preparing high quality teachers for San Francisco’s hardest to staff schools and subjects. Building upon the success of other urban teacher residencies, SFTR serves as a model for new teacher education pathways in that it re-envisions how universities prepare teachers and how they partner with local districts and
other education stakeholders. For more information, please visit http://www.sfedfund.org/programs/leadership_overview.php

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