

# **RESIDENT TEACHER STIPEND INCREASE PROPOSAL**

## **I. Background Information**

Effective July 1, 2019, the Louisiana State Department of Education (LDOE) requires all teacher candidates to complete a two-semester teacher residency under the guidance of a highly-effective mentor teacher.

Research shows that teacher candidates who participate in a residency program are better equipped to enter their first year of teaching and more likely to remain in the profession beyond the first five years.

Further, well-designed and well-implemented teacher residency models can create long-term benefits for school districts and the students they serve. When used in a deliberate, strategic manner, residency programs can help school district's address recruitment and retention needs while building the district's capacity to provide high-quality instruction for all.

## **II. Proposed Action**

LDOE currently allocates funds for public school districts to pay \$3300 to undergraduate residents who hold a Resident Teacher certificate and successfully complete two consecutive semesters in a classroom. Funding is provided yearly through the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) formula via the certificated pay raise calculation.

In an effort to recruit and retain more resident teachers from Northwestern State University (NSU)—and be competitive with packages offered by neighboring school districts--Natchitoches Parish Schools proposes to supplement the Residency stipend provided by LDOE, raising it to \$10,000 for the year of service.

As an additional incentive to remain with Natchitoches Schools, residents who accept full-time positions with the district after graduation will be credited a one-year step on the district Salary Schedule.

## **III. Funding**

As previously stated, \$3300 of the proposed stipend will come from LDOE. Approximately \$900 will come from the district's substitute teacher budget as residents will be able serve as substitute teachers for up to 15 days for their mentor teachers and other teachers in their home-based schools. The district will explore federal funding sources, grants, and partnerships to cover the remaining cost of the program.

During Year 1 of the incentive program, only 10 residents will be able offered the stipend supplement. However, the goal will be to increase the number to 20 candidates in subsequent years.

#### **IV. Rationale**

The rationale for this proposal includes the following:

- a. Over the past two years, the district has seen a 66% decrease in the number of NSU teacher candidates choosing to complete their residency in Natchitoches Parish, as most are choosing to work in a neighboring district that offers a \$15,000 residency stipend and travel expenses.
- b. For the past two years, the district has been able to retain approximately 50% of the NSU candidates who complete residency in district schools, decreasing the certified teacher shortage.
- c. The district's average teacher retention rate from 2020-2022 was 77.5%, with the rate at hard-to-staff schools falling well below average. Residency creates a vehicle for school districts to recruit teachers for high-need certification areas and populations since district must give top priority to high-need schools when placing residents.
- d. Candidates are required to be in schools 80% to 100% of the school day/week for the course of the two-semester residency. Consequently, they are unable to hold jobs. The increased stipend will help defray education and living expenses candidates incur during their residency year by providing them a "living wage."

#### **V. Implementation**

If approved, the proposal will go into effect for the 2024-2025 school year. The stipend increase will be advertised on the district's website, social media platforms, via NSU's platforms, etc.