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School systems partnering to create principal cohort

By Bobbie Hayse Messenger-Inquirer
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Amy Shutt

Five area school districts are participating in a school leadership cohort that will enable each to help current employees earn administration certifications through Western Kentucky University.

The cohort, which includes staff from Owensboro, Daviess County, Muhlenberg County, Hancock County and Breckinridge County schools, will begin this summer and run through December 2023. Each district is accepting applicants from current educators interested in completing the necessary training to become administrators, primarily principals, and at a discounted rate.

WKU will be discounting the rate of the program by \$3,500; local boards of education will be providing a \$3,500 scholarship; and the individuals taking the course will be responsible for paying \$3,500 for the certification. The program will also be offered in Owensboro, in a hybrid, in-person/online format.

Matthew Constant, Owensboro Public Schools superintendent, said WKU came to the schools with the idea for this cohort, which is based off of the schools' already-established "grow your own" teacher certification program.



OPS and Daviess County Public Schools are currently in the process of "growing" new teachers through that program, which enables them to support current employees in their journey toward earning their teacher certification in a similarly discounted process.

"Everybody is filling out the same application and then each district will decide on winners of a sponsored scholarship," Constant said.

Amy Shutt, DCPS assistant superintendent for human services, said both these grow your own programs are some “out of the box” options districts have come up with to recruit teachers, and develop a pipeline of administrators for the future.

“We are in the process of finalizing those,” she said. “This was just an excellent opportunity for us to give our employees a unique chance to seek that certification.”

Carla Embry, Muhlenberg County Schools community relations specialist, said the district is still in the process of organizing the program internally, and selecting which educators will participate.

“This is just a great opportunity for everyone involved,” she said.

DCPS has received several applications for the administration certification scholarship and is in the process of selecting participants. At least five will be chosen for the principals certification cohort, Shutt said.

OPS has selected four individuals to participate in the administration certification cohort: Sarah Ralph, Owensboro Middle School sixth-grade social studies teacher; Katy Harrison, Estes Elementary School curriculum facilitator, Christa Bossow, Cravens Elementary School curriculum facilitator, and Nikki Sims, Newton Parrish Elementary School kindergarten teacher.

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