

FY 2007 QUESTION NUMBER: 30

QUESTION:

What are the challenges of finding highly qualified and certified teachers?

BUDGET PAGE REFERENCE: 8–9

ANSWER:

There are national shortages of math, science, and special education teachers, and there is significant competition among states and school districts for these candidates. Teacher education programs in Maryland produce fewer than half of the teachers hired throughout the state each year. Recruiters must seek candidates from other states where teacher education programs and testing requirements differ from those of Maryland. In some cases, this results in hiring teachers who are not yet fully certified or “highly qualified” according to Maryland and federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements.

NCLB requires that all special educators teaching core academic subjects also must be highly qualified in the core academic subject that they are teaching. Colleges and universities have not developed enough dual certification programs for special education teachers. Graduates of special education teaching programs report frustration with the additional content requirements when they seek employment as special education teachers. These requirements and the challenging nature of the position lead special educators to switch to regular education teaching positions. Once they are certified in special education, teachers can change to a regular education position by passing a PRAXIS II content test. This increases the need for additional special education teachers.

Many teacher candidates with backgrounds and content expertise in math and science do not have a background in teacher education. Therefore, these candidates must seek additional training before being hired. Recent approved changes for alternative programs will help in this area; however, it will take time for institutions of higher education and local school systems to create these alternative programs.

Teacher pensions in Maryland are not as competitive as pensions in other states. Increased awareness of the pension benefits for Maryland teachers also may impact efforts to recruit certified and highly qualified teachers.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics “Completions” survey (November 2002), Hispanic graduates comprised 4.5 percent of bachelor’s degrees in education conferred by degree-granting institutions during 2000–2001, the most recent year for which data are reported.

During FY 2006, 3.9 percent of MCPS teachers (437) are Hispanic. As of October 15, 2005, 5.2 percent of MCPS new teachers (59) are Hispanic. School systems compete for Hispanic and bilingual teachers. The Office of Human Resources continues to emphasize recruitment of a diverse work force. These efforts have been successful and will continue. New teacher hires are proportionally more diverse than current teachers.