

Frequently Asked Questions

MCPS Higher Education Partnership Programs for Teacher Preparation

1. What are MCPS Higher Education Partnership Programs?

The Office of Human Resources and Development works with local universities to provide tuition reimbursement and additional support at the post-secondary, undergraduate, and graduate levels for individuals seeking teacher certification, continuing professional development, or pursuing career advancement opportunities. Partnership programs focus on expanding the candidate pool to applicants representing diverse backgrounds and areas of critical need for the school system. These programs involve extensive MCPS field experiences, supplemental training, and supervisory support by colleges, universities, and MCPS.

2. What are critical need areas?

MCPS hires 700-1,000 teachers every year in all content areas and grade levels. Some areas are more challenging to staff based on the number of qualified candidates and the needs at our schools. In recent years, those areas have been: secondary math and science, technology education, computer science, art, music, ESOL, French, Spanish, and special education. Related professions such as speech pathology, school psychologists, media specialists, and occupational therapists, as well as, individuals who are bilingual/biliterate in English and Spanish are also critical needs.

3. What are the benefits of partnership programs?

Our superintendent, Dr. Smith recognizes there are numerous employees who live in our district, send their children to our schools, and have established a desire to have their careers in MCPS. To that end, he has dedicated resources to support employees who want to pursue teaching as a career. Some benefits are:

- Courses offered online, face-to-face, and hybrid formats
- Courses offered at MCPS sites or Universities at Shady Grove
- Potential opportunities to complete student teaching while maintaining employment and salary
- Waived fees for application and transcript review

4. I want to teach PE. Do we have partnership programs for PE?

We do not have partnership programs for *every* content area. We want to provide programs to support the career goals for our employees matched to the needs of our school system.

5. If MCPS does not have a partnership program for my content area does that mean I can't teach that subject?

We always need great teachers who are passionate about their content/subject. Teaching is more than a job. MCPS wants individuals who love what they teach. It is never recommended to pursue an area if it does not bring you joy or motivate you to want to help students. Employees can pursue teacher preparation programs outside of *partnership* programs. Employees are eligible for tuition reimbursement to assist with the cost of teacher preparation *programs*.

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6. Are any of these program 100% free? If not, what is the cost?

None of the partnership programs are free and they all have a costs to the employee and costs to MCPS. Many of the programs offer reduced tuition rates, waived fees, and direct payment from MCPS to the college or university to minimize the out of pocket cost to the employee. The program costs can range from approximately \$4,000 - \$15,000 depending on the program, degree, and institution. The price range can fluctuate based on changes in fees from the college or university. MCPS works closely with our partnership programs to minimize unexpected increases to fees.

7. How does tuition reimbursement work?

Permanent employees of MCPS can be eligible for partial tuition reimbursement up to 9 credits per year. The per credit tuition reimbursement rate is one half the cost of the per credit rate at the University of Maryland. Details regarding the tuition reimbursement process can be found on the MCPS website.

8. A friend told me that I don't have to student teach (also known as a student teaching internship). Is that true? I have done substitute teaching. Do I still need to student teach?

Completing a student teaching internship is a Maryland State Department of Education requirement. The state of Maryland establishes the criteria for teacher certification. MCPS works with colleges and universities who create programs that meet those requirements and guidelines.

9. But I know some people who get conditional certification. What is that and how can I teach on a conditional certificate?

MCPS, on rare occasions, will hire individuals with conditional certification. Often these people have just a few remaining requirements for teacher certification in a critical need area. Conditional certification is handled on a case by case basis, but it is not a recommended pathway for employment.

10. How do I get started? Am I eligible?

MCPS employees, who have *permanent status*, are eligible for teacher preparation partnership programs. Support professionals earn permanent status after the first 6 months of meeting competencies.

11. I have some post-secondary course work, an Associate's degree, or Bachelor's degree? Can I contact the MCPS Certification Office to have someone review what I need in order to become a teacher?

The MCPS Certification Office reviews certification requirements for individuals who are in the hiring process, new hires, and current professional and administrative staff. Another benefit of our partnership programs is colleges and universities will review transcripts of MCPS employees who want to pursue teacher preparation programs. Also, the Maryland State Department of Education has a process for reviewing transcripts.

12. If I have questions, who do I contact?

Employees should contact Career Pathways Program Specialist, **Nathalie Bourdereau** or Instructional Specialist for Higher Education Partnerships, **Sydney Pinkard**.