

Teach at Dallas College

By Kristen McCaw | June 6, 2023

Teach at Dallas College aims to strengthen and diversify the teaching workforce in North Texas by providing a flexible and affordable pathway to a Bachelor's degree and teacher certification through a combination of online coursework, in-person classes, and hands-on learning opportunities.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | Dallas College launched Teach at Dallas College and an accompanying apprenticeship consortium to strengthen and diversify the teaching workforce in North Texas. The program is open to anyone and offers a Bachelor's degree, as well as certification in bilingual EC-6, EC-6, PreK-3, and the option to add special education. During the final year of the program, students participate in a paid apprenticeship that includes weekly in-person courses and hands-on learning in a school setting.

Goals

The goal of Teach at Dallas College and its apprenticeship consortium is to strengthen and diversify the teaching workforce in North Texas.

Basics

The program was launched in the fall of 2021. The program serves students who are already employed in a classroom setting and those who are not - for the latter group, Dallas College sets up paid residencies for them in their final year of the program. In the 2022-23 school year, there are 150 students who are in the final year of the program. Out of these, 47 students are with school systems that have signed into the consortium, enabling them to access federal apprenticeship funding. The duration of the program varies, and the Bachelor's degree offered by the program can take 1-4 years to complete, depending on how many credits students have to start with. In addition to the Bachelor's degree, students can also choose to complete a certification program that takes one additional year to complete.

The format of the program varies, with many courses available online and a weekly in-person course required for 4 hours in the evenings of the final year.

The cost of tuition is \$79 per credit hour, including books, making the whole Bachelor's degree program cost under \$10K. With financial aid and apprenticeship dollars, the program is free for many students, and they can continue working while completing the degree.

Eligibility

The program is open to anyone who wishes to participate.

Courses & Credits

To ensure the success of the program and retain employees, Dallas College has set up arrangements with employer partners where students take 15 credit hours per semester while working full-time. Most employer partners give their employees a half-day per

week of release time, during which they can attend their coursework and still receive their pay. The program has seen evidence that employees who are given release time by their employer partners are more likely to be successful in the program. Currently, employer partners who have joined the consortium are participating in this arrangement, which is critical to the success of the program and the retention of students in the program.

During the first 60 credit hours of the program, students focus on taking general education courses, but in their junior year, they begin to take education courses. In their senior year of the program, students earn course credits while deepening their learning through performance-based assessments and competency-based learning.

Hands-On Experience

Dallas College's program offers students hands-on experience as they work towards their Bachelor's degree. If students are already working in a school or early childhood education setting, the goal is to allow them to keep their jobs and earn course credit for hands-on learning. For students who are not yet working, Dallas College has set up tutoring partnerships with school systems in the metroplex, and is experimenting with offering work-study funding. In these paid residency experiences, students spend at least 3.5 days a week in a school setting as tutor or substitute teacher and half a day doing in-person coursework.

Getting a Teaching Credential

Dallas College's program is approved to certify teachers in PreK-3rd grade at the undergraduate level. However, the program has found that students need a longer runway to certification, so they do not start the certification process until their senior year, and Dallas College provides support with completing licensure after they graduate. The program provides intensive licensure support in the final semester, and students take their tests during the summer after they graduate. Students then secure a job as a teacher and complete their certification requirements in the following year, with support from Dallas College post-baccalaureate. The college offers coaching sessions twice a month, and students attend an in-person course once a month to support them through the certification process.

Mentorship

In students' final year, instruction is mostly asynchronous so faculty can focus on providing coaching on-site. This coaching is provided at least twice per month, with weekly coaching for students who are struggling. There is also a weekly 4-hour residency course in person at Dallas College. Students in the curated residency are also paired with a mentor teacher who has been trained by Dallas College on how to give aligned feedback and support.

For paraprofessionals, Dallas College has set up a cohort model to provide them with a supportive and collaborative learning environment. From the beginning of the program, paraprofessionals are grouped together as a cohort, and each cohort is assigned an education facilitator who meets with them regularly to provide support throughout the program. The program aims to build a relationship between paraprofessionals in the cohort and others in their school system who are already participating in the program. Dallas College has found that by having one faculty member teach all five of the courses for the cohort, a strong relationship is established between the faculty member and the students. This model has been successful, and all of the paraprofessionals in the fall semester cohort were able to complete the program.

Continuous Improvement

Dallas College is developing a partnership to launch this summer, where students will work with struggling readers either in afterschool programs or during the day. Additionally, they have identified that the courses offered in the first 2 years are not customized for education students, leading to some dropouts. Therefore, they are redesigning the courses to make them relevant to education students and include content that will help them pass certification exams. They are also offering flexible delivery options to meet the needs of students.

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