

Partnership Gives Teacher Prep Students Year-Long Classroom Residency

Dover, DE – Aspiring teachers are spending an entire school year working side-by-side with veteran teachers as part of a new partnership between Wilmington University and the Capital, Indian River and Red Clay Consolidated school districts. This year-long clinical residency approach is rare amongst teacher preparation programs nationwide.

Traditional teacher preparation programs generally place candidates in classrooms for a few months for student teaching experiences, and the model is generally not a co-teaching model. This pilot initiative, a direct result of a Race to the Top (RTTT) teacher preparation grant and 2013's Senate Bill 51 designed to strengthen the state's teacher preparation programs, provides aspiring educators the chance to spend an entire school year co-teaching with an experienced educator. For this and other innovations to its teacher preparation programs, Wilmington University has been awarded \$230,000 in competitive grant funding via RTTT over the last two years.

Dr. John Gray, dean of Wilmington University's College of Education, cited the importance of deep partnerships in innovations like these: "An effort of this magnitude requires partnerships across the spectrum—with our districts, our students, our university leaders and the state. Our team and partners have shown tremendous dexterity in pulling this off, and it's a testament to the entrepreneurial spirit at WilmU that allows us to adjust to the evolving needs of our teachers and students."

Governor Jack Markell joined Secretary of Education Mark Murphy to visit participating teachers at North Dover

Elementary today. 

“This initiative directly answers a need identified by our teachers,” Markell said. “So many teachers told us just how challenging their first year in the classroom was and how they would have benefited from having a longer clinical residency, and the Department of Education and Wilmington University responded to their call-to-action.”

Three schools – Capital’s North Dover, Indian River’s East Millsboro and Red Clay’s Richey elementary schools – joined Wilmington University’s efforts as “lab schools” this year. Similar to the way other professions utilize a clinical residency experience, Wilmington University selected and placed a dozen of its seniors in these schools, pairing them with host teachers who agreed to embark upon the year-long co-teaching model.

Wilmington University plans to expand the program over the next 18 months with additional teachers in these schools as well as the development of additional school partnerships.

East Millsboro Principal Kelly Dorman said this is an invaluable learning experience for the aspiring educators, allowing them to become part of a school culture.

“It allows them to learn what it looks like to begin a school year, and it also provides a window through which to see the growth that students make by the end of the school year,” Dorman said. “It is a hands-on experience that lets the intern learn and grow in a nurturing environment with the support of both the teachers and administrators.”

Senate Bill 51 requires deeper clinical residency experiences to be offered by the state’s teacher preparation programs, but only Wilmington University has taken dramatic and immediate action, adjusting its coursework and model to make this happen.

Photos from North Dover Elementary School Visit