

Spotlight on the Grow Your Own Program

One of Sun Prairie's recruitment strategies includes a program to help current non-certified staff earn their certification in hard to fill teaching areas. The district, in partnership with Edgewood College, has established a "Grow Your Own" Teacher Program to develop a diverse pipeline of teachers from the Sun Prairie School District community. The program, now in its 3rd year, has recently added three (3) additional participants, for a total of four (4) students.

"The Grow Your Own program helps us recruit, prepare and retain a greater number of teachers of color and male teachers interested in elementary education. The best human resources can be found within our own school community." the district's Employee Relations Manager, Tracey Caradine says. "The district believes in the power of a diverse teaching workforce and recognizes that some of the best candidates can be found within our district."

Timothy Slekar, Dean of the School of Education at Edgewood College says that "Working in partnership with school districts like Sun Prairie is part of the School of Education's mission. The Grow Your Own partnership also helps Edgewood's School of Education continue to solidify its commitment to social justice and inclusion by working directly to help Sun Prairie diversify its teaching force and helping those future teachers focus on a justice model of inclusive education".



The program is open to non-certified, full time school district support staff who already have a Bachelor degree and is interested in earning a teaching certification in one of the district's hard to fill areas (special education, science or math); Male employee interested in teaching elementary aged students; or bilingual employees interested in teaching English Language Learning students.

The district provides financial assistance and mentoring by a peer advisor along the way. The student, the district and Edgewood College each pays 33% of the tuition to attend. The tuition is considered a loan from the district until the participant has become a teacher and worked in the capacity of a teacher for the district for three (3) years.

Current Grow Your Own participant Ronald Caito reflects on his experience, "I am thankful that the Sun Prairie School District and Edgewood College formed a partnership to provide an opportunity for expansion of diversity in the teaching population. Although my journey has been arduous at times, I have grown as a thinker and have become more reflective. The support that I've received, not only from the district but also Creekside Elementary, has been instrumental in helping me to be successful in this program."



Like Ronald, all of the current participants are in the 2-year Advanced Certification Elementary (ACE) program at Edgewood College. If you have questions about the Grow Your Own program please contact Tracey Caradine at 608-834-6522.