

Hillsborough County Public Schools

Hillsborough County Public Schools' Alternative Certification Program

In 1998, the Florida Department of Education authorized the creation of district-based alternative certification programs as a means for overcoming the teacher shortage. Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) developed the first program, which is still the largest Alternative Certification Program (ACP) in Florida. ACP participants complete standards-based practical coursework, an electronic portfolio, and internship opportunities, all documenting their mastery of the 12 Florida Accomplished Practices for Educators. The program targets non-education majors and career switchers who want to enter the education field through an alternative method. ACP is funded solely through participant fees. Over 1500 participants have completed the program in its nine-year history. There are currently 650 participants in the program.

In 2004, HCPS received a USDOE Transition to Teaching (TTT) grant allowing eligible paraprofessionals to receive a scholarship towards their tuition as they earn a bachelors degree in education. The Paraprofessional Transition to Teaching Program (PTTP) was developed in partnership with St. Petersburg College (SPC) and provides up to a \$5000 scholarship towards tuition and fees. Participants attend bachelor-level coursework taught by SPC professors at HCPS school sites. The program targets paraprofessionals with associates of arts degrees or 60 semester hours at an accredited college or university. Currently there are 15 participants earning their bachelors degrees. Additional participants are completing prerequisite work to prepare for the upper-division coursework. HCPS also developed the Title I Associate of Arts Degree (TAAD) Program in 2004, to allow participants at Title I (high needs) schools to earn their associates degree and then enroll in PTTP to earn their bachelors degree.

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