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Partnership could lead to more certified teachers

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Hardin County Schools classified staff members attend an information session on Monday regarding earning their teacher certification through Western Kentucky University at the Early College and Career Center.

Submitted

Classified staff at Hardin County Schools might be given the opportunity soon to earn their teacher certification through Western Kentucky University.

A partnership between WKU and the WKU College of Education and Behavioral Sciences with HCS is in the works to implement the “WKU Grow Your Own” program.

Superintendent Terrie Morgan said in an email that she has been discussing this new initiative with Corine Murphy, dean and professor of special education, ever since the university reached out to the district.

There were 58 classified staff members that expressed interests in a survey sent out to them. An informational session on Monday at the Early College and Career Center accumulated around 40 classified staff members who are interested.

Classified staff members include bus drivers, child nutrition workers, custodian and instructional assistants.

The program allows these staff members to enroll in college classes to earn their education certificate at a discounted rate.

She said WKU would match what the district would contribute toward each applicant earning their degree, with the rest being covered by the staff member.

Morgan said these possible candidates have good rapport with students, a certain level of knowledge and a desire to be in the classroom.

“Each time I visit our schools, I encounter multiple persons who you immediately know would be superior in the classroom. Their supervisor also shares this information,” Morgan said.

HCS spokesperson John Wright said that approximately 20% of certified staff members could retire right now. He said this isn't necessarily unique to the HCS district, and that all districts in the state have this problem with possible teacher shortages.

Currently, a memorandum of understanding is being worked out that will need to be approved by the HCS board of education.

Morgan said some of those who attended the meeting do have a degree in an area other than education. She said WKU will work with each individual to develop a path toward becoming a certified teacher.

"We look forward to working staff members who have already demonstrated their commitment to education through their current work in Hardin County Schools," Murphy said in an email.

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