

120,000-student School District of Philadelphia picks BC3 to tutor educators

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(Butler, PA) The largest school district in Pennsylvania, with four times as many students as Cranberry Township has residents, has selected Butler County Community College to prepare noncertified educators working under one-year emergency permits to take content examinations required by the state for instructional I certification.

The School District of Philadelphia, with 124,184 kindergarteners through seniors, last fall requested proposals from organizations and institutions to provide tutoring services to help employees with bachelor's degrees in fields other than education, and others who serve as emergency certified educators, to take tests that would result in state Department of Education certification.

BC3 has been awarded the one-year, \$100,000 contract. The college will also tutor those among the School District of Philadelphia's 8,500 teachers, some of whom are working with BC3 to obtain additional content-area certification.

The School District of Philadelphia has 18,000 employees, including emergency certified educators who have demonstrated content mastery and are able to renew one-year emergency permits.

"Assisting teachers in moving from emergency permits to certification will decrease turnover rate and impact the academic success of their students," said Annie Lindsay, who directs BC3's Praxis teacher certification test preparation program.

Chanell Bates is director of strategy and operations in the School District of Philadelphia's talent office, which supports and oversees educator pathways.

"BC3 has a tremendous track record of working with a lot of local universities in teacher prep, and we want to leverage that expertise for our employees," Bates said.

"Part of the excitement about the proposal and why we included BC3 among a list of organizations or institutions that we reached out to with this solicitation was because of BC3's reputation."

Through its Praxis program, BC3 has offered tutoring services for teacher certification examinations for more than 15 years, Lindsay said. In the past year, 90 percent of candidates who were tutored by BC3 and reported results of their examinations said they were successful, Lindsay said.

“BC3,” Lindsay said, “is leading a path forward to help pre-service teacher candidates find success.”

BC3 works with pre-service teacher candidates from about 50 institutions in providing teacher certification examination training for college and university students majoring in education, for noncertified educators pursuing certification, or for teachers seeking to add certifications, Lindsay said.

BC3’s proposal stated that the college provides tutoring to a number of institutions in the Philadelphia area, Bates said.

“It’s not really about location. It’s about the quality of those services,” Bates said. “When we were initially looking for vendors that could potentially provide this as a service to our employees, naturally I did lots of research and then consulted with some of our university partners. Butler was among the more consistent responses and some were saying, ‘Yes, Butler.’”

BC3 will provide online or video preparation to emergency certified educators, or to teachers who wish add a certification, for examinations for pre-kindergarten through Grade 4; middle level examinations for Grades 4 to 8; or secondary education examinations for Grades 7-12, Lindsay said.

BC3, Lindsay said, is among the few colleges and universities in Pennsylvania to offer a credit course to prepare education students for basic skills examinations.

The college has two-year transfer programs in early childhood education (Pre K-4), secondary-education-English concentration, secondary education-social sciences concentration, and physical education-teacher education option.

The School District of Philadelphia is addressing not a shortage of teachers, Bates said, but a distribution “not aligned to where the needs are.

“We’re thinking about math and science, world languages, middle-grade teachers and special education teachers. Those are priority areas for the district.”

Lindsay expects to provide tutoring for up to 20 different certification options for the School District of Philadelphia.

“And once they’re fully certified,” Lindsay said, “you have teachers in stable jobs year after year. Once that continuity is put into place, it inevitably spells success for each student who comes in through the classroom doors.”