

# **Palacios Independent School District “Grow Your Own” Teacher Certification Program**

## **OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM**

### **Purpose**

The Palacios Independent School District (PISD) “Grow Your Own” Teacher Certification Program provides tuition and other support to non-certified school district employees who have exemplary work records, better than average grades, and a sincere commitment to teaching so that they can earn college degrees leading to teacher certification in locally identified shortage areas.

### **Eligibility**

The “Grow Your Own” teacher training program is open to all full-time non-certified school employees (instructional assistants, secretaries, cafeteria personnel, etc.) who have completed the application requirements outlined in Section 1. Consideration will only be given to employees seeking certification in:

- Mathematics (secondary)
- Science (secondary),
- Bilingual (all level),
- Spanish (secondary),
- Technology Applications (secondary),
- Computer Science (secondary),
- or Special Education (all level).

### **Agreement**

PISD will enter into a legally binding agreement with selected employees. Under this agreement, selected employees will take course work needed for a college degree in education. The program will be limited to 3 total participants with no more than 1 employee being selected each year. The district retains the right to limit the number of employees working toward certification in any specific field. Employees will generally be selected during the spring and will begin the program during the summer. The education degree must be from the University of Houston-Victoria, but academic courses can be taken from other approved universities and colleges. After graduation, the employee must teach in PISD for 5 years.

## **SECTION I—APPLICATION AND SELECTION**

- A. To complete the application process and be considered for the program, the applicant must submit the following documents, in accordance with deadlines and submission requirements as specified by the superintendent or designee:
- Copy of high school transcript or GED certificate (if applicable)
  - SAT/ACT or other entrance test scores (if applicable)
  - Passing scores on the TASP (if applicable)
  - Copy of college transcripts (if applicable), indicating a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.0 on all college work taken within the last 5 years.
  - Letter of recommendation and approval from building principal (sent directly from principal to superintendent or designee.)
  - A letter of approval for future employment is required from each campus principal who has teaching positions at their campus that the applicant would qualify for with the certification/degree the applicant is seeking. Bilingual and Special Education requires a letter from all four campus principals.
  - Letters of recommendation from two teachers (sent directly from teachers to superintendent or designee)

- Letter of recommendation from active community or civic leader (sent directly from community member to superintendent or designee.)
  - Brief personal biography
  - 200-300 word essay on “Why I Want to Become a Teacher in PISD
- B. Recommendation letters are confidential and applicants agree they will not seek access to them.
- C. A screening committee appointed by the superintendent will evaluate the applicants and their credentials according to a matrix developed by the superintendent, interview each applicant, and rank the applications according to their score on the matrix. An applicant must score a minimum of 107 points on the matrix to be considered for the program. The applicant with the highest score will be selected. The committee’s decision shall be final.
- D. Board Approval will be the final step required before the applicant is formally accepted into the program.

## **SECTION II—DISTRICT CONTRIBUTION AND ASSURANCES**

- E. PISD agrees to pay/provide for costs or materials as specified below. Employees must submit a “notification of enrollment course work” and textbooks and laboratory fee form to the PISD personnel office before enrollment in order for PISD to pay these amounts in advance:
- all tuition costs and required fees at the community college or state college or university selected by the employee. All courses to fulfill the education degree must be taken at or transferred to the University of Houston-Victoria.
  - all required textbooks for the courses leading toward degree at the community college or state college or university selected by the employee. Textbooks remain the property of PISD for use by subsequent participants in the program unless the employee reimburses PISD the full cost of the textbooks at the end of the semester in which the book is purchased.
  - the first administration of any required entrance examinations.
  - all required laboratory fees for courses leading toward degree at the state college or university selected by the employee.
  - the fees for the first administration of required ExCET tests for certification.
- F. For employees who qualify for tuition exemptions from the state or who qualify for a scholarship covering the cost of tuition, PISD will pay the employee a stipend of one-half the cost of tuition. After an employee is admitted to the program and successfully completes 24 hours of coursework toward the degree, PISD will pay a \$75 per course stipend for the successful completion of each additional course. Employees who qualify for tuition exemptions from the state or who qualify for a scholarship covering the cost of tuition will not be eligible for this stipend..
- G. PISD will provide flexible schedules to allow employee to take courses, including:
- release time for late afternoon and night classes
  - available classes via the PISD distance learning lab
  - concurrent enrollment classes offered by PISD
  - release time (6 clock hours per week) if courses cannot be taken any other time
- H. Palacios ISD will provide travel expenses associated with taking classes out of town in accordance with the following allowances:
- Travel outside the district in the employee’s vehicle will be reimbursed at 20 cents per mile.
  - If two or more employees of the District travel to the same location on the same date with similar class schedules, reimbursement will be allowed for only one of the employees.

### SECTION III-EMPLOYEE CONTRIBUTION AND ASSURANCES

- I. Selected employees agree to pay for:
- Fees for university graduation activities
  - Late registration fees (if applicable)
  - Parking fees
  - Transportation to and from sites where courses are taught [Except as outlined in II (G)]
  - TASP required remediation courses
  - Retaking courses
  - All other costs
- J. Additionally, the selected employee agrees to the following:
- Applicants for Bilingual certification must be proficient in English and Spanish at the time of application.
  - The employee must qualify for regular admission into the college or university and declare education as the major. Regardless of where courses are taken, the University of Houston-Victoria must be the degree-granting institution.
  - Employee's schedule of classes must be approved each semester by the superintendent or designee.
  - The employee must remain employed by PISD and receive annual satisfactory or above evaluations by the appropriate supervisor during the program.
  - If the employee withdraws from a course or earns a grade below "C" in a course, the employee must reimburse PISD for full tuition, textbooks, and any other PISD incurred costs relative to the course.
  - The employee must maintain a minimum grade point average of 2.5.
  - The employee must take a minimum of 6 hours of course work each semester, or 21 hours per year including each summer session, until the degree and certification plan are successfully completed. Upon written request, an employee who is unable to enroll in 6 hours during a semester because the necessary upper division courses are not offered or under other special circumstances subject to the superintendent's discretion may be permitted to enroll in fewer than 6 hours.
  - If an employee is unable to register and take course work at all during a semester, he or she must request a semester furlough and receive superintendent or designee approval for the furlough. An employee may receive no more than 3 furloughs during the program. Any request for additional furloughs must be submitted to the PISD board of trustees.
  - An employee with no prior college credit must complete the degree and certification program within 6 years, unless an agreed exception is reached by PISD and the employee. No more than one extra year may be added to the program.
  - A completion time line will be developed and agreed upon, prior to beginning the program, between PISD and the employee who has completed prior college class work.
  - An employee selected for the program must be a current employee and have been employed by the District for a minimum of two full school years.

#### **SECTION IV: OBLIGATIONS UPON COMPLETION**

- K. Upon completion of degree and certification plan, the employee shall:
- Complete student teaching in PISD (if applicable)
  - Accept any full-time teaching position that may be offered by PISD for at least 5 years.
  - Comply with all SBEC/TEA/SBOE and PDAS guidelines, achieving a minimum of “proficient” in appraisal performance ratings.
  - Meet all requirements of professional growth and other duties required of PISD teachers.
- L. Upon employee’s completion of degree and certification plan, PISD shall:
- Review the selected employee’s record and offer a one-year probationary contract upon written verification of degree/certificate completion.
  - Comply with all SBEC/TEA/SBOE and PDAS guidelines.
  - Offer additional contracts, subject to satisfactory performance by selected employee.
  - Inform the employee in writing of the full amount expended by PISD in connection with the employee’s participation in the PISD “Grow Your Own” teacher certification program.
- M. By applying for and accepting the benefits of the PISD “Grow Your Own” teacher certification program, employee agrees to repay to PISD all sums PISD expended on employee in connection with the program according the terms of this Section and Section V: TERMINATION.
- N. If employee fails to comply with or complete the requirements of the “Grow Your Own” program, employee shall repay all funds PISD expended on employee in connection with the program in installments agreed upon by PISD not to exceed a term of 18 months.
- O. Upon obtaining a college degree and teaching certification pursuant to the “Grow Your Own” program, employee will repay the amounts expended by one of these methods:
- Employee is expected to accept a teaching position with PISD and will receive credit against amounts due for each semester that employee serves as a full-time teacher in PISD. For each full semester that the employee teaches in PISD, employee will receive credit for 1/10 of the total college expenses paid by PISD. Full credit will be achieved when Employee has been a teacher in PISD for 5 years. If employee for any reason fails to repay the obligation by working in PISD for 5 years to receive full credit, including a decision by PISD to terminate or nonrenew a contract, employee must pay the balance of any amounts due in installments agreed upon by PISD not to exceed a term of 24 months.
  - If employee declines PISD’s offer of a teaching position at any time during the 5 years following completion of the program, employee shall repay the balance of all funds PISD expended on employee in connection with the program in installments agreed upon by PISD not to exceed a term of 24 months.

#### **SECTION V: TERMINATION PROVISIONS**

- P. PISD has the right to terminate the “Grow Your Own” program at the end of any regular semester or summer session for any reason. If PISD terminates the program before employee completes the degree and certification requirements, employee is released from any obligation to repay funds expended on employee in connection with the program.

- Q. PISD has the right to terminate the employee's participation in the "Grow Your Own" program for any of the following reasons, and employee must repay to PISD all amounts expended on employee in connection with the program:
- PISD terminates the employment relationship in accordance with PISD policy.
  - PISD removes the employee from the program based on employee's failure to comply with any of the covenants or conditions of this Agreement or any of the guidelines, requirements or regulations relating to the program, including maintaining satisfactory evaluations in employee's current job assignment in PISD.
  - PISD determines in its sole discretion that employee is not making adequate progress or if employee's performance in the "Grow Your Own" program is not acceptable.
- R. Employee has the right to terminate employee's participation in the "Grow Your Own" program at any time for any reason. If employee terminates participation, employee must repay amounts expended on employee in connection with the program under the following provisions:
- An employee who withdraws from the program and continues employment in PISD must agree to a payroll deduction program to repay amounts expended within a term agreed to by PISD not to exceed 24 months. If employee resigns or is terminated before the full amount is repaid, employee must pay any balance due on the date of resignation or termination.
  - An employee who withdraws from the program and resigns employment in PISD must pay all amounts expended by PISD for employee's participation in the program on the date of resignation.

#### **SECTION VI: PROGRAM LIMITATIONS**

- S. PISD establishes the "Grow Your Own" teacher certification program in order to fulfill its needs for certified teachers in areas of local shortage. An employee's admission to the program according to the terms set out in this Agreement does not create a property interest in employment or in any other benefit and is not a guarantee that PISD will employ the person as a teacher for any period of time. If an employee accepts a contract for teaching in PISD, PISD retains its right to make all subsequent decisions regarding employment, including termination or nonrenewal in accordance with PISD policies.
- T. Operation of the "Grow Your Own" teacher certification program is contingent on the availability of funds and is within the sole discretion of the PISD board of trustees.

**SECTION VII: EMPLOYEE’S ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

I have read the foregoing requirements. By my signature below, I initiate application to the “Grow Your Own” program. I understand that this application process will not be complete until and unless I submit the documents specified in Section I. If accepted to the program, my signature below is acceptance of all the terms and conditions for participation, including the responsibility to repay amounts.

*College/University attending:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Degree/Certification:* (check one)

- Mathematics (secondary)
- Science (secondary)
- Bilingual (all level)
- Spanish (secondary)
- Technology Applications (secondary)
- Computer Science (secondary)
- Special Education (all level)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant’s Name(Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant’s Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Superintendent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date