



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2024.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Henrico
Program Title: Language Instruction Education Program Microcredential Courses
Program Category: Organizational Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Victoria Davis
Title: Public Relations Specialist
Department: Public Relations
Telephone: 804-501-4933 Website: www.henrico.gov
Email: dav127@henrico.gov

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Monica Smith-Callahan
Title: Deputy County Manager for Community Affairs
Signature: *MS Callahan*

Program Overview

Henrico County Public Schools has been working hard to provide its staff members with opportunities for increased learning and additional pay increases that recognize and reward their initiative and growth. As part of this, the Language Instruction Education Program Department has created two “microcredential” courses to help teachers better support the unique needs of English-learning students. One goal of these programs is to give instructional staff the training necessary to meet the linguistic needs, vocabulary development and differentiation needed to support English-learners in any class. The other goal is to provide the training necessary for current classroom teachers who wish to switch into the field of language instruction education. With this training, teachers may become English-as-a-second-language instructors. With a growing teacher shortage, this program provides a way for HCPS to grow its ESL teaching staff internally.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

In the 2023-24 school year, HCPS had 5,470 multilingual students enrolled in a total population of nearly 50,000 students. This number has doubled in the past five years and continues to climb. Due to the growing population of multilingual learners, classrooms have an increase in English-learning students, with many teachers who are not experienced in teaching this population. The development of this program creates learning opportunities for instructional staff that go more in-depth in content pertaining to multilingual learners. In accordance with the Code of Virginia, school divisions are obligated to serve English-learners with a pupil teacher ratio of 50:1. The HCPS course provides training to become a licensed ESL teacher and helps the division to meet this legal obligation by growing the teaching staff.

How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

Henrico County Public Schools deserves a VACo Award for the facilitation of these microcredential courses for instructional staff — a staff development program that could be

replicated by other localities to address common widespread challenges. The program focuses on multilingual students as it demonstrates a commitment to professional development and inclusivity in education. By offering targeted training in multilingualism, the HCPS Language Instruction Education Program Department is addressing the diverse needs of students from different linguistic backgrounds and how best to support them. This initiative not only enhances the skills and knowledge of teachers but also contributes to creating a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. It demonstrates a proactive approach to understanding and meeting the needs of multilingual students, fostering cultural sensitivity and promoting effective teaching strategies for multilingual learners. Recognizing the department's efforts in this area acknowledges the importance of language diversity in education and highlights the commitment to providing quality education that caters to the unique needs of all students.

How Program Was Carried Out

This program serves as an incentive to broaden the scope of knowledge by instructional staff to enhance their transcript and resume, as well as the potential to increase their salary. A microcredential is a competency-based course or experience that provides 20 to 30 hours of targeted learning about a specific topic or area. It is facilitated with feedback given to the participants during the course and shows evidence of positive effects on educational practice and/or student learning. Microcredentials can either be designed and facilitated by HCPS staff directly as a way to personalize learning needs for educators or may sometimes be offered by an outside organization. As part of this program, the Language Instruction Education Program Department chose to offer two microcredentials: "So You Wanna be an ESL Teacher" and "SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol)." With the growing number of English-learning students, many teachers and other staff members have been asking for this instruction. Upon successfully completing either course, teachers can use their microcredential as credit in the Henrico County Public Schools Career ladder program. This career ladder creates an opportunity to earn two microcredentials that leads to a teacher "specialization." Once a specialization is

complete, teachers earn a 4.8% salary increase.

SIOP: The SIOP microcredential program aims to provide resources and expertise to teachers and staff members who work with multilingual students. These resources support students in their content classes by using evidence-based strategies that can be used throughout the course of instruction. The SIOP microcredential is open to all HCPS staff members. After signing up for a session, participants engage in 18 hours of interactive, in-person professional learning. This course teaches an understanding of acquiring a second language, as well as teaching strategies in vocabulary development, scaffolding and differentiation, and student interaction and engagement. When participants complete this professional learning course, they are better equipped to serve students in their care who are learning to speak English while also learning course content. Following the live training sessions, participants are encouraged to use their new knowledge to engage in self-reflection and lesson-planning, and to film and reflect on their practice as the final part of the microcredential. This additional 10-12 hours of work is turned in and participants get feedback from course facilitators. The final piece of the course allows participants to demonstrate their knowledge and ultimately affect student achievement. While this microcredential helps teachers engage with their multilingual students, it also benefits their monolingual students as well.

This course was developed over six months and was first taught during the summer of 2022. Since then, sessions have been offered in the fall, spring and summer with a total of 103 staff members participating in five different cohorts. While the foundation of the course is based on training through the Center for Applied Linguistics, the microcredential course was developed by Henrico County Public Schools with these materials used with permission.

Typical completion time is about two months from start to finish for each cohort.

So You Wanna be an ESL Teacher: With a growing multilingual population, additional language teachers continue to be needed. The “So You Wanna be an ESL Teacher” microcredential course teaches and prepares current teachers licensed in other areas — as well as unlicensed staff

members — to become a language instruction education program teacher. Interested participants complete an interest form and are selected based on their desire to teach English-learners. The applicants are required to commit to the in-person sessions (three total hours) and asynchronous work, and take the Praxis licensure exam to apply their knowledge. Throughout the sessions and the asynchronous work, teachers use the course resources and strategies to complete field work — practicing in their classrooms or schools — and apply what they have learned in the microcredential course. They are given feedback throughout the five modules. Participants learn cultural awareness, understanding the identification of English-learners, foundations in linguistics and language acquisition, instructional strategies and standards for English-learners and Praxis preparation. The course was developed by the HCPS Language Instruction Education Program Department, in partnership with the Department of Professional Learning and Leadership. Development took about two months, with courses ongoing in various times of the year (fall, spring and/or summer). Typical course completion takes about four months, depending on the time a staff member can dedicate to the learning process.

Financing and Staffing

Program costs include the payment for the original training as well as the ongoing cost of facilitation. The original SIOP course through the Center for Applied Linguistics cost \$1,325 per person with a total of five trainers trained. The ongoing program cost is minimal as facilitators for both microcredentials are Henrico County Public Schools employees. For each microcredential, one facilitator is paid \$800 for the course cohort. Additionally, upon completion of the ESL teacher course, teachers can take the ESL Praxis exam. If the teacher passes the test, the county reimburses them for the \$130 cost of the test. Each cohort for the ESL course typically consists of 15 people.

Program Results

As of February 2024, 103 teachers and staff members have completed SIOP microcredential training and 40 staff members have participated in the “So You Want to Be an ESL Teacher” microcredential course. Considering the number of students each person may impact, this means that approximately 10,000 students now have a teacher that can better serve their academic needs. From the first cohort of “So You Wanna be an ESL Teacher” participants (25 total), five were hired as new language instruction education program teachers during the 2023-24 school year, meeting the objective of growing staffing internally.

One participant wrote, “This was one of, if not THE most, helpful and useful professional development courses I have ever attended. I really appreciated the general wealth of tangible strategies to implement the SIOP model in my classroom. I genuinely feel like I will be entering the school year with tools I am excited to use. I also really appreciated the modeling of different teaching strategies throughout this program, engaging with peers in the room, collaborating on ideas, etc. I also feel confident in my new network of peers I have if I ever need additional help or resources.”

Brief Summary

HCPS’ Language Instruction Education Program Department has created two “microcredential” courses to help teachers better support the unique needs of English-learning students. One goal of these programs is to give instructional staff the training necessary to meet the linguistic needs, vocabulary development and differentiation needed to support English-learners in any class. The other goal is to provide the training necessary for current classroom teachers who wish to switch into the field of language instruction education. With this training, teachers may become English-as-a-second-language instructors. With a growing teacher shortage, this program provides a way for HCPS to grow its ESL teaching staff internally.

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