

# Educators see few development opportunities

## Teachers find alternative ways to get the continuing education credits they need

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Career planning and professional development are services so common in the corporate world, any company not offering them is guaranteed to lag behind competitors in recruitment and retention.

Professionals whose certifications require a specific number of annual continuing education units (CEUs) will need to be compensated for time spent in training. The U.S. Department of Labor even has statutes specifying how and when training pay is appropriate.

To keep certifications active, board-certified professionals, such as architects and doctors, are required to complete a certain number of CEUs before their licenses expire. Board-certified educators have the same requirement. Unlike their professional peers, however, educators must often find and fund development classes on their own.

### No help

Compared with their corporate counterparts, teachers have little assistance in growing professionally. Where a corporation may reimburse staff for advanced-degree tuition, several seminars and an annual conference, the Duval County

school district spends less than \$250 per teacher on development.

"[In-service] workshops, serve as the main professional development piece," said to Frances Gupton, principal of West Riverside Elementary School.

New teaching methods, updated behavioral modification tools and other subjects are presented, usually by other teachers in these workshops, and attendees practice new skills before applying them in the classroom.

While many in-service activities count towards total CEUs, the accumulated number falls short of what's needed to stay licensed. To fill the gap, teachers look to local colleges.

UNF offers special undergraduate-level classes for recertification. But according to Phillip Riner, chairman, UNF, Division of Curriculum and Instruction, "teachers enroll at their own expense. Schools don't pay for teachers to earn a master's

degree."

A program called America's Choice, based in Washington, D.C., provides a bit more help. Participating schools have a local literacy coordinator and a design coach. Teachers in these roles are sent to district-wide workshops throughout the year, then plan and facilitate in-services for their peers. Regional coordinators help bring in outside consultants for on-site training. On-line training is also available.

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"There's no real career path," Gupton said. "[Career planning] is up to each individual teacher. Often, the subject doesn't even come up until the exit interview."

Advancement comes from advanced degrees and certification for most teachers, otherwise it comes through promotion to principal.

"Florida actually produces too many teachers," Riner said. "Nearly 46,000 teachers are certified to teach in this state, but not enough of them are working in the schools. They're in Blue Cross Blue Shield. They're in middle management somewhere. They're everywhere, but in the classroom. We don't have a shortage of teachers, we have a short-

age of people who'll work for the money in a classroom environment."

### Mentoring commitment

In a program called the Partnership to Advance School Success (PASS) the CEO of a top corporation mentors a school principal in management and employee development skills.

Participants commit to each other for three years.

Funding is provided by the mentoring company and the school. A third party is made available for incentives and programs designed to help families understand how to support their children's efforts.

Similarly, UNF provides on-site informal training where a faculty member commits to mentor at a school once a week for three years.

"It's a huge commitment," Riner said. "Training focuses on helping others to learn, teaching practices, and understanding student needs, among other things."

For information on Florida's education system, visit the Department of Education's site at [firm.edu](http://firm.edu). For statistical information, visit the National Center for Education Statistics at [nces.ed.gov](http://nces.ed.gov). To learn more about professional development in education, visit the Florida Association for Career and Technical Education site at [facte.org](http://facte.org).

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