

## **Teacher Leadership for School Improvement (TLSI) Program: Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the TLSI Program?**

The TLSI Program has a sharp focus on literacy and in helping educators become master classroom teachers, as evidenced by their demonstrated mastery of the core competencies of effective teaching (knowledge of content and pedagogy; understanding of learner development; creating positive classroom environments; use of effective assessment strategies; collaboration and communication with colleagues, parents, and communities; critical reflection; continuous professional growth; designing engaging instruction; planning, implementing, and evaluating effective instruction; and effective use of technology). It is an inquiry-based program that places a priority on developing teachers who can ensure students' success in school. In this graduate program, learning is directly related to classroom outcomes as teachers learn new strategies, implement them in their classrooms with guided assistance, collect evidence of student learning, and then reflect on and adapt practices. The program is delivered on-line and occasionally on-site in the district from which the cohorts are drawn; teaching and learning is embedded in the routines and structures of the school. Offered free of charge (with the exception of book and program fees) to cohorts of teachers from selected schools, TLSI seeks to improve teacher practice, increase student achievement, and serve as powerful mechanism to assist high need schools to recruit, retain, and develop a cadre of high quality educators.

### **How is this different from a traditional Graduate program?**

In a traditional graduate program, learning is an individual activity where knowledge is gained, but not necessarily translated into practice in the classroom. In the TLSI Program, individuals participate in a professional learning community where there is an emphasis on classroom practice. Unlike traditional graduate programs that draw students from many different settings, TLSI is offered on-site to cohorts of teachers from the selected schools. Each graduate program participant will be required to examine his/her practice, participate in critical reflection, offer critical/supportive dialogue with others, read about and implement innovative practices, collect evidence of student learning, and share professional presentations in a variety of venues. Graduate students will not only acquire and apply new knowledge, but also share it with others within the school community.

### **Who is it for?**

The TLSI Program is designed specifically for educators who have made a commitment to teach in high need schools that serve large numbers of children living in poverty. Teachers in this program must have the desire and courage to engage in a collaborative, inquiry-based learning community where practice is made public and craft knowledge is shared freely. The scholarship is only funded for teachers that work in Lastinger Center partner schools in each district, but the program itself is global.

### **How much will it cost?**

The Lastinger Center and its financial partners will offer full tuition scholarships to teachers who make a 5-year commitment to remain in a Lastinger partner school. This translates to an award of approximately \$20,000. Participants will be responsible for books (price varies) and application fees (including GRE testing).

### **What commitment do participants need to make?**

The scholarship is only offered to people employed in our partner schools, so you must remain in one of our schools for the duration of your graduate program. Then, we ask that you make a good faith commitment to remain in your school for 2 years following graduation in order to bring your new skills to assist the school community.

### **How long will it take?**

This is a 2 and a half-year, 36-credit Graduate program.

## **Where will classes be offered?**

Classes are all online, but some will include face to face meetings at a partner school site. In addition, you may be required to attend program informational meetings occasionally. Site-based meetings are mandatory.

## **How does the cohort structure work?**

Participants from area schools will form a cohort, consisting of a maximum of 30-40 students per group. As cohort members, participants must support the success of all members by actively participating in facilitated discussions, bringing evidence of student and adult work, and engaging in peer observation and coaching. Participants will take courses within cohorts, so that a site-based person (Professor-in-Residence) can support learning, aiding in the translation of theory into action within the classroom.

## **What are the selection criteria?**

Interested teachers must submit an email of interest to the Lastinger Center, demonstrating understanding of the commitment involved in this program. Further application information will be sent to applicants on how to apply to UF online. Applicants will have to meet all University entrance requirements in order to be selected. Current entrance requirements include an upper division undergraduate GPA of 3.0 and GRE scores that average around 450-600 in the verbal and math sections. There is some flexibility on these minimum scores on a case-by-case basis.

## **What courses will I take?**

### **Core I: Courses in Teacher Leadership and School Improvement**

- Guided Teacher Inquiry
- Teacher Leadership and School Change
- Transforming the Curriculum
- Differentiated Instruction
- Data-Driven Decision Making
- Culturally Responsive Classroom Management
- Improving Practice Practicum (three credits related to classroom implementation of course content and creation of a portfolio with evidence)

### **Specialization Areas**

- Reading (courses may lead to reading endorsement)
- Educational technology
- Media Literacy
- Middle School Mathematics (and Science coming soon!)
- Early Learning
- Helping Struggling Learners (special education focus)
- Multi-disciplinary (can include your choice of any specialization coursework)