

Does Dallas College have the answer to the teacher shortage?

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By [Dallas Morning News Editorial](#)



Pricila Cano Padron graduated this May from Dallas College's first ever bachelor's degree program in education. She will teach fourth grade reading in Richardson ISD this fall. (Courtesy of Pricila Cano Padron)

When she was in middle school, Pricila Cano Padron loved helping her classmates with their math homework.

“I really liked being able to go up to the board and show my friends how I got the answer,” she said.

Cano Padron’s passion for teaching has grown into a career. In the fall, she will be teaching fourth-grade reading at Spring Ridge Elementary school in Richardson ISD, the same district where she grew up.

This is an achievement for Cano Padron and for Dallas College, where she graduated this spring. Cano Padron was one of 125 graduates in the community college’s first class with a bachelor’s degree in education. This is thanks to a [2017 Texas law](#) that allows community

colleges to offer four-year bachelor's degrees in high-need areas, including teaching.

At a time when higher education has become prohibitively expensive for many students and Texas is struggling to retain teachers, Dallas College has managed to build a robust pipeline of new teachers feeding into local school districts, launching them into their education careers debt free.

All the graduates have received job offers from Dallas ISD, Richardson ISD and the Uplift charter school system, with starting salaries of \$60,000, said officials with Dallas College.

Cano Padron's tuition was fully covered while she earned her degree. That was the case for all of her classmates. In fact, Cano Padron and her classmates earned money while student-teaching during their senior year.

Dallas College enrolls students who most need tuition assistance, including many nontraditional students who delayed college enrollment after high school or who are pursuing a career change. The average age of the class of 2023 with a bachelor's in education is 26.

Half of the class became the first in their family to graduate from college. Almost all of the graduates are Black or Hispanic.

This is good news for North Texas, where many school districts like Dallas ISD, where students of color are the majority, are looking to diversify their teaching ranks.

The bachelor's program costs a total of \$10,000. Still, the average family income for a Dallas College student is \$27,000. All the graduates in the class of 2023 qualified for federal aid, college officials said.

Robert DeHaas, vice provost of Dallas College's School of Education, said students are able to tap apprenticeship dollars from the U.S. Department of Labor. That's because Dallas College launched the first paid teacher residency apprenticeship program in Texas.

By senior year, students spend around 40 hours a week working as a teacher's assistant, DeHaas said.

"Student teaching is something all education majors do and they don't get paid for it, but our students earn \$30,000 during their apprenticeship year ... so they don't have to choose between continuing with school or working," he told us.

Dallas College plans to eventually graduate 500 teachers each year. Other community colleges in the Houston area and Midland-Odessa are developing similar programs.

While teaching is a demanding profession, it's also a calling for many young people who want to change children's lives for the better. Texas must set a high bar for the quality of its teachers, but it must also do what it can to lower barriers that keep good people from

pursuing or finishing a teaching degree. Dallas College understands the assignment.

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