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School districts join for minority job fair

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Staff Writer

Three Central Jersey school districts will hold a joint job fair for minority teacher candidates on March 21 in an effort to increase diversity among their faculties.

The event will take place from 9 a.m. to noon at Piscataway High School, 100 Behmer Road. The participating schools districts are the North Brunswick, Piscataway and South Plainfield school districts.

Teresa Rafferty, director of communication, planning and community outreach for the Piscataway Township School District, said the district has about 110 teachers who are considered minorities, or about 22 percent of its professional staff. At the same time, about two-thirds of the district's students are noncaucasian.

"The district really is committed to having a representative work force, a high-quality representative work force," she said. "...We also think that it is important for students to see role models who resemble themselves."

Peter Pitucco, director of human resources for the Piscataway district, said his district has sent letters to graduating seniors at historically black colleges and universities, attended other job fairs, and advertised their job openings. But he said this is the first time the district has held its own job fair specifically aimed at minority teaching candidates.

He said a job fair provides applicants with a better opportunity to make a solid first impression.

"There is so many people applying that you don't always get to really see everybody who is out there and know who's out there just because for some areas there are so many applications out there," he said. "At a job fair you get a feel for the person, get to know the person, and know if its someone who might be a good fit for our district."

Pitucco said the job fair might be particularly helpful for professionals seeking to get into the teaching field via the state's alternate route certification program, which is intended to help working professionals with expertise in a given subject area to earn their teaching certification while teaching.

The job fair also will feature three half-hour information sessions. An "Interview Skills" session starts at 9:30 a.m. "Resume-Writing Tips" begins at 10 a.m. A session on the alternate-route process begins at 11 a.m.

The schools are seeking candidates for positions at all levels, but Pitucco said math, science and special education teachers always are in demand. He said experienced teachers who want to transition to teaching special education also can learn about the process at the job fair.

Applicants are asked to bring a resume, as well as Praxis test scores and their certifications if they have them. Pitucco said job openings can be viewed at njschooljobs.com.

Representatives from the South Plainfield and North Brunswick districts could not be reached for comment.