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SEEKING SOLUTIONS: In the Franklin School District, new partnership with Plymouth State University is the latest tool to address teacher shortage



Plymouth State University graduate Abigail Yelle, left, is now a teacher at Franklin High School and was attending a professional development workshop at the school library headed up by Joey Rino, an associate professor at Plymouth State.

Investing in the classroom

By MICHAELA TOWFIGHI
Monitor staff

Long after the school day ends, class is still in session on Thursday nights in Franklin Middle School as teachers trade their lesson plans for a seat in a graduate course led by Plymouth State University.

Last spring, a pilot version of the partnership gave teachers new practices to bring back to their classrooms.

The class title: "Try this on Monday."

The essence of the course was to introduce teachers to new techniques, said Kenneth Logan, who is an assistant professor and English education coordinator at Plymouth State. But rather than inundating teachers with complex theories, Logan wanted to hit one thing teachers could do in their classroom tomorrow.

"Here's something very practical, very straightforward that you can implement," said Logan.

Now in a formal partnership with the Holmes Center for School Partnerships and Educator Preparation at Plymouth State, more than 20 teachers in Franklin are participating in a weekly graduate course on-site at the middle school. With the ability to earn these graduate credits

SEE CLASSROOM A3



Joey Rino, an associate professor at Plymouth State University, works with Franklin Middle School math teachers in a professional development workshop at the school's library last week.

SEE CLASSROOM A3

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PAGE A1 STORIES

Saturday, November 4, 2023 | CONCORD MONITOR A3

Investing in the classroom

CLASSROOM FROM A1

free of charge, it is the latest solution to address a teacher shortage that plagues the industry.

"The idea was to try and pay for teachers to take a Masters class, try and help retain teachers here and build their skill sets," said Dan LeGallo, the superintendent for the Franklin School District.

Last year, the district – which includes Franklin's elementary, middle and high school – lost almost a quarter of its staff. Most educators went on to find higher-paying jobs in different districts, said LeGallo.

The story of Franklin's retention issues holds weight statewide. So much so, that there is a legislative committee to study the state's teacher shortage. On Nov. 1, committee members will issue a report that outlines challenges for teachers and recruitment and retention recommendations.

Considered in this report is a survey from Reaching Higher, an education policy nonprofit in the state.

In the spring of last year, Reaching Higher surveyed 590 teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators about their feelings about the education industry.

Among responses from teachers, 28 percent pointed to salary as a top concern.

LeGallo is well aware that Franklin's wages aren't competitive to areas with larger tax bases. The average teacher salary in the state is just over \$62,000, according to the New Hampshire Department of Education. In Franklin, the average pay sits at \$49,000.

An advanced degree will inherently boost teacher pay, said LeGallo. And with the support from Plymouth State, teachers will deliver better classroom results for their students.

"It's a win-win-win all the way around," he said. The investment from Plymouth State will also come full circle, said Brian Walker, the director of the Holmes Center.

"I see Plymouth being a hub for supporting our K through 12 schools," said Walker. "We're invested in this community in many ways. That's our future students."

This semester, the course is called "The Science of Teaching and Learning," which studies the connection between developmental psychology and cognitive science to school classrooms.

The purpose of the course is to identify small changes that teachers can make in their classrooms that will inherently chip away at a bigger problem.

"Oftentimes, we think of problems as being so massive that we will have to change systems beyond schools to fix them," said Logan. "But there are also things like small tweaks that add big results. And that's what we're trying to do with the grad course."

Take students' attention for example. In a 90-minute course, teachers often worry about planning each section to keep their classroom engaged throughout the lesson.

But if a teacher hones in on what their plan is for the first five minutes of class, often times that small sliver will dictate how the rest of the session is going to go.

"The first five minutes it turns out are really important. Students walk in the door. The first five minutes, what do you do to make sure that you're the one driving?" he said.

In addition to the weekly graduate course, Plymouth State professors are also providing support to teachers to improve math and literacy rates, two areas that are identified as historically low in the district.

Last year, Franklin Middle School was identified as one

of 23 Comprehensive Support and Improvement schools in the state, which means it falls in the lowest 5 percent of school performance.

With this indicator, the district now has access to increased funding to help improve student outcomes. Part of these funds are now invested in this Franklin-Plymouth State partnership.

On a recent Thursday, students from Plymouth State served as substitute teachers in Franklin Middle School math classes. Over in the library, Joey Rino, an associate professor at Plymouth, had pulled all middle school math teachers into a professional development workshop.

The goal of the session was to facilitate a conversation about how a new math curriculum, Eureka, which was introduced in the district, translates across grades.

It's one of several sessions Rino has led this semester. And each can take on its own shape or purpose.

Earlier in the year he took the helm of a middle school math class, leading a lesson with the new curriculum for teachers to observe. After that, the roles reversed, with Rino watching and providing feedback on their instruction.

"It's less about me being the one to teach them something, but rather me providing a support that allows them to utilize their resources differently," said Rino.

The hope also is that with this classroom experience in Franklin schools, Plymouth State students would be entitled to join the district staff after graduation.

"The district is showing a commitment to teaching and learning in a comprehensive way. Retaining teachers and supporting teachers is the number one factor for outcomes," said LeGallo. "High-quality teachers improve students, and that's what we're trying to accomplish for our kids."

Town looks to address flooding

BOW FROM A1

form the tests during his area inspection. During last week's select board meeting, members approved the survey and voted to allocate \$500 for the work.

At a select board meeting in October, Bow Pioneers Club member Anthony Foote requested the return of pipes used to regulate the pond's water level, which proved unsuccessful since the beavers

consistently found ways to ob-

struct the pipes, rendering them ineffective.

He said that the pipes, owned and installed at the club's expense, are required to address a problem at another location.

"We need the pipes to use at an actual location that is flooding right now to save us the \$1,500 for the materials that we don't have right now," Foote said.

However, the select board said that when a club or organization installs equipment or

constructs on town-owned land, it becomes the property of the town.

While abutters and the Conservation Commission consider restoring the pond important, they are cautious not to rush, as they want to ensure a solution that won't lead to a similar issue in the future.

"Even if we don't do any restoration and the beavers come back, the bridge will still be in the same spot and likely cause the same problem," explained Crystall.

Police: Man shot brother-in-law

SHOOTING FROM A1

At least one bullet hit Santos, said Goldstein.

Duchesne, who was not granted bail, was charged with one count of first-degree assault with a deadly weapon, a Class A Felony; one count of reckless conduct during a domestic dispute with a deadly weapon, a Class B Felony; and four counts of endangering the life of a child, each a Class A Misdemeanor representing the four children who were in the house at the time of the shooting.

No child was hurt. All are

juveniles and live in the house with Santos and his wife, whose name was withheld by Goldstein. It is unclear if Duchesne, the woman's brother, lives there as well.

Goldstein said his department was called to Webster Lake Road at 8:11 p.m. Thursday, adding that one of the couple's daughters had called 911.

"She told the dispatcher that there was a psychological problem, the husband and wife had emotional issues," Goldstein said. "But we determined it was domestic abuse."

Duchesne said during the phone call that he would surrender peacefully and wait outside for the cops' arrival, Goldstein said.

"Very peaceful, no resistance," Goldstein said. "Then we located Santos and the EMTs got him out of there."

Police from Tilton and the Merrimack County Sheriff's Office assisted.

"We're still trying to get their history," Goldstein said. "Right of the bat, we thought it was domestic violence. It's what we see every day in this state and this country."

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INSIDE

SPORTS

BEARS HAVE EYES ON TITLE

The Coe-Brown girls soccer team secured a spot in the Division II title game with a tough win over Pembroke.

Page B1



Page B1

Page B1

Page B1



CLOSE-UP

PREP FOR YOUR PRUNING

Get the latest gardening tips, including tips, last-minute preparations of winter ahead of Henry Homeyer.

Page B6

Fall back

Daylight saving ends at 2 a.m. Sunday. Before bed on Saturday, set your clocks back one hour.



Classifieds B3 Nation&World A4
Close-Up B6 Obituaries A4
Comics B5 Opinion A5
Crosswords B4, B5 Sports B1
Dear Abby B5 Sports TV B2
KenKen B4 Sudoku B4

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