ON THE FastTrack

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MONTHLY UPDATE: INSPIRING BEGINNINGS & CELEBRATIONS

The Teacher FastTrack Recruit Team is excited to announce the official launch of our programming for the 2025-2026 school year, coinciding with the celebration of the 21st issue of On the FastTrack. This year is particularly significant as we experience a record low in teacher vacancies across Nevada, thanks in part to our former participants who have realized their dreams of becoming licensed educators. Recently, Clark County School District's Chief Human Resources Officer, RoAnn Triana, celebrated the impact of this achievement, stating that the dream of fully staffing all classrooms is a "dream that is finally within reach."

As we welcome this new academic year, we also celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month. The Teacher FastTrack Team honors our nearly 80 mentees and mentors from Hispanic and Latin communities, who are vital in ensuring all students have access to passionate educators. These trailblazers reflect the spirit of success, like Hispanic astronaut and engineer Ellen Ochoa, who inspires us with her words: "I tell students that the opportunities I had were a result of having a good educational background. Education is what allows you to stand out."

As we embark on this journey, we wish all our current mentees and mentors a successful academic year ahead. Our team is here to support you every step of the way. If you need assistance, please reach out to the Teacher FastTrack Team at tft.recruit@thepef.org. Together, let's ensure that every student has the opportunity to shine in a nurturing environment!

Current Cohort DATA

* data based on Fall 2025 cohort as of 9/9/25

70 Mentors

210 Mentees

55% of Mentees are members of diverse communities

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH: BUILDING COMMUNITY IN THE CLASSROOM

My name is Jessica Rodriguez, and I have the privilege of serving as the Coordinator of Education Programming at the Public Education Foundation. As we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month this September, I wanted to share my journey with you and reflect on how our diverse backgrounds can enrich the educational experience for both teachers and students.

As a first-generation Mexican American and the first in my family to graduate from college, my connection to education is deeply personal. Five years ago, I moved to Las Vegas, where I embraced the incredible honor of teaching high school English. Teaching has not only shaped my professional path but has profoundly impacted my life. I firmly believe that a truly effective classroom is one where students feel represented, valued, and empowered.

Growing up in a collectivist culture, I carry the values of community and support into my teaching. It has always been my mission to create a nurturing space where students can learn, collaborate, and grow together. In my classrooms, I prioritized building a community spirit that encouraged students to uplift one another.

Storytelling is another critical aspect of my heritage that influences my teaching style. In many Hispanic families, stories are shared across generations, shaping our understanding of the world. In my classroom, I invited students to share their own narratives, honoring their identities and empowering them to find their voices.

Throughout my teaching career, I have had the joy of working with students from diverse cultural backgrounds. By introducing them to authors who reflect that diversity, I aimed to affirm their experiences and highlight the common threads that unite us all. I believe that meaningful impact happens when students feel seen and recognized, inspiring them to speak up, share their perspectives, and engage collaboratively.

Now, in my current role, I have the opportunity to support aspiring and new teachers as they embark on their own transformative journeys. Just as I worked to create a community for my students, I strive to ensure that our participants feel supported, resourced, and empowered to foster classrooms where every student feels they belong.

As we honor Hispanic Heritage Month, let's reflect on the strength that diversity brings to our education system. Together, we can inspire the next generation of educators to embrace their unique backgrounds and create inclusive environments where all students thrive.

Where our Mentees want to make a Difference in NEVADA

- Elementary Education: 62%
- Special Education: 21%
- Early Childhood: 10%

*representative of mentees in the 2025 Fall cohort as of 9/9/25

Teacher FastTrack Recruit *addresses the teacher shortage crisis by helping to identify school employees who dream of becoming a licensed teacher and providing invaluable wrap-around support while they complete UNLV's Rebel Start Academy. We also mentor hundreds of new teachers during the first three years in their own classrooms through our Teacher FastTrack Retain program.*

A Journey of Passion and Perseverance

Ruth Ponce's inspiring journey began in 2016 as a kitchen worker at Richard C. Priest Elementary in the Clark County School District. Her passion and patience during lunchtime interactions with Special Programs quickly opened the door for her to take on roles as a Special Programs Teaching Assistant (SPTA) and eventually as an English Language Learner (ELL) Student Support Assistant (SSA). Ruth's transformative experience with a bilingual teacher in fourth grade ignited her desire to pursue a career in education. Today, she thrives in her mission to support English Language Learner and newcomer students, proving that dedication can truly change lives.

Embracing the mission of Richard C. Priest Elementary, which celebrates teamwork and diversity, Ruth values the collaborative spirit of her school community. She understands the crucial role educators play in motivating students, which drives her commitment to balancing her responsibilities in the Undergraduate Pre-Apprenticeship program. Ruth has become adept at mastering time management to ensure she fulfills her duties while continuing her professional growth.

Professional development and mentorship have been vital to Ruth's success. She actively seeks resources and wisdom from her colleagues, demonstrating her commitment to continuous improvement and learning. This proactive approach not only enhances her own skills but also enriches the support she provides to her students, ensuring they receive the best possible guidance in their educational journeys.

Ruth's path hasn't been without its challenges; initial denials from the Nevada Forward Initiative program only fueled her determination. Inspired by her mentor Tina Jacobson, whom she affectionately refers to as her "Wonder Woman," and the cultural principle of "*ganas*," she embodies perseverance and hard work. Her advice to aspiring educators is simple yet profound: teaching must be something you truly love. As Ruth continues to grow and blossom in her role as an educator, the community is excited to see the lasting impact she will have on future generations.

BUILDING STRONGER CLASSROOMS TOGETHER: PEF and CCSD Strengthen The Teacher Pipeline

The Public Education Foundation (PEF) is excited to continue its partnership with the Clark County School District (CCSD) as we kick off another year of Teacher FastTrack (TFT) programming! Together, we're working to meet one of education's greatest challenges—making sure every classroom is led by a skilled, supported, and passionate teacher—and doing everything we can to help those teachers stay and thrive.

A special thank-you goes out to Assistant Human Resources Office Jason Ginoza, Talent Recruitment and Teacher Pathways Director, Dana Crowley, and Associate International Recruiter, Joyce Perez from CCSD's Human Resources Office. Their dedication and hard work are helping make this possible. From recruiting new talent to supporting those already in the classroom, their commitment is truly making a difference.

Through Teacher FastTrack Recruit, paraprofessionals and guest teachers are guided along a clear, supportive path to becoming fully licensed teachers. CCSD helps identify promising candidates, and PEF provides the tools to help them succeed—mentorship from experienced educators, Praxis preparation & reimbursement, stipends, and weekly office hours. Together, we're turning passion for teaching into reality.

This partnership reflects a shared commitment: to give every student access to excellent teaching and to ensure every educator feels valued, prepared, and supported from day one. We're not just filling classrooms—we're helping to build a stronger, more sustainable educator workforce and creating brighter futures for students across Clark County.

PEF Teacher FastTrack

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