

Osceola Schools get serious about hiring the best teachers

By STEVE KNOX
Times Staff

The Osceola School District is very serious about hiring the best and brightest teachers possible.

Osceola Superintendent Mike Cox said the district goes to great lengths to make sure they have the best available staff.

"We advertise our openings in the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, *Jonesboro Sun*, on Facebook, the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators website, and on the district website," said Cox. "We also are really active in recruiting locally. We even have hired local people and helped them get certified. We also used the Teach for America program and got some excellent teachers."

This summer, the district will also be working with the University of Arkansas on a program which could lead to the

OSD gaining some new staff members next year. The district is partnering with the University's Teach Corp Program to bring more than 40 future teachers to Osceola to work in the summer school program.

"(Osceola High School principal) Tiffany Morgan set this up," said Cox. The U-of-A staff members and future teachers will be on the OHS campus Monday - Friday from 7:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. May 30 - July 14. Approximately 175-200 students from the STEM Academy and OHS are being invited to take part in the summer program. There will also be 12 OSD staff members on campus Monday - Thursday, June 7-29, from 7:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. for classes.

Cox is hopeful getting these future teachers on campus will help them attract members of this group to the district. "We hope to fill five to 12 positions by hosting this program," said Cox. "Getting these future teachers on staff will give us access to them we wouldn't have otherwise. I think it is a win, win for us. I think this could help us attract a better quality candidate," said Cox.

Cox also highlighted the district's hiring and retention bonuses offered in shortage areas. "We offer \$10,000 over four years to those teachers." The district also offers all teachers a perfect attendance bonus of \$100 for each month they don't miss a day. "The monthly bonus has really made a difference," said Cox.

"The bottom line here is the Osceola School District knows it is all about what

happens in the classroom," said Cox. "We want teachers who care about our students. If they know the teachers care, the students will work harder. I am confident these steps we are taking will help our students succeed."