



News | Entertainment | Sports | Jobs | Cars | Real Estate | Apartments | ShopLocal | Place An Ad

am New York

NYC schools housing subsidies attracting plenty of teachers

By NAHAL TOOSI

Associated Press Writer

July 11, 2006, 11:22 AM EDT

NEW YORK -- A program to recruit much-needed science, math and special education teachers to New York City through housing subsidies is attracting a strong stream of applicants, and the school system is already close to achieving its initial recruiting target.

So far 91 people are expected to be offered the subsidy, which amounts to nearly \$15,000 over two years. They are among nearly 140 people from around the country who have applied, and more are expected in coming months.

"When all is said and done, we're aiming for at least 100 in the program," said Elizabeth Arons, chief executive officer of human resources for the school system. "We'd like to go higher if we can."

While living in New York and working for the nation's largest school system are attractive incentives for many teachers, the area's steep cost of housing has often kept many from making the move. When it comes to math, science and special education teachers, a national shortage only compounds the recruiting difficulties.

Other parts of the country also have tried varying housing incentives to attract teachers. In New York, education officials have said they hoped the housing subsidy would act as a deciding factor for many teachers who already wanted to come. It worked for Ivydean Frazier, a special education teacher from Conway, S.C., who already had been accepted to work in New York when she learned she'd also qualify for the subsidy.

"My rent, it's up there, but nowhere what New York is going to be," said Frazier, 42. "Even though I'd be making more, my rent was going to eat it up. I wanted to come regardless, but that really tipped the scales."

Frazier is spreading the word among her colleagues, and said two friends are now seriously considering applying to New York because of the financial assistance.

Arons said the response was strong considering the program was announced in April, relatively late in the school year.

The housing incentives used by other communities run the gamut. Santa Clara, Calif., built special low-rent housing for its educators. And a handful of teachers were given rent-free apartments in a crime-prone neighborhood in Forestville, Md., if they agreed to serve as role models and tutors to children there.

Randi Weingarten, president of the New York City teachers union, which worked out the program with the city Department of Education, said she's pleased with the results so far.

"We need to find ways to make affordable housing more accessible to all teachers," Weingarten said.

The teachers coming to New York will get up to \$5,000 up front to help pay for down payments or relocation. In addition, they will get \$400 monthly subsidies for two years. The total aid would run about \$14,600. The teachers do not have to live in the city to receive the subsidies, which are being funded by the system's regular operating funds.

To qualify, teachers must be licensed and certified to teach in their specialized areas and must have taught in those areas for at least two years. They also must commit to teaching for at least three years, most likely in some of the city's toughest middle or high schools. Teachers already in the school d have been used as passenger buses since.

Copyright 2006 Newsday Inc.