



## News Brief - 2/5/05

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### **WGU Helps Clark County Address Teacher Shortage with Scholarships; More Funds Available**

SALT LAKE CITY -- When Marion Kovalenko began volunteering her time with the Clark County School District (CCSD), she realized how great was the district's ongoing need for highly qualified teachers. Kovalenko is one of several Clark County residents taking advantage of Western Governors University's "Transition to Teaching" scholarship program which helps teacher aides, substitute teachers, career changers, and new college graduates become certified through WGU's online, competency-based programs. And there are more scholarships available, each valued up to \$4,000 (see [www.wgu.edu/t2t](http://www.wgu.edu/t2t)).

Kovalenko, who now works as a teacher's aide, wants to work in elementary education. However, without her bachelor's degree and a teaching certificate, and with the demands of a family, she felt this goal was out of reach. "I have my associate's degree but never went any further. Then I heard about Western Governors University and realized there was an opportunity for me," she said.

More teachers would be a welcome relief in Clark County which has the fifth-largest and one of the fastest-growing school districts in the nation. According to a report on teacher education in Nevada prepared by the University and Community College System of Nevada, CCSD currently requires 1,800 new teachers per year. By 2010, the school district will need approximately 3,800 new teachers per year.

Additionally, the CCSD aggressively recruits local candidates. "We need to grow more teachers from within, and that means reaching and teaching prospective teachers in new ways," said Dr. George Ann Rice, associate superintendent, CCSD.

The Transition to Teaching Scholarship program is a partnership between the CCSD and WGU. Scholarships for the program are made available through a U.S. Department of Education grant. "This grant is an attractive solution for the dramatic teacher shortage," said Rice.

WGU provides access to education for people who want to become teachers but who do not have time for traditional education. "I have a job and a family, and this just fits best with my lifestyle," said Kovalenko. Because classes are offered online, students can literally earn their degree independent of time and location.

Additionally, WGU is an accredited university that grants degrees and certificates based completely on competency—the ability to demonstrate skills and knowledge on a series of assessments carefully selected to measure knowledge of a field of study—rather than required courses. Some students are able to accelerate their studies because of competencies they already possess from prior academic or professional experience.

"We are creating a new cost-effective, competency-based model for higher education," said Dr. Robert Mendenhall, president of Western Governors University. "And the university is playing a vital role in addressing our nation's teacher shortage by providing degrees and certificates leading to licensure in elementary education, math, science and social science."

#### **About Western Governors University**

WGU is the only regionally accredited university in the U.S. offering online competency-based degree programs. The university was founded and is supported by 19 governors, as well as over 20 leading corporations and foundations. WGU offers bachelor's and master's degrees in Information Technology, Business and Education. More information is available at [www.wgu.edu](http://www.wgu.edu).