Paraprofessional Pipeline: Research & Training Grant

Dr. Tara Mason
Assistant Professor of Inclusive Education
Western Colorado University
How did this story get started?

2020- (1) Critical special education teacher shortage (In CO 88 sped vacancies left unfilled in 2019...) + (2) Pandemic impacts + (3) Increased special education teacher disillusionment & overwhelm = training grant projects that were both a recruitment incentive, training, and research study

- 2021-2020 AT Cohort
- 2022-2023 Paraprofessional Pipeline Training Grant
Components of Alternative Special Education Teacher Project, 2021-2022 (1st CEEDAR grant)

**Recruitment**
- Incentive
- "Grow your own" marketing

**Tech Kit + Asynchronous Professional Development**
- IPad + Apple Pencil
- ETextbooks
- OER Assistive Technology (AT) Course focused on:
  - AT, UDL, Multimodal Literacy

**Ongoing Projects**
- Integrated Coursework exemplars and independent AT SMART Goals

**Theoretical Framework**
- UDL
- Constructivist
- SAMR Model
# Components Paraprofessional Training Project, 2022-2023 (2nd CEEDAR Grant)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment</th>
<th>Tech Kit + Asynchronous Professional Development</th>
<th>Synchronous Trainings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paraprofessionals</td>
<td>IPad + Apple Pencil</td>
<td>(1) Coteaching Best Practices: Mentor &amp; Mentee;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors</td>
<td>Guided Notes</td>
<td>(2) Nuts and Bolts of Positive Behavior Support and Classroom Management;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentive</td>
<td>OER Assistive Technology (AT) Course focused on:</td>
<td>(3) IEP Case Management and Progress Monitoring;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Grow your own&quot; marketing</td>
<td>AT, UDL, Multimodal Literacy</td>
<td>(4) Assistive Technology in Special Education Programs; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(5) Gradual Release: Mentee Takes on Lead Teaching.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Let's dig in!

- Timeline
- Research review
- Synchronous trainings
- How is it going?
- Next steps
Revised the plan to recruit 10 paraprofessionals and mentors. Only recruited 5 paraprofessionals and mentors, gave both participants an iPad and Apple Pencil.
Research Foundation: Paraprofessionals

- Increased Diversity
- Less Turnover & More Retention
- Unique Perspective and Increased Comfort in Special Education
Synchronous Trainings

Conducted training survey, May 2022, identified themes (n= 56)

(1) Coteaching Best Practices: Mentor & Mentee;
(2) Nuts and Bolts of Positive Behavior Support and Classroom Management;
(3) IEP Case Management and Progress Monitoring ;
(4) Assistive Technology in Special Education Programs; and
(5) Gradual Release: Mentee Takes on Lead Teaching.
IEP Case Management and Progress Monitoring

The IEP Process
Understanding the individual parts of the IEP process such as timeframes for when testing, reports, and finalization needed to be completed.

Understand the IEP Sections
Many survey respondents commented on making sure paraprofessionals understand the laws and individual parts of the IEP.

Identify a Data System
Finding systems for data collection and reporting for IEP’s is important.

Relationships
Build a relationship with all IEP stakeholders, especially students.

Progress Monitoring
Progress monitoring must be meaningful and consistent to make informed decisions based off the progress.

Goals
Establish effective goals and stick to them (if they are not effective goals... change them).
Behavior is Communication
Survey respondents commented a need to understanding what behavior is communicating and using that information to better help students who are struggling with their behavior.

Whole Student
Understanding the whole child and what they bring and where they are at are essential in beginning PBIS or any behavior program.

PBIS
Positive reinforcement and supports were discussed frequently on the survey.
Coteaching Best Practices: Mentor & Mentee

Set Times to Plan
Have set times to co-plan (ideally) and also set times for when planning for the week or lesson will be done. Follow those as a way to value one another's time.

Build on Strengths
Knowing each other's strengths and challenges helps the workflow and supports ways to overcome issues.

Set Expectations
Having expectations around how you will co-teach and division of tasks helps the relationship stay healthy.

Collaboration Best Practices
Collaboration and respect for each other, communication is KEY.

Relationships with Students
Continuously build relationships with students and each other to stay healthy in your partnership.

Accommodations & Differentiation
Are best implemented collaboratively.
# Assistive Technology in Special Education Programs

## AAC & Implementation
Teachers & paraprofessionals need more training on Alternative, Augmentative, Communication Devices (AAC) and how to teach the use of it in the classroom.

## Assessment & Set up
This includes how to implement it, how to set it up, and how to use it for assessment.

## Available in GE
Assistive Technology needs to be more available in general education classrooms.

## Text to Speech
Especially text to speech.

## Availability of AT
Teachers and professionals need to be more knowledgeable about assistive technology and know that it is available.

## Devices
Most common, UDL, matching devices to students, and training on devices.
Nearly ½ say....
Nearly 50% (49.01) of survey respondents strongly agree on the use of gradual release

Mentoring is Important
Approximately 70% of respondents believe mentoring new special education teachers is highly valuable

Understanding Accommodations
Teaching teams need to be more knowledgeable of the importance of accommodations, how they work, and the baseline student skills

Learning how to Mentor
Mentors need more training on how to mentor, how to give effective feedback, and how to coach

The Order
For teaching, the gradual release must include observation, then co-teaching, and then release of (lead) teaching.
Paraprofessional Training to Be a Special Education Teacher

Gradual Release of Responsibility

Mentor Teacher

- Focused Modeling of IEP, Intervention & Collaboration, August - October
- Guided Modeling & Releasing of IEP, Intervention, and Collaboration, October - December
- Releasing Leadership, January

Mentor Teacher

- Observe & Switch Roles

Collaborative and Shadowing

- Plan, Implement, Feedback, Revise, and Repeat
- Teaching & Collaborating, January - March
- Lead Teaching & Caseload Management, late March - April

Paraprofessional
How is it going & next steps...

Nearly 100% attendance in training, all dyad members added to the course and reviewed PD materials.

- Complete trainings with periodic surveys
- Disseminate descriptive research study and training materials as OER for other IHEs
- Grow and continue partnerships to create paraprofessional pipelines
### Where can you find us?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tara Mason, Ph.D.</th>
<th>Jill Choate, Ph.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Professor of Inclusive Education &amp; Special Education Program Coordinator</td>
<td>Associate Professor of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Colorado University</td>
<td>Fort Lewis College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:Tmason@western.edu">Tmason@western.edu</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:jnchoate@fortlewis.edu">jnchoate@fortlewis.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Building Bridges
Para to Educator Programs

CEC TED Richmond, VA Nov. 9, 2022
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>01</strong></td>
<td><strong>INTRODUCTION</strong>&lt;br&gt;Is there a teacher shortage?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>02</strong></td>
<td><strong>Solution Attempts</strong>&lt;br&gt;Creating stackable programs to increase prepared educators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>03</strong></td>
<td><strong>Implementation</strong>&lt;br&gt;Recruitment, Selection and Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>04</strong></td>
<td><strong>Discussion</strong>&lt;br&gt;How are you addressing educator shortage in your fields?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Shortages of workers, especially educators
Utah’s students and workers aren’t choosing to become teachers

**High Turnover**
Highest turnover in low income schools and rural schools. 71% of teachers say retention is an issue

**Decline in Entrants**
Since Fall 2019, undergraduate enrollment has fallen 6.6%

**Pathway Options**
In 2017, only 34% of new teachers came from Utah's academic teacher prep programs, compared to 58% in 2007.
WHY ARE TEACHERS LEAVING?

SALARY

Not in line with national averages. 47.5% respond pay is the cause for leaving.

CULTURE

Blame the teacher. 15.9% teachers cite a
WHAT IS THE IMPACT?

**Reduced Qualifications**
- of teachers entering the classroom with alternative certification.

**Pandemic Resignations**
- Increased resignations during the pandemic.

**Undermined Achievement**
- Student and school improvement is lowered.

**New Teachers**
- Turnover rate is 42% during the first five years of teaching.
- Higher than nation.

**Areas of Most Need**
- Teachers of math and special education in Utah.

**Leveled Licenses**
- Professional, Associate, LEA Specific.
WHY DO TEACHERS STAY?

- Mentoring
- Enhanced working conditions
- Enhanced learning and instructional practice
- Effective teacher preparation
02 SOLUTION ATTEMPT
Creating stackable programs to increase educator preparation
HAPPY DAY!

We do have some happy thoughts to share.
FACILITATING RETENTION and PREPARATION

For twenty years, there has been a chronic nationwide shortage of special education teachers. To combat shortages many states, including Utah, have looked at alternative preparation programs. However, teachers using these routes to licensure are often put in difficult situations, and the retention of these teachers is below that of teachers trained in traditional programs. As a special education teacher preparation program, we chose to primarily focus on creating pathways that provide students support from the outset of the university experience.
**Para Certificate Program**

**Retention**
Teachers who were paras are more likely to remain.

**Incentive**
Districts may offer more pay for certified paraeducators.

**Timely**
Can be completed in one year.

**Targeted**
PCP consists of 18 credits or 6 courses.

**Fully Funded**
Student tuition for PCP is fully funded.

**Stackable**
Aligned with other WSU degrees.
Stackable PROGRESSION

Certificate
PCP
18 credits
One year
District Recognition
Awaiting State Recognition

Associate
AS or AAS
60 credits
2.0 GPA
Elementary
Early Childhood
General Education Requirements
Prerequisites courses for Major

Bachelor
BA or BS
120 credits
2 + 2
Elementary
Secondary
Special Education
Early Childhood

License
Professional
3.0 GPA
Approved Program
Competency Exam
Ethics Review
Practicum Experience
Melissa
My parents were hard workers but were not able to afford to go to college themselves. However, they made sure to teach me the importance of receiving a college education. I am now the mother of five children, and I teach them how important it is to get a college education. Now I get to teach them by example.

Madison
No matter who you are in this world a teacher has inspired you in some way, shape, or form.

Tyler
I have been going to school for over 6 years only able to afford one class a semester. I am able to fulfill my dreams of becoming a teacher.
Implementation

Recruitment, Selection, Evaluation
RECRUITMENT

NOW ACCEPTING PARA CERTIFICATE APPLICATIONS
A rewarding career in education awaits! In cooperation with the Teacher Education Department at Weber State University and Utah Workforce, the Paraeducator Certification Program is a one-year program designed for those seeking employment as a paraeducator, improving their skills as an experienced paraeducator, or earning stackable degrees toward a teaching license and bachelor degree. Those accepted will receive full financial assistance for tuition, fees, and books. Program can be completed in one to three semesters.

NEED INFORMATION?
Dr. Melanie Alexander
malexander@weber.edu
Apply at: https://weber.edu/teac/hed/teac/paraeducatorcertification

Applications Due June 30, 2021

NOW ACCEPTING TAPT PROGRAM APPLICATIONS
This may be the program for you! In cooperation with the Teacher Education Department at Weber State University and USBE, we are accepting applications from individuals interested in earning a teaching license in elementary, secondary, or special education. Those accepted into the program will receive tuition, cohort, and scholarship support. If you are interested in applying, scan the QR code and submit your completed application to your district representative by March 31, 2022.

NEED INFORMATION?
Contact your district representative
Dr. Shirley Dawson, TAPT Program Director
sharleydawson@weber.edu

Applications Due to District March 31, 2022

NOW ACCEPTING STEP UP APPLICATIONS
This may be the program for you! In cooperation with the Teacher Education and Graduate Certificate Teaching Departments at Weber State University and Utah State Board of Education, STEP UP is an expedited special education teacher preparation program specifically designed for those with a bachelor degree and employed in local public or charter schools as special education teachers. Those accepted into the program will receive financial assistance through USBE supported funding.

NEED INFORMATION?
Dr. Sherinavaz Vakil
svakil@weber.edu
Apply at: https://weber.edu/teac/hed/teac/stepup

Applications Due July 31, 2021
SELECTION

Criteria
Grant or Award
Commitment
Prerequisites
Licensing
Board Rule
Legislative Rule
Availability
Funding
Capacity

Process
Application
Interview
Employment
WORK BASED LEARNING

- Credit given for experiences
  - Intro course waived for some programs
- Requirement for continuing experiences
  - Work in the field
  - Practicum experiences align with work placement
    - District
    - Field
    - Area
Participants and employers evaluate program each year.

Participant self evaluation

Indicators for participants and program
EVALUATION: Performance Indicators

INDIVIDUAL
- External Exam
- GPA
- Performance Assessment and Evaluation System (PAES)
- ETeacher Supporting Documents (TSD)

PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT
- Utah Teacher Education Student Survey
- Utah Teacher Education Employment Survey
YOUR TURN
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A. FIELD
   Is there an educator shortage in your state/fields?

B. PROGRAMS
   Do you have existing stackable programs? Are any stairs missing?

C. SUPPORT
   What supports do you have? What supports are needed to train more educators in shortage areas?
Do you have any questions?

THANK YOU!

Shernavaz Vakil
Shirley Dawson
Melina Alexander

Moyes College Of Education,
Teacher Education Department

CREDITS: This presentation template was created by Slidesgo, including icons by Flaticon, and infographics & images by Freepik