

Division of Elementary and Secondary Education - Special Education Unit Advisory Council for the Education of Children with Disabilities Personnel Development, July 2020

Personnel Development Activities

Paraprofessional Supports and Training

The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education - Special Education Unit (DESE-SEU) maintains the registry of required paraprofessional training courses on MySped, which must be taken by paraprofessionals serving students with special needs. The required training consists of three Modules on Foundations of Special Education, three Modules on Introduction to Behavior and the one (six hour) Special Health Care Needs Module.

All of the Foundations of Special Education and Introduction to Behavior Modules are available through ArkansasIDEAS for licensed Arkansas educators and administrators. These Modules are required for all long term special education substitutes and teachers on additional licensure plans for special education, as well as for paraprofessionals serving students with special needs.

Foundations and Behavior Modules may be taken individually and online, by paraprofessionals with registered ArkansasIDEAS accounts. However, districts are encouraged to facilitate these trainings for groups of paraprofessionals whenever possible in order to promote interactive discussions and additional learning. The Special Health Care Needs Module has been revised and is located on the Special Education Unit's page on the DESE website. It must be presented by a Registered Nurse and remains a 6-hour requirement.

Other quality courses are available for paraprofessional training through ArkansasIDEAS by means of its non-licensed section.

Districts are encouraged to have all paraprofessionals update any required trainings by accessing them through the ArkansasIDEAS, if the modules were completed prior to the latest revisions by the ADE, DESE-SEU.

Districts submitted numerous updates to their MySped Paraprofessional Registries during the COVID-19 Pandemic remote work systems.

Recruitment and Retention

The DESE-SEU supports the recruitment and retention of educational personnel at the local level through collaboration with educational service cooperatives.

The DESE-SEU has agreements with two out of state IHEs that offer programs for Visual or Hearing Specialists. The DESE-SEU supports recruitment and training of licensed Arkansas teachers seeking to add Visual or Hearing Specialist certifications by means of stipends available after certification and time spent teaching in a qualified position.

SEU Personnel Development Staff actively works with the DESE's Teacher Recruitment and Retention program by attending and supporting all "Become an Arkansas Teacher" events and works with Educator Prep and Licensure Units to attract and support persons interested becoming special education teachers. SEU staff also directly assist teachers and others interested in entering the field of Special Education by providing information via phone and email. In June 2020, the SEU participated the DESE's first virtual career fair.

Staff at DESE-SEU work with personnel at the Arkansas Division of Higher Education (ADHE) to share information about the Teacher Opportunity Program (TOP), State Teacher Education Program (STEP), and loan forgiveness programs. These programs encourage new personnel to enter the field and current educators to acquire special education licensure.

Educational Interpreters

Each year the DESE-SEU surveys districts to assess needs regarding educational interpreters. The DESE-SEU will continue to collaborate with local education administrations to offer Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) assessment opportunities for interpreters working in educational settings as well as provide opportunities for Educational Interpreters to increase their skills and assist them in obtaining their license and credentials required for working in public schools. The DESE-SEU collaborates with the Arkansas School for the Deaf, Arkansas Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (ARID) and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock's Interpreter Education Program Stakeholder group to support Educational Interpreters and schools in Arkansas.