

# Iowa State Board of Education

## Executive Summary

January 12, 2023



- Agenda Item:** Keystone Area Education Agency (AEA) Paraeducator Preparation Program Approval
- State Board Priority:** Improving Teacher and Leader Preparation
- State Board Role/Authority:** Iowa Administrative Code section 281—80 grants authority to the State Board of Education to set standards and procedures for the approval of programs for individuals who seek a paraeducator certification issued by the Board of Educational Examiners.
- Presenter(s):** Kelly Faga, Program Consultant  
Bureau of Community Colleges
- Attachment(s):** One
- Recommendation:** It is recommended that the State Board approve Keystone Area Education Agency Paraeducator Preparation Program through the next review scheduled for the 2028-2029 academic year.
- Background:** Keystone AEA has submitted a request for approval of the paraeducator generalist certificate and early childhood prekindergarten through grade 3 concentration. Upon review of the evidence, it is determined that Keystone AEA has met each of the program standard requirements in IAC 281-80, and has submitted the appropriate curriculum exhibits to meet the Board of Educational Examiners Requirements in IAC 282-24.

January 12, 2023



# **Keystone Area Education Agency Paraeducator Preparation Programs Report**

Board Report – AY 2022-2023

State of Iowa  
Department of Education  
Grimes State Office Building  
400 E. 14<sup>th</sup> Street  
Des Moines, IA 50319-0146

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## Review Team Members

Dr. Kelly Faga, Iowa Department of Education

Ms. Geri McMahon, Iowa Board of Educational Examiners

## Recommendation to the Board

Program	Recommendation
Generalist Certificate Area of Concentration Early Childhood	Approval

The report includes a selected summary of suggestions for improvements and compliance concerns for each area. A copy of the program application with links to evidence of compliance is maintained in Department files and copies are available upon request. It is recommended that the State Board of Education approve this program through AY2028-2029.

## Program Representative(s)

Laura Smith

## A Brief History/Overview Shared by the Program

We at Keystone AEA are excited to continue to provide learning opportunities for area paraeducators that aligns with our agency vision and mission. Keystone's vision is to improve living and learning for all students. Our mission is to provide leadership to ensure equitable, effective and efficient services to schools in families. Keystone AEA is committed to providing quality learning opportunities to paraeducators. For many years, Keystone has provided both the Generalist and Early Childhood area of concentration to area paraeducators. Keystone has responded to suggestions from stakeholders in our partner schools to make the program both meaningful and accessible. Keystone has typically provided two options each year for the Generalist participants. Options were positioned geographically in a way that made them accessible to paras that had to commute across the agency. With the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to pivot when face-to-face was not an option. Our hybrid option allowed us to ensure classes were offered in an equitable manner. Our Early Childhood courses have also experienced changes over the years. Over the last 10 years we have moved from 45 hours of face-to-face learning to a hybrid option. These changes are the result of both responding to the needs of our participants as well as our partner schools who have struggled to find paraeducators to fill positions and find subs when paraeducators were attending classes.

# Program Standards

## 281—80.9 Organizational and Resources Standards

Organization and resources shall adequately support the preparation of paraeducator candidates to enable them to meet state standards in accordance with the provisions of this rule.

**80.9(1)** The unit provides resources and support necessary for the delivery of a quality certification program, including:

- a) A commitment to a work culture, policies and faculty/staff assignments that promote and support best practices in education;
- b) Resources to support a quality hands-on (clinical) experience;
- c) Resources to support professional development opportunities for certified paraeducators and unit faculty;
- d) Resources to support technological and instructional needs to enhance candidate learning; and
- e) A commitment of sufficient administrative, clerical and technical staff to ensure implementation of a quality program.

**80.9(2)** The unit provides evidence of collaboration with members of the professional community, including the unit's advisory committee comprised of school administrators, classroom teachers, currently employed paraprofessionals and others, to design, deliver and evaluate programs to prepare paraeducators.

**80.9(3)** When a unit is a part of a college or university, the unit maintains ongoing collaboration with the appropriate departments of the institution, especially regarding content knowledge.

**80.9(4)** The unit has primary responsibility for all paraeducator preparation programs offered through any delivery model.

**80.9(5)** The unit has a clearly articulated appeals process for decisions affecting candidates. This process is communicated to all candidates and staff. The unit may use an institution wide appeals process to meet the requirements of this subrule.

**80.9(6)** The unit's use of staff in teaching roles is purposeful and managed to ensure integrity, quality and continuity of the program(s).

**80.9(7)** The unit ensures that resources are equitable for all program components, regardless of delivery or location.

## Standards Met

The Organizational and Resource Standard has been met by Keystone AEA. They provide resources to support technological and instructional needs to enhance candidate learning. Keystone AEA collaborates with LEA technology directors to ensure paraeducators have the technological resources they need. This includes access to a Zoom account, working microphones and/or camera devices and a reliable Wi-Fi connection.

## Compliance Concerns

None.

## 281—80.10 Diversity Standards

The unit shall ensure that the paraeducator preparation program meets the following diversity standards.

**80.10(1)** The unit provides an environment and experiences to paraeducator candidates to support candidate growth in knowledge, skills and dispositions to help diverse groups of PK-12 students learn.

**80.10(2)** The unit establishes and maintains a climate that promotes and supports diversity.

**80.10(3)** The unit's plans, policies and practices document its efforts in establishing and maintaining a diverse staff and paraeducator candidate pool that strives to represent the diverse makeup of the community at large.

**80.10(4)** In addition to the requirements of rule 281—80.12, the unit shall gather data about its implementation of this rule, use those data to make program improvements and share those data and improvements with the schools and communities it serves.

## Standards Met

Through the evaluation of the program application the Diversity Standard has been met. Keystone AEA gathers data about diversity of paraeducators in the program through the registration process. The Keystone Advisory Committee reviews the data and utilizes it to determine future goals. All paraeducators within Keystone AEA are surveyed annually to determine needs, future support and current programming.

## Compliance Concerns

None.

## 281—80.11 Faculty Standards

Unit staff qualifications and performance shall facilitate the unit's role in the preparation of a professional paraeducator in accordance with the provisions of this rule.

**80.11(1)** The unit documents the alignment of teaching duties for each faculty member with that member's preparation, knowledge, experiences and skills appropriate for training paraeducators to serve in a school setting.

**80.11(2)** The institution shall hold unit staff accountable for teaching the critical concepts and principles of the discipline.

**80.11(3)** For the purpose of implementing each of the requirements of this chapter, unit faculty shall maintain ongoing, actual involvement in settings where paraeducators are employed.

## Standards Met

Keystone AEA has met the Faculty Standard. Personnel experience performance evaluations coordinated by the supervisor are identified in the corresponding position description. In addition, paraeducator feedback surveys provide formative feedback of instructor performance. School administrators and mentor teachers also communicate with Keystone AEA staff at the time of the observation to discuss potential improvements to the program.

## Compliance Concerns

None.

## 281—80.12 Program Assessment and Evaluation Standards

The unit's assessment system shall appropriately monitor individual candidate performance and use that data in concert with other program information to improve the unit and its programs in accordance with the provisions of this rule.

**80.12(1)** Each paraeducator candidate's knowledge and skills shall be measured against state certification standards adopted by the board of educational examiners under Iowa Code section 272.12 and the unit's learning outcomes for any certificate for which the unit may recommend the candidate.

**80.12(2)** Programs shall submit curriculum exhibits for approval by the department.

**80.12(3)** The unit shall establish a standard of satisfactory performance of paraeducator candidates, which shall comply with the following requirements.

- a) The unit uses measures for candidate assessment that are fair, reliable and valid.
- b) The unit assesses candidates on their demonstration and attainment of unit standards.
- c) The unit uses a variety of assessment measures for assessment of candidates on each unit standard.
- d) The unit provides candidates with formative feedback on their progress toward attainment of unit standards.

- e) The unit assesses content knowledge and its application as candidates work with students, teachers, parents and other professional colleagues in school settings.
- f) The unit assesses candidates at the same level of performance across programs, regardless of the place or manner in which the program is delivered.

**80.12(4)** The unit shall conduct a survey of graduates and their employers to ensure that its graduates are well prepared for their assigned roles.

**80.12(5)** The unit shall have a clearly defined, cohesive assessment system and regularly review, analyze and revise its assessment practices.

**80.12(6)** The unit shall collect and analyze aggregated candidate and program data, use those data to make program improvements and share those data and improvements with stakeholders on a regular basis.

**80.12(7)** An annual report including a composite of evaluative data collected by the unit shall be submitted to the department by September 30 of each year.

**80.12(8)** When it publicly reports data, the unit shall comply with all applicable privacy laws, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g.

## Standard Met

Keystone AEA has established a standard of satisfactory performance of paraeducator candidates for the Assessment and Evaluation Standard. Each paraeducator is assessed for understanding of the competencies and are required to achieve 80% overall on coursework to pass. Paraeducators are also observed by a Keystone AEA staff member and deemed competent in all areas.

## Compliance Concerns

None.

## 281—80.13 Clinical Practice Standards

The unit and its school partners shall provide clinical experience opportunities that assist candidates in becoming successful paraeducators in accordance with the provisions of this rule.

**80.13(1)** Paraeducator clinical experiences support learning in the context in which paraeducators will practice.

**80.13(2)** Paraeducator clinical experiences include the following:

- a) A minimum of ten hours of experience in a state-approved school or educational facility under the supervision of a licensed educator.
- b) Opportunities for paraeducator candidates to observe and be observed by others in the application of skills and knowledge.

## Standard Met

Keystone AEA has provided substantial evidence through the program application that they have met the clinical standard. At Keystone AEA all paraeducators must be employed by a local education agency to register for the paraeducator generalist or the early childhood courses. This ensures each paraeducator will have the opportunity to experience working in a school setting. The clinical experience log form includes the activity along with competencies aligned to it.

## Compliance Concerns

None.