

Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

January 12, 2023



- Agenda Item:** Prairie Lakes Area Education Agency (PLAEA) 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 Prairie Lakes Area Education Agency Paraeducator Preparation Programs through the next review scheduled for the 2028-2029 academic year.
- Background:** PLAEA has submitted a request for approval of the paraeducator generalist certificate, early childhood prekindergarten through grade 3 concentration and special needs prekindergarten through grade 12 concentration. Upon review of the evidence, it is determined that PLAEA 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, 2022



Prairie Lakes Area Education Agency Paraeducator Preparation Programs Report

Board Report – AY 2022-2023

State of Iowa
Department of Education
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State Board of Education

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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 Areas of Concentration: Early Childhood Special Needs	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)

Linda Ankeny

Carrie Guerin

A Brief History/Overview Shared by the Program

Prairie Lakes Area Education Agency's mission is to ensure equitable, efficient and effective educational services that prepare all Iowa children for a life well-lived. AEA staff are committed to being caring partners that deliver accountable services that result in professional capacity and increased learning. In the past five years, 155 paraeducators have successfully completed the Generalist Programming Courses with some extending their learning to areas of concentration (Early Childhood and Special Needs). Paraeducator candidates establish positive and productive relationships with a variety of experienced teachers, administrators and support staff to function as members of an instructional team. Prairie Lakes Area Education Agency's Certified Paraeducator Program engages in a continuous improvement process to anticipate and respond to the needs, requirements and expectations of our schools.

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

Prairie Lakes Area Education Agency (PLAEA) has met the Organizational and Resources Standards by committing to a work culture that promotes and supports best practices in education. In addition, they provide resources to encourage professional development opportunities for certified paraeducators. Classes towards renewal are available to certified paraeducators as well as advanced opportunities in Level II classes. PLAEA communicates with all local education agency staff regarding upcoming trainings and professional learning opportunities to further enhance knowledge and skills.

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 a review of the report, it is evident that PLAEA has met the Diversity Standards. During the class, Behavioral Support, the candidates read *Diversity of Family Honoring Differences*, *The Invisibility of Culture* and *Personal Exploration*. In addition, candidates discuss considerations as they work with children from different cultural backgrounds and are assigned reflective activities in regards to working with families from different cultures.

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

PLAEA has met the Faculty Standards by utilizing a common curriculum developed by the AEAs and their instructors. The curriculum can be delivered through the AEA Professional Development Online Moodle and face-to-face sessions. PLAEA has four instructors who individually teach courses and collaborate as needed. The Certifying Official and the Licensure Renewal Specialist support the instructors and participants as well as act as liaisons to the Board of Educational Examiners.

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

PLAEA has met the Assessment and Evaluation Standards through utilizing a variety of assessments. Participants are assessed on discussions, quizzes, journal reflections, in-class group work, interviews/observations and collaboration. Students maintain a portfolio that includes assignments and journals. Moreover, they have developed statewide curriculum in Moodle and have aligned it directly to each competency.

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

PLAEA has met the Clinical Practice Standard. PLEAEA collects and analyzes candidate and program data for program improvements. Candidates complete an electronic end-of-course survey asking for feedback on the instructor's teaching style and relevancy of content, as well as an opportunity to provide open ended responses. The survey data is analyzed to determine areas of improvement and next steps.

Compliance Concerns

None.