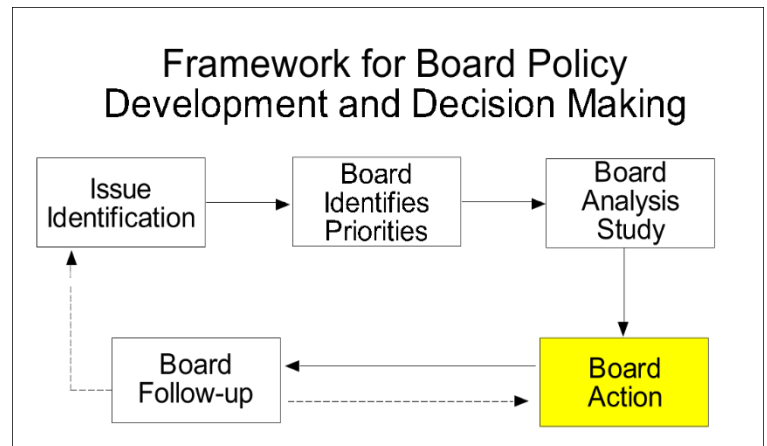


# Iowa State Board of Education

## Executive Summary

August 3, 2023



- Agenda Item:** Central Rivers Area Education Agency  
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, Consultant  
Bureau of Community Colleges and Postsecondary Readiness
- Attachment(s):** One
- Recommendation:** It is recommended that the State Board approve the Central Rivers Area Education Agency Paraeducator Preparation Program through the next review scheduled for the 2030-2031 academic year.
- Background:** Central Rivers Area Education Agency has submitted a request for approval of the paraeducator generalist certification and early childhood (prekindergarten through grade 3). Upon review of the evidence, it is determined that Central Rivers Area Education Agency 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.

August 3, 2023



# **Central Rivers Area Education Agency Paraeducator Preparation Program Report**

Board Report 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	Approval
Early Childhood (prekindergarten through grade 3)	Approval

The report includes a selected summary of suggestions for improvement and compliance concerns for each area. A copy of the program application with links to evidence of compliance is maintained in Iowa Department of Education (Department) files and copies are available upon request.

## Program Representatives

Angela R. Gansen, Professional Learning Coordinator

Kay Schmalen, Director of Professional Learning

## A Brief History/Overview Shared by the Program

Central Rivers Area Education Agency (CRAEA) offers paraeducator certification and an early childhood area of concentration. Most recently CRAEA hired three instructors to review and modify the curriculum based on current research and the standards set forth in Chapters 80 and 24 of the Iowa Code. Utilizing student feedback and data collected through surveys and advisory meetings, a new learning management system, Canvas, was established to allow for a blended learning environment. Additionally, student feedback informed the decision to break the coursework into three classes rather than one large course. This allowed for student flexibility and fewer schedule conflicts. A newsletter, ParaPost, was established to ensure effective communication and provide factual information regarding the work of a paraeducator. Over one thousand emails have been collected to distribute the ParaPost and inform currently practicing educators.

The paraeducator program is closely connected to the work and the mission of CRAEA through the [Strategic Plan](#) areas of Standards Based Learning (SBL), Well-Being, and Future Ready. In the area of SBL, the program supports paraeducators in understanding their role in a Multi-Tiered System of Support and providing Specially Designed Instruction (SDI). In the area of well-being the ParaPost and courses in the certification program provide activities and strategies on supporting students' well-being. In the area of Future Ready, the program supports ParaPosts in understanding their role in supporting student agencies by promoting student independence.

# Program Standards

## 281—80.9 Organizational and Resources Standard

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.

### Standard Met

The Organizational and Resources Standard has been met by CRAEA through providing evidence of adequate support to paraeducator candidates that enables them to grow and learn in education. CRAEA offers candidates opportunities to engage in quality experiences, which are built into each of the three courses. Instructors give the candidates educational prompts in various areas to facilitate conversations with supervising teachers and provide authentic learning experiences. Moreover, CRAEA provides a newsletter titled, ParaPost for paraeducators that informs candidates of upcoming professional development, educational topics such as a paraeducator's role in the classroom, the importance of confidentiality and a paraeducator help line.

### Compliance Concerns

None.

## 281—80.10 Diversity Standard

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.

## Standard Met

CRAEA has met the Diversity Standard. CRAEA has developed a diversity statement, which reads, "Central Rivers AEA is committed to living and honoring the beliefs and values of diversity, equity and inclusion." CRAEA has cultivated an environment where everyone feels welcome, is provided with equitable opportunities and is empowered to bring their authentic selves to work. One of CRAEA's paraeducator courses includes two modules specific to supporting students with diverse needs. CRAEA has hired a coordinator who provides workshops and training that are available to all educators in CRAEA.

## Compliance Concerns

None.

## 281—80.11 Faculty Standard

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.

## Standard Met

CRAEA has met the Faculty Standard through providing evidence of highly qualified faculty and staff. They provided clear examples of teaching duties aligned with each faculty member's preparation, knowledge, experiences and skills. Additionally, CRAEA engages in a thorough performance review of faculty and staff that includes an evaluation of activities and observation of performance with a reflective discussion. Lastly, all instructors are employed as school improvement consultants, instructional coaches or professional learning directors to work within schools regularly. Consistent interaction with schools provides the opportunity to maintain ongoing involvement in a setting where paraeducators are employed.

## Compliance Concerns

None.

## 281—80.12 Program Assessment and Evaluation Standard

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

CRAEA has developed an assessment system that appropriately monitors each individual candidate's performance; therefore, meets the Assessment and Evaluations Standard criteria. The institution utilizes the assessment data, along with student feedback from the assessment committee, for program improvement. All assignments, journals and discussions are based on learning outcomes under Iowa Code section 272.12. Each lesson states what learning outcome will be taught and assessed. The three instructors meet on a regular basis and collaborate to ensure expectations are consistent across all courses. Participants engage with peers in discussion boards, complete quizzes to assess learning and write journal reflections on their learning. Instructors are expected to engage with candidates frequently and provide feedback on how to improve a task if the candidate does not meet expectations.

## Compliance Concerns

None.

## 281—80.13 Clinical Practice Standard

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**

CRAEA has met the Clinical Standard through provided evidence. Each candidate is required to complete at least 10 hours of observation by the end of the three courses. Candidates log their hours along with reflections on the core competencies: foundations, learning environments, content and instruction, emotional and behavioral, professional relationships and ethical and professional practice. Recently, the instructors met and developed a comprehensive observation plan to ensure quality feedback for all candidates.

## **Compliance Concerns**

None.