

Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

November 15, 2023



Agenda Item: Grant Wood 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 Iowa State Board of Education to set standards and procedures for the approval of programs for individuals who seek a paraeducator certification issued by the Bureau of Educational Examiners.

Presenter(s): Maryam Rod Szabo, Administrative Consultant
Bureau of Community Colleges and Postsecondary Readiness

Attachment(s): One

Recommendation: It is recommended that the State Board approve the Grant Wood Area Education Agency Paraeducator Preparation Program through the next review scheduled for the 2030-2031 academic year.

Background: Grant Wood Area Education Agency has submitted a request for approval of the paraeducator generalist certification. Upon review of the evidence, it is determined that Grant Wood 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 Bureau of Educational Examiners requirements in IAC 282-24.



Grant Wood Area Education Agency Paraeducator Preparation Program Report

Iowa State Board of Education

November 15, 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, Bureau of Community Colleges and Postsecondary Readiness

Geri McMahon, Bureau of Educational Examiners

Recommendation to the Board

Program	Recommendation
Generalist Certificate	Approval

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

Program Representative

Nicole Brown, Professional Learning Coordinator

A Brief History/Overview Shared by the Program

Grant Wood Area Education Agency (GWAEA) strives to offer high quality professional learning that meets the needs of both internal and external customers. One of the professional learning opportunities has been to offer the generalist paraeducator certification. The instructors for this program have worked to ensure that the content is relevant and meaningful in order to equip participants with the knowledge and skills needed to perform the role of paraeducator in the schools.

GWAEA's mission statement is "to ensure success for all learners." The paraeducator certification program is an example of how GWAEA offers opportunities to a variety of learners to enhance their skills and knowledge in education.

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. GWAEA offers courses to accommodate working adults. The courses begin with short introductions through Zoom (synchronous), and the remaining work is provided in an online, self-paced format through the AEA Learning Online Moodle site. The course syllabi outline all expectations for participants and provide information for instructor assistance as needed, including, office hours to assist with technical issues or content concerns.

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

GWAEA has met the Diversity Standard through utilizing a wide variety of resources and materials for participant engagement and exposure to a diverse group of students. Assignments include, but are not limited to, diagrams, journal entries, quizzes, writing strategies, phoneme worksheets and a team activity scenarios forum. Additionally, GWAEA offers a variety of professional development focused on diversity. Recently, GWAEA has made a micro-credential library available to all, free of charge. Many of these asynchronous learning opportunities have components of supporting a culture and climate that promotes and supports diversity. The GWAEA administration ensures adherence to all board policies around diversity, inclusion and equity.

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

GWAEA has met the Faculty Standard through documenting alignment of teaching duties for each faculty member with that member's preparation, knowledge, experiences and skills. Currently, there are three faculty teaching the courses, which include a future ready consultant, off-site behavior teacher and a former special education consultant. Instructor expectations are communicated through the Professional Learning Coordinator. Instructors are able to reach out for additional support if needed. Moreover, students are surveyed and the feedback is collected and analyzed for course instructor feedback and improvement.

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 bureau 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

GWAEA has developed an assessment system that meets the Assessment and Evaluations Standard criteria. GWAEA instructors require an 80 percent pass rate to move from one course to the next. Instructors utilize common rubrics, journal reflections, quizzes and multiple other assessment tools. A clinical log outlines the requirements including observation of a licensed educator, guided conversations with the classroom teacher and reflections of the conversations and classroom experiences. To ensure candidates are assessed at the same level of performance, all three of the generalist courses are taught in the same modality. There is a welcome and introduction section through Zoom and participants then engage with the self-paced modules located on AEA Professional Development Learning Online.

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

GWAEA has met the Clinical Standard through the provided evidence. GWAEA's instructors work with candidates to provide a successful clinical experience. All journal activities are exercises of the class learning and are intended to represent and reflect practical experiences. Paraeducators have the opportunity to observe and be observed by others in the application of their skills and knowledge as part of the clinical experience. Candidates are asked to have a minimum of five conversations, during the ten hour experience, with their

cooperating teacher. The discussion includes strategies they are learning in the courses. The cooperating teacher offers constructive feedback to the paraeducator.

Compliance Concerns

None.