

Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

March 21, 2024



Agenda Item:

Southwestern Community College Offering New Paraeducator Preparation Generalist Program

State Board Priority:

Improving Teacher and Leader Preparation

State Board Role/Authority:

The State Board of Education sets standards and approves practitioner preparation programs based on those standards. Iowa Code section 256.7(3) and 281 Iowa Administrative rule chapter 80.

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 award full approval to Southwestern Community College to offer a Generalist Paraeducator Preparation Program through the next review scheduled for the 2030-2031 academic year.

Background:

Southwestern Community College has provided evidence of meeting the requirements to offer a Paraeducator Preparation Program. Coursework leading to the Bureau of Educational Examiners (BoEE) paraeducator certification includes three courses for a total of seven credits, meeting BoEE certification requirements. Department consultants reviewed their application for compliance with Iowa Administrative Code chapters 80 and 24.



Department of Education

Southwestern Community College

March 21, 2024

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

State Board of Education

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Maryam Rod Szabo, Administrative Consultant

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Review Team Members

Dr. Maryam Rod Szabo, Bureau of Community Colleges and Postsecondary Readiness

Ms. Geri McMahon, Iowa Board of Educational Examiners

Recommendation to the Board

Program	Recommendation
Prekindergarten through grade 12 paraeducator generalist certificate	Approval

Program Representative(s)

John Franklin, Interim Vice President of Instruction

Salina Chesnut, Education Instructor

Overview

Southwestern Community College (SWCC) has submitted an application to introduce a generalist paraeducator preparation program. The program's courses will be conducted in person at SWCC's Creston campus and will be accessible to high school students eligible for dual credit enrollment. To successfully complete the program within two 16-week semesters, students must first complete EDU 213 before progressing to EDU 245 and EDU 151.

In the future, the program plans to expand to include concurrent enrollment opportunities at approved local high schools. SWCC guarantees that their concurrent enrollment courses adhere to the same high standards as those offered directly through the college, as they are accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP).

Summary of Department Review

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.”

The program presented evidence of multiple organizational resources available to candidates, such as library resources, tutoring services, disability accommodations and campus health/mental health support. Furthermore, the classroom is furnished with smart boards and other advanced technology that offer hands-on experience in instructional technology to

enhance the students' learning process. There are detailed plans in place to monitor and assist candidates in fulfilling program requirements, including their clinical experiences. Resources are available to support faculty development and engagement in continuous improvement.

281—80.10 Diversity Standards

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

Evidence indicates that the institution maintains policies that actively promote and support diversity and inclusion. An illustration of this commitment can be found in a recent job posting for an education instructor role, which features a diversity statement. Furthermore, the institution has established policies regarding equal employment opportunities, institutional non-discrimination and core values. These policies were communicated to the review team, indicating the institution's commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive environment.

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.”

Reviewers had access to resumes for faculty member assigned to teach these courses. Faculty members are qualified with related preparation, knowledge and experience aligned with their teaching duties. Syllabi include a detail list of competencies and assignments that will be covered in each course.

Recommendations:

It was recommended that the unit continue to collect evidence of faculty engagement in the K-12 setting where the paraeducators are hired.

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.”

The unit gathers assessment data from candidates and implements an assessment process within institutional effectiveness. Assignments and activities are directly aligned with the necessary competencies, and candidates receive continuous feedback throughout the courses and program. Moreover, the assignments and assessments have consistent rubrics examples which were shared with the reviewers.

Recommendations:

It was recommended that the unit ensure opportunities for candidates to understand and implement Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics (Iowa Administrative Code 282-25). While reflections and activities lead to understanding and application of these rules, it was

emphasized that direct presentation and awareness of the specific rules would benefit candidate preparation.

The reviewers recommended that program leaders continue to collect candidate performance data to improve the program in addition to contact information for graduates as they enter the workforce to conduct a survey of graduates and their supervisors to understand the areas in which they need additional preparation.

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.”

The unit has plans in place for the placement, tracking and assessment of candidates during their clinical placements. Candidates will experience observation and evaluation based on their performance.

Recommendations:

Since this program is part of other education curriculum, it was recommended that the program ensure that candidates are placed in field placements where they can experience and practice being a paraeducator and understand paraeducator responsibilities. Reviewers asked that the program collect evidence that these experiences are relevant and tracked for all candidates.