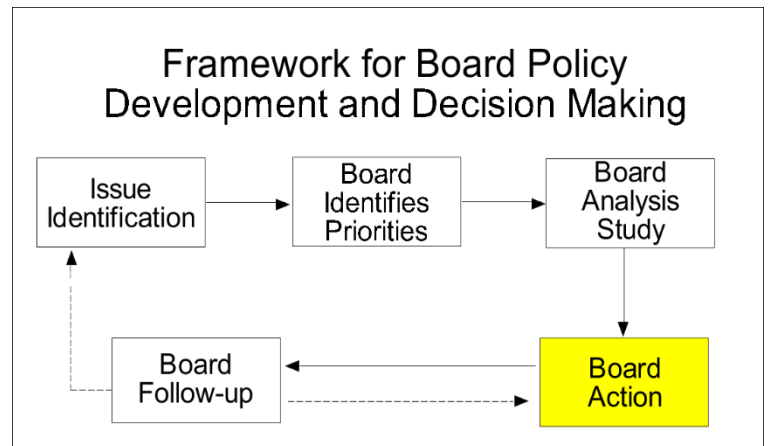


Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

March 21, 2024



Agenda Item: Prairie Lakes Area Education Agency (AEA) Paraeducator Preparation Substantial Change: Adding Concentration Area

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 Prairie Lakes AEA to offer English as a Second Language (ESL) concentration area in Paraeducator Preparation Program through the next review scheduled for the 2028-2029 academic year.

Background: Prairie Lakes AEA has an approved Generalist Paraeducator Preparation Program. They have requested approval and shared evidence that their program meets the requirements to offer an English as a Second Language concentration. Department consultants have reviewed their application for compliance with Iowa Administrative Code chapters 80 and 24.



Department of Education

Prairie Lakes Area Education Agency

Adding English as a Second Language Paraeducator Area of Concentration

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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Review Team Members

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

Ms. Geri McMahon, Iowa Bureau of Educational Examiners

Recommendation to the Board

| Program | Recommendation |
|--|----------------|
| ESL (English as a Second Language) — Prekindergarten through Grade 12 Paraeducator Preparation Concentration | Approval |

Program Representative(s)

Linda Ankeny, License Renewal Coordinator

Overview

The mission of Prairie Lakes Area Education Agency (PLAEA) is to ensure equitable, efficient and effective educational services that prepare all Iowa children for a fulfilling life. The staff at PLAEA are dedicated to being supportive partners who provide responsible services leading to professional growth and enhanced learning. Over the past five years, 155 paraeducators have successfully completed the generalist programming courses, with some expanding their knowledge into specialized areas such as early childhood and special needs. Paraeducator candidates cultivate positive and fruitful relationships with experienced teachers, administrators, and support staff to effectively function as integral members of an instructional team. PLAEA’s Certified Paraeducator Program is actively involved in a continuous improvement process to proactively address and meet the needs, requirements and expectations of the school districts. PLAEA has submitted an application with additional curriculum to offer an area of concentration in English as a second language.

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.”

There have been no changes to the current structure of the program. PLAEA has demonstrated commitment in meeting the Organizational and Resources Standards through fostering a work culture that advocates and upholds best practices in education. They offer a variety of resources aimed at promoting professional growth and development opportunities for certified paraeducators. Certified paraeducators have access to courses for certification renewal and are also provided with advanced learning prospects in Level II classes. PLAEA ensures effective communication with all local education agency personnel about upcoming

training sessions and professional development opportunities, thereby enriching their knowledge and skills.

281—80.10 Diversity Standards

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

PLAEA has policies and procedures for hiring in place. In their preparation program, candidates participate in discussions regarding considerations when interacting with children from diverse cultural backgrounds. They also undertake reflective activities aimed at enhancing their effectiveness in working with families of varying cultural backgrounds.

Examples of their readings and activities include but are not limited to understanding behavioral support, the candidates read Diversity of Family Honoring Differences, The Invisibility of Culture and Personal Exploration. This additional concentration area will allow the candidates to prepare and practice to work with English Language Learners.

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.”

Faculty assigned to teach courses have knowledge, skills and preparation related to their teaching assignment. Additionally, they are actively engaged in K-12 settings where paraeducators are involved. The unit will track faculty development and engagement as it relates to the requirements in this standard.

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.”

In addition to the overall program assessment, PLAEA provided evidence and examples of assessment and activities related to the competencies to earn an ESL concentration. The curriculum and assessment tools were reviewed by Department consultants.

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.”

Candidates are placed in relevant clinical placements and receive feedback throughout their experience. Additionally, they are required to fill out an electronic end-of-course survey, providing feedback on the instructor’s teaching style, the relevance of the content and the chance to share open-ended responses. The collected survey data is carefully analyzed to identify areas for improvement and plan next steps effectively.