Grow Your Own Educator Pipeline Program Amendments

2026 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Ryan D. Wilcox

Senate Sponsor: John D. Johnson

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This bill expands scholarship eligibility to include licensed teachers pursuing special education endorsements.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- expands scholarship eligibility to include licensed teachers pursuing special education endorsements; and
- makes conforming changes.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

None

Utah Code Sections Affected:

AMENDS:

53F-5-218, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2023, Chapters 136, 342

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

Section 1. Section **53F-5-218** is amended to read:

53F-5-218 . Grow Your Own Educator Pipeline Program.

(1) As used in this section:

(a) "Paraprofessional" means an individual who:

(i) works with students in an LEA as a paraprofessional or in a similar teaching assistant position; and

(ii) is not licensed to teach.

(b) "Program" means the Grow Your Own Educator Pipeline Program [~~that this section creates~~] created in this section.

(c) "School counselor" means an educator who is:

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(i) licensed as a school counselor in accordance with state board rule; and

(ii) assigned to provide direct and indirect services to students in accordance with a school counseling program model that the state board provides.

(d) "School counselor assistant" means a student who is:

(i) enrolled in an accredited bachelor's degree program in a related field; and

(ii) completing the student's practicum experience in a school counseling department under the supervision of a licensed school counselor.

(e) "School counselor intern" means a student who is:

(i) enrolled in an accredited school counselor master's degree program; and

(ii) completing the student's hours of a supervised counseling internship by applying appropriate school counseling techniques under the supervision of a licensed school counselor.

(f) "School psychologist" means an individual:

(i) whom the state board licenses to practice as a school psychologist; and

(ii) who is assigned to provide direct and indirect services to students within the relevant school or LEA seeking program grant funding.

(g) "School social worker" means an individual:

(i) whom the state board licenses as a school social worker; and

(ii) who is assigned to provide direct and indirect services to students within the relevant school or LEA seeking program grant funding.

(h) "Special education teacher" means a teacher assigned to serve or teach a class of students with disabilities with a current educator license, a special education license area of concentration, or special education endorsement.

[~~(h)~~] (i) "Teacher" means an educator who has an assignment to teach in a classroom.

(2) The Grow Your Own Educator Pipeline Program is a competitive grant program created to provide funding to LEAs to award scholarships to paraprofessionals, teachers, school counselor assistants, and school counselor interns within the LEA for education and training to become licensed teachers, licensed school counselors, licensed school psychologists, or licensed school social workers.

(3)(a) The state board shall use money appropriated for the program to provide funding to LEAs that are awarded grants under the program to award scholarships to eligible candidates.

(b) The state board shall:

(i) determine the amount of an award an LEA receives under the program; and

(ii) prioritize the amount of an award an LEA receives based upon an LEA's identified need.

(c) The principal within the participating LEA shall nominate a candidate for the scholarship awarded under this section.

(4) An LEA that participates in the program may select a candidate for a scholarship award if:

(a) the candidate is a resident of the state; and

(b)(i) for a paraprofessional:

(A) a school district or a charter school has employed the candidate as a paraprofessional for at least one year before entering the program; or

(B) subject to Subsection (5), the candidate has experience outside of the school district, the charter school, or the state that is equivalent to the experience described in Subsection (4)(b)(i)(A);

(ii) for a teacher, the candidate:

(A) was a paraprofessional who was awarded a scholarship;

(B) was offered employment as a teacher before the teacher completed the training to become a professionally licensed teacher; and

(C) is working as a teacher for the same LEA where the teacher previously worked as a paraprofessional and was awarded the scholarship;

(iii) notwithstanding Subsection (4)(b)(ii), for a teacher, the candidate is a licensed teacher seeking to become a special education teacher;

[~~(iii)~~] (iv) for a school counselor assistant, the candidate:

(A) is enrolled in a bachelor's degree program in a related field; and

(B) demonstrates a commitment to continue the school counselor assistant's education after graduation in school counseling;

[~~(iv)~~] (v) for a school counselor intern, the candidate is enrolled in a school counselor master's degree program accredited by:

(A) the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs; or

(B) another regionally recognized accrediting body that meets the state board's standards for school counselor education programs;

[~~(v)~~] (vi) for a school psychologist student, including a student, practicum student, or intern, the candidate is enrolled in a school psychology education specialist or doctorate program that the National Association of School Psychologists

accredits; or

[~~(vi)~~] (vii) for a candidate studying to become a school social worker, including a student or practicum intern, the candidate is enrolled in a masters level social work program that the Council [~~of~~] on Social Work Education accredits.

(5) The percentage of an LEA's paraprofessional scholarship recipients who are eligible for a scholarship using equivalent experience under Subsection (4)(b)(i)(B) may not exceed 20%.

(6) A scholarship award under the program may only be used for:

(a) tuition, books, fees, and certification tests for required coursework and licensure;

(b) stipends for mentors or school counselor assistants; and

(c) if the LEA pays 0.15 of a full-time equivalent and all employee benefits, payment of a 0.35 full-time equivalent for:

(i) a paraprofessional, up to one semester of student teaching; or

(ii) a school counselor assistant or school counselor intern, up to two semesters of practicum or internship hours.

(7) An LEA shall ensure that a paraprofessional scholarship recipient is continuously employed as a paraprofessional by the paraprofessional's LEA while pursuing a degree using scholarship money under the program.

(8) The state board shall make rules in accordance with this section and Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act, to administer the program, including rules regarding:

(a) grant and scholarship application procedures;

(b) procedures for distributing scholarship money;

(c) assignment and eligibility of qualified mentors;

(d) stipends for mentors or school counselor assistants;

(e) administrative costs for regional education service agencies, as that term is defined in Section 53G-4-410; and

(f) eligibility requirements for potential candidates for scholarships regarding the completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and the acceptance of other grants, tuition or fee waivers, and scholarships offered to the candidate.

Section 2. **Effective Date.**

This bill takes effect on May 6, 2026.