

Grow Your Own Teacher and Counselor Pipeline

Why teacher assistants/paraprofessionals?

Paraprofessionals/Teacher Assistants are well-positioned to become licensed teachers. Benefits of developing paraprofessionals as teachers include:

- Experienced in providing small-group instruction to students, assisting teachers in meeting the needs of all students, offering behavioral support and supervision of a wide range of student activities,
- often reflect the demographics of the local community,
- provide students with diverse and culturally competent role models, and
- demonstrate higher retention rates.

There are **barriers**, however, for paraprofessionals who would like to become licensed teachers. Paraprofessionals are typically older, have families or other substantial life experiences, and are often one of, or the only financial providers for their families. As such, the costs of returning to college or university studies to obtain a teaching credential are prohibitive and often deter paraprofessionals/teacher assistants from entering the licensed teacher preparation pipeline. Through partnerships with local districts, higher education, with tuition assistance, and credit for job-embedded experiences many of the prohibitive costs incurred by paraprofessionals/teaching assistants in becoming licensed teachers could be effectively addressed.

Pathway Choices for LEAs and Candidates	
Licensure Route 1: For LEA staff with an associate's degree	Licensure Route 2: For LEA staff with a bachelor's degree
Candidates enrolled in this route complete both their baccalaureate degree and requirements for residency certification in two years or less, including a paid and mentored internship to be completed in the final year.	Cohorts of candidates for this route shall attend a pre-residency intensive summer academy, followed by a full year in a mentored internship employed by an LEA while completing coursework.

Partnerships (e.g., LEAs and IHEs)

Support candidates by:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping paraprofessionals to prepare for and enter licensure routes 1 or 2. • Providing pre-admission advisement. • Assisting with financial support. • Providing academic advisement from admission through graduation. • Offering tutoring, writing, and additional academic support as needed. • Offering career advisement. • Assessing and crediting school-based teaching experiences toward requirements of degree completion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing information about USBE requirements for teacher certification. • Providing support for the USBE approved teacher certification exams and any pedagogical performance assessments. • Offering coursework options outside of the school day. • Providing options for paraprofessionals to use their work experiences as part of their clinical experiences hours as they apply/align. • Develop and support opportunities for demonstrated competency options (prior learning assessment) for the licensing requirements.
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Why school counselor assistants/interns?

Creating a system that integrates and embeds school counselors into the education workforce early and throughout their preparation program is one solution to increasing support for students to become college and career ready. Leveraging undergraduate and graduate school counselor candidates would:

- assist practicing school counselors in completing tasks that support the student’s individualized Plan for College and Career Readiness (e.g., schedule changes, at-home or online learning schedules, etc.);
- incentivize school counseling candidates in rural local education agencies (LEAs);
- supplement the inflated school counselor-to-student ratio of 1:684, bringing ratios closer to the current USBE Board standard of 1:350 and national standard of 1:250; and
- provide authentic and realistic experiences through high-quality mentoring that promotes long-term retention.

Barriers to strengthen the school counselor pipeline include 1) cost of receiving a master’s degree, 2) time invested to complete the practicum and internship without wages, 3) incentives are not in place for mentor counselors to support pre-service candidates during the practicum and internship, and 4) enticing school counselors to take employment in rural school districts. Partnerships with local education agencies (LEAs), academic and social support systems, and tuition assistance may be approaches to combating these barriers.

Pathway Choices for LEAs and Candidates	
Route 1 (school counselor assistants): For candidates enrolled in a bachelor’s program in a related field with aspirations to be a school counselor.	Route 2 (school counselor interns): For candidates enrolled in a school counselor master’s degree program.
Candidates for this route would be enrolled in a bachelor’s degree in a related field and are committed to earning a master’s degree in school counseling. Stipends would be provided for completing practicum hours in a school counseling setting. Scholarship opportunities would be provided to those qualifying through application to continue their education in school counseling.	Cohorts of candidates for this route shall commit to a full year, paid internship experience.

Partnerships (e.g., LEAs and IHEs)

Support candidates by:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing opportunities for graduate students to have a paid internship experience. • Providing a robust development program that enriches the candidate’s skill set and career readiness (e.g., professional development, expanded school classification rotation/placement, networking, HR workshops, interviewing techniques, etc.). • Providing pre-admission advisement (for Route 1). • Assisting with financial support. • Providing career advisement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing stipends to candidates enrolled in a bachelor’s program in a related field (e.g., psychology, sociology, family and consumer science, etc.), who aspire to continue their education in school counseling, to complete their practicum experience in a school counseling setting. • Providing information about USBE requirements for school counselor licensing. • Developing and supporting opportunities for demonstrated competency options for the licensing requirements.
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