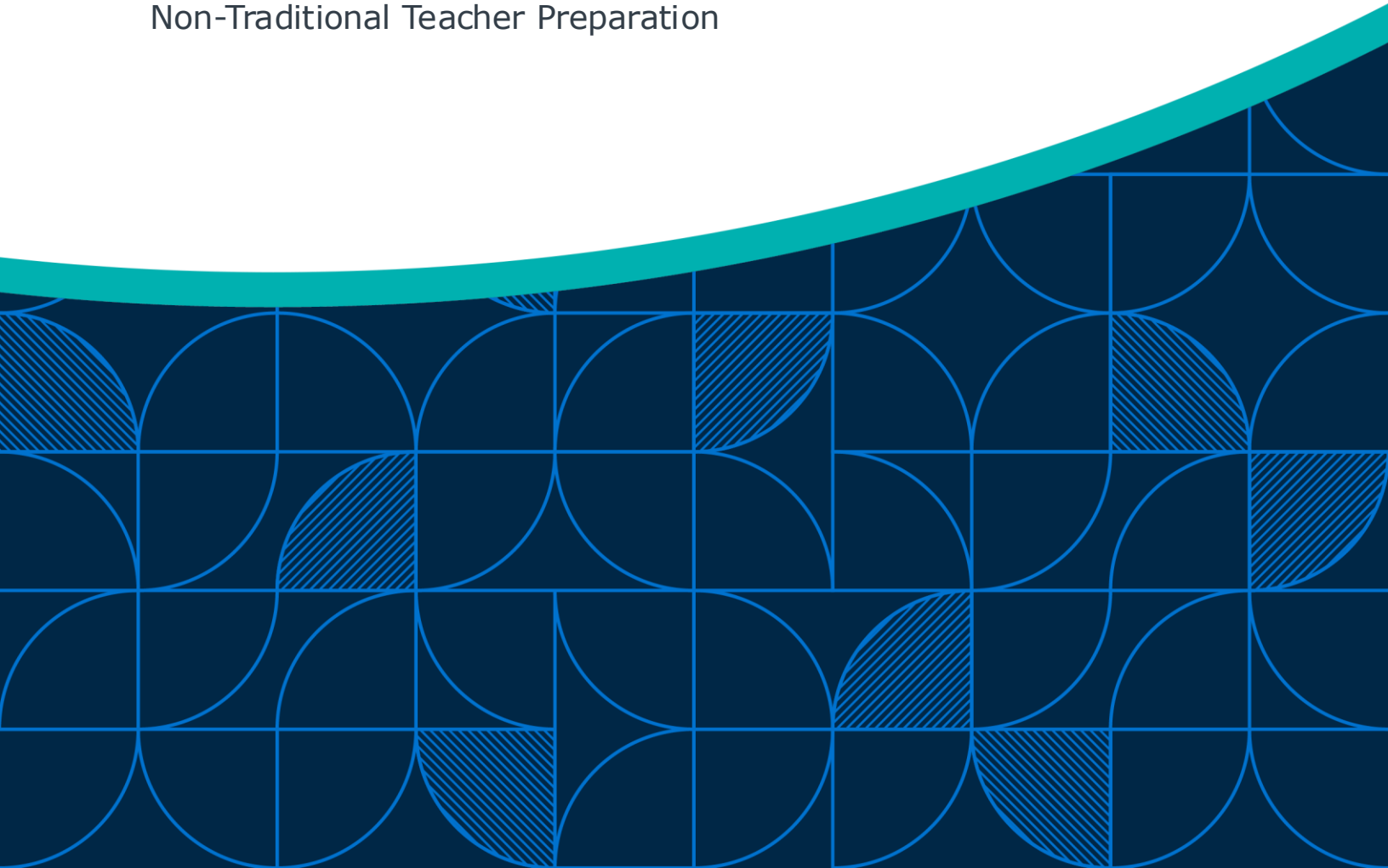




DISTRICT LEADERSHIP FORUM

Student Education Pathway and Alternative Certification Program Best-Practice Profiles

Models for Student Career Exploration and
Non-Traditional Teacher Preparation



District Leadership Forum

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This toolkit highlights student education and alternative credentialing pathway programs that meet EAB's best-practice criteria for strengthening educator recruitment pipelines at two key educator decision points: **Attract** and **Inform**. It features student-focused initiatives that build early awareness and spark curiosity about the profession, and it explores alternative certification pathways that enable career changers, paraprofessionals, and other nontraditional candidates to move efficiently toward licensure and classroom success. Review these best-practice profiles to learn how districts can create opportunities that inspire, guide, and support individuals into education careers.

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Learn how to navigate the toolkit and apply EAB's best-practice criteria to assess, adapt, and strengthen educator pathway programs across your district.

Student Education Pathway Programs

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A three-year CTE pathway that guides high school students from early classroom exposure to full teaching practice through dual credit with Clemson University and guaranteed district interviews.

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An elective course for 11th and 12th graders that combines dual-credit coursework and classroom experience, preparing students for district employment after graduation.

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A one-year preparation program in partnership with Loyola Marymount University that prepares adult learners to become credentialed bilingual and special education teachers through paid residency and mentorship.

EUSD Teacher Residency, Escondido Union School District Pg. 9

A one-year program that supports paraeducators in earning special education credentials through full-time employment, district stipends, and university partnerships.

GATE Program, Greenville County School District Pg. 10

A three-year alternative certification pathway for adult career changers that provides embedded coursework, weekly coaching, and full-time paid teaching experience.

How to Use This Resource

This resource features best-practice profiles of student pathway programs and alternative certification pathway programs that meet all three best-practice criteria for their respective model. District leaders can use these profiles to:

- Understand how each program meets the best-practice design criteria
- Identify replicable strategies and design elements adaptable to their own context
- Examine program outcomes and impact on the local educator pipeline

Before reviewing the program profiles, see the definitions of the best-practice criteria below.

Student Pathway Best-Practice Criteria Definitions



Low Barriers To Entry

Create accessible, low-commitment student engagement

- Easy enrollment and introductory opportunities (e.g., clubs, short courses)
- Accessible for students from all backgrounds
- Early exposure before long-term commitment



Compelling ROI to Maintain Interest

Offer compelling incentives and career prestige

- Dual credit education courses and college scholarships
- Guaranteed district interviews, career advising, or employment
- Leadership roles, recognition, and opportunities that build value and career prestige



Hands-On Learning Experiences

Provide real-world exposure and connect interests to the profession

- Hands-on teaching experiences across grade levels and subject areas
- Support from mentor teachers in the classroom
- Activities aligned with student interests to deepen engagement

Alternative Certification Pathway Best-Practice Criteria Definitions



Low Barriers To Entry

Remove obstacles so career changers and district staff can easily pursue certification

- Stipends and grants to reduce financial costs
- Flexible program structure to accommodate working adults
- Streamlined program enrollment and support



Compelling ROI to Maintain Interest

Highlight clear outcomes and practical support to keep candidates on track

- Guaranteed employment upon program completion
- Structured coaching, mentorship, and career advising
- Paid teaching experiences during preparation



Program Alignment with District Priorities

Prepare candidates to meet district needs and priorities for long-term success and retention

- Curriculum tailored to district practices and high-need certification areas
- District staff actively involved in coursework and programming
- Strong connection to the district to facilitate transition into roles

Future Teacher Academy, Greenville County SD



District-University Partnership Fast Tracks Students into Education Profession

The **Future Teacher Academy (FTA)** at Greenville County School District is a three-year career technical education (CTE) pathway, launched in 2021-22, that guides high school students from early classroom exposure to full teaching practice. Students earn college credits through Clemson University and can continue into an accelerated program to secure employment within the district.

Low Barriers to Entry



10th Grade Exploratory Course

- Before committing to a full-time CTE class schedule, 10th graders complete a semester-long honors course that introduces education as a career.
- The course features guest speakers, interactive group projects, classroom demonstrations, and field trips.

Compelling ROI to Maintain Interest



Stackable College Credits

- Beginning in 11th grade, students may earn three college credits per semester, progressing through classes on a schedule that fits their needs.

Student Leadership Opportunities

- FTA students attend a statewide iTeach conference with 20+ professional development workshops led by educators, peers, and Clemson faculty.
- Elected 11th graders serve on a leadership board to facilitate service projects, field trips, and workshops at the iTeach conference.

Scholarships for Educator Diversity

- Academy graduates who pursue the accelerated certification pathway are eligible for scholarships that lower tuition and certification costs.

Accelerated Three-Year Certification Pathway

- FTA graduates can apply for an accelerated education degree program through Clemson and Greenville Technical College, reducing the time to completion to just three years and saving students time and money.
- Greenville staff remain in contact throughout the pathway and provide ongoing mentorship to ensure students stay on track.

Guaranteed Hiring Priority

- Academy graduates receive guaranteed interviews for full-time teaching positions in Greenville County Schools once certification is attained.

Hands-On Learning Experiences



Robust Real Classroom Experience

- 11th grade students complete at least 70 hours of observation alongside mentor teachers in district classrooms.
- 12th grade students spend four days a week working in district classrooms, steadily increasing their instructional responsibilities over the year.

Program Outcomes¹

160+

Students participated in the exploratory course

82

Students graduated from FTA

39

Students were active in accelerated certification pathway

190+

Students participated in the 11th grade dual credit course

110+

Students participated in the 12th grade practicum

346

Students attended the iTeach Conference

24

Students served on FTA leadership board

1) Program data for the 2024-2025 school year

Sources: Greenville County School District, South Carolina, [Future Teacher Academy](#); EAB interviews and analysis.

Future Educator Academy, Olathe Public Schools



Districtwide Early Exposure Cultivates Student Interest in Teaching

The **Future Educator Academy (FEA)** at Olathe Public Schools is a four-year pathway started in 2016-17 that introduces students to the teaching profession through dual enrollment coursework and progressive classroom experiences. As part of the district's Teach Olathe initiative, the academy promotes education as a profession and prepares the next generation of Olathe teachers.

Low Barriers to Entry

Golden Apple Future Educator Elementary Club

- 5th graders in the club mentor Kindergarten and 1st grade students in STEM, reading, and math to build skills such as communication and empathy.
- K-5 club members meet weekly after school to create learning projects for younger classrooms (PK-K) and learn more about education careers.

Early Pathway Exposure in 8th Grade

- The Middle School Future Educator Crew Club allows 8th graders to volunteer in elementary classrooms and connect with current college education majors.
- Students interested in FEA are first introduced to the program in 8th grade through a half-day summit dedicated to exploring careers in education.

Future Educator Club (FEC) Option

- High school students have the option to join a Future Educator Club (FEC) at every district campus without committing to the four-year academy.
- FEC members observe elementary classrooms, participate in national competitions, and receive a first-round interview for district employment.



Compelling ROI to Maintain Interest

National Recognition Opportunities

- FEA and FEC students compete in the annual Educators Rising National Conference, where several Olathe students have earned national honors.

Pathway to District Employment

- Students attend workshops to practice professional skills, develop resumes, and participate in mock interviews and principal panels.
- In 12th grade, recommended FEA students interview with HR staff and principals and are offered full-time contracts contingent on certification.

Paid Paraprofessional Experience

- Select FEA 12th grade students are hired as paraprofessionals, placing them directly in district classrooms for paid professional experience.



Hands-On Learning Experiences

Scaffolded Classroom Exposure

- 9th-10th grade: Students take dual enrollment education pedagogy courses while observing different classrooms (e.g., elementary, P.E.).
- 11th grade: Students advance into higher-level dual enrollment courses and work with different mentor educators in classrooms.
- 12th grade: Students select their own mentor teacher and spend two hours daily in the classroom supporting instruction.



Program Outcomes¹

250+

8th graders in the Middle School Future Educator Crew Club

121

Students in the Future Educator Club

118

Students in the Future Educator Academy

2

Academy students hired as paraprofessionals

60

Teacher contracts extended since program launch

9

Olathe alumni working in the district

15

Academy students awarded Kansas CTE college scholarship

1) Program data for the 2025-2026 school year.

Sources: Olathe Public Schools, Kansas, [Future Educators Academy](#); EAB interviews and analysis.

Aspiring Educators Elective, Park Hill SD



Progressive Learning Develops Students' Skills and Returns Talent to the District

Aspiring Educators at Park Hill School District is an elective course for 11th and 12th graders launched in 2016 that blends college coursework through Northwest Missouri State University (NMSU) and real-world classroom experience. As part of Park Hill's Professional Studies program, Aspiring Educators offers career exploration through college courses and hands-on classroom practice.

Low Barriers to Entry



Elective Course Option Each Semester

- Each semester, students may opt into the elective course, engaging in coursework and classroom observation with flexible scheduling.

Compelling ROI to Maintain Interest



Dual Credit Course Enrollment

- Students may earn up to nine dual credits through NMSU, which transfer toward a degree in education.
- With each student elective re-enrollment, content builds from foundational topics to advanced education coursework.

Professional Capstone Course

- At the end of the course, students present a formal capstone presentation summarizing their classroom experiences and participate in mock interviews with district administrators.

College Scholarships for Candidates

- Park Hill leverages the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (MODESE) teacher recruitment grant to award \$10,000 annually in scholarships to course alumni pursuing education as a career.

Direct Pathway to District Employment

- Students who earn a B or higher in the course and receive a faculty recommendation are guaranteed a second-round interview with the district.
- District staff stay connected with alumni throughout college, providing mentorship and supporting them through their transition back to the district.

Hands-On Learning Experiences



Diverse Classroom Observation

- At the start of the course, students spend 45 minutes each day in elementary classrooms to observe authentic classroom practice.
- After the first eight weeks, students spend 10 hours per week in district classrooms, gaining experience across teaching styles and grade levels.
- Returning course participants may spend up to 75 minutes daily with a mentor educator of their choice to accelerate their skill progression.

Simulated Educator Skills

- Students build practical real-world skills through mock parent-teacher conferences, preparing them for the responsibilities of the classroom.

Program Outcomes

20

Participants in the course each semester

220

Students have taken the course since 2017

10

Program alumni have been awarded college scholarships¹

27

Program alumni have returned to the district as certified teachers¹

11

Program alumni hired as SPED teachers¹

1) Program data as of the 2024-2025 school year.

Sources: Park Hill School District, Missouri, [Aspiring Educators](#); EAB interviews and analysis.

AVANCE Teacher Residency, Camino Nuevo Charter Academy



Paid Residencies Increase Community-Based Bilingual Teachers

The **AVANCE Teacher Residency** at Camino Nuevo Charter Academy is a one-year preparation program that began in 2023-24 in partnership with Loyola Marymount University (LMU). The cohort-style program prepares adult learners to become credentialed teachers within the charter network, with a focus on bilingual and special education to address vacancies and increase community representation.

Low Barriers to Entry



Flexible Evening Course Schedule

- Participants complete LMU evening courses to earn their teaching credential in one year, helping adult learners balance coursework with personal and work obligations.

Financial Support Towards Tuition

- \$8,000-\$10,000 in tuition support is available from LMU, depending on the certification track (i.e., bilingual education vs. special education).

Compelling ROI to Maintain Interest



In-Classroom Mentor Training

- Residents are coached four days a week by mentor teachers to develop and practice skills learned in their coursework.
- Residents gradually take on more classroom responsibility as the program progresses, culminating in substitute teaching experience.

Paid Clinical Experience

- Residents earn a full teacher's salary for their classroom hours.
- By program completion, residents log over 1,000 hours of classroom experience that applies to their certification.

Test Preparation Resources

- Free certification test preparation through [Study.com](https://www.study.com) helps participants prepare for and pass credentialing exams.

Program Alignment with District Priorities



Recruitment of Bilingual Community Members

- The residency prioritizes recruiting educators who reflect community demographics and strengthen representation in the workforce.

School-Wide Professional Development

- Residents participate in school-wide professional development alongside current teachers to learn local culture, practices, and instructional strategies.
- Residents attend weekly workshops that provide targeted skill-building with guidance from mentor teachers and district leaders.

Program Outcomes

14

Participants have graduated from the program¹

98%

Of participants identify as BIPOC¹

70%

Of the first graduated cohort works in bilingual classrooms

96%

Pass rate of certification exams¹

1) Since program launch in 2023-24

Sources: Camino Nuevo Charter Academy, California, [AVANCE Teacher Residency Program](#); EAB interviews and analysis.

EUSD Teacher Residency, Escondido Union SD



District-Supported Pathway Transitions Paraeducators into Special Educators

The **Escondido Union School District (EUSD) Teacher Residency** is a one-year program, launched in 2023-24, that supports district paraeducators in earning a Special Education Credential in Mild/Moderate or Extensive Support Needs. With multiple credentialing options and district financial support, the residency builds a direct pipeline of paraeducators into special education teaching roles.

Low Barriers to Entry



District Stipend for Financial Support

- Each resident receives a \$30,000 stipend from EUSD to offset expenses throughout the program (e.g., childcare, transportation).

Financial Aid Guidance for Residents

- EUSD offers counseling and guidance to help residents apply for university scholarships and state grants, further reducing program costs.

Credential Program Options to Fit Participant Needs

- EUSD partners with San Diego State University, National University, and Cal State University San Marcos to offer certification program options.
- Residents select the credential program that best fits their needs (e.g., schedule, start date, course modality, financial aid eligibility).

Compelling ROI to Maintain Interest



District Mentorship

- Each resident is paired with a district mentor who provides professional coaching and support for refining their classroom practice.

Full-Time Salary and Benefits

- Residents continue working as paraeducators, earning full salary and benefits during the program.

Secure District Employment

- Graduates of the residency are prioritized for open teaching positions and guaranteed four-year employment contracts upon successful completion.

Program Alignment with District Priorities



Credential Focused on Special Education

- EUSD exclusively offers credentialing pathways for Special Education credentials in Mild/Moderate and Extensive Support Needs, addressing EUSD's highest-need teaching area.

Pathway for Paraeducators to Become Teachers

- The program leverages EUSD paraeducators' existing experience and district knowledge to transition them into full-time teaching roles.

Program Outcomes¹

10

Participants in the residency since launch in 2023-24

4

Residents applied for state grant support for 2025-26

5

Previous staff members (i.e., paraprofessional, substitute) in residency 2024-25

4

Residents hired to full-time special education positions since launch in 2023-24

1) Program began in 2023-24 and has limited available data outcomes

Sources: Escondido Union School District, California, [EUSD Teacher Residency](#); EAB interviews and analysis.

GATE Program, Greenville County SD



District-Designed Pathway Trains Teachers for Classroom Success

The **Greenville Alternative Teacher Education (GATE) Program** at Greenville County School District is a three-year alternative pathway established in 2016 to support adult career changers in the community. Participants complete embedded coursework and receive hands-on coaching from a Teacher Support Team while serving in full-time teaching roles.

Low Barriers to Entry



Flexible Course Schedule

- Courses are taught at the district by Greenville staff during paid professional development days.
- Participants take one summer class and one evening class during the program, maintaining a manageable work and courseload for adult learners.

Scholarship and Grant Tuition Support

- District and state support reduces the financial burden of tuition and coursework, making the program more accessible.

Compelling ROI to Maintain Interest



District Mentorship and Coaching

- Participants receive rigorous, weekly, on-site coaching from GATE coaches to boost classroom readiness throughout the program.
- Participants meet with coaches weekly to refine skills and address areas for improvement.

Full Salary and Benefits

- Participants are employed as full-time teachers and receive full salary and benefits throughout the program to reduce the financial burden and encourage participation.

Program Alignment with District Priorities



Certification in High-Priority Roles

- The program prioritizes certification in the district's high-need subject areas, such as math, science, foreign language, and fine arts to encourage participants to pursue credentials that address existing district vacancies.

District-Tailored Curriculum

- Greenville partnered with a local education organization to design the GATE program emphasizing teacher support, well-being, and long-term retention.
- The curriculum and coursework are tailored to reflect district culture, values, and expectations while incorporating evidence-based instructional strategies.

Program Outcomes

148

Graduates from the program since launch in 2016

197

Participants in the program during the 2025-26 SY

100%

Participants hired into high need roles

76%

Average retention of graduates across the last 5 years



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