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## **Interest in Utah’s Alternative Pathway to Educator Licensure for Special Education Exceeds Expectations**

SALT LAKE CITY – Two and a half years ago, the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) launched the Alternative Pathway to Educator Licensure for Special Education (APPEL-SpEd), a program for those interested in earning a Professional Educator License in the areas of Special Education (K-12+) or Preschool Special Education. The response has far exceeded expectations, with almost 400 candidates currently enrolled in the program and 13 recent graduates. Interest has been so substantial that USBE has had to increase capacity on several occasions by adding additional staff and contracting out for assistance.

The APPEL-SpEd program is open to candidates who have a bachelor’s degree and are employed by a Local Education Agency (LEA). The program provides several educational options for those pursuing a career in special education, including taking courses that the USBE has created, taking university courses, or demonstrating evidence of competency through prior coursework or micro-credentials. USBE staff work closely with candidates to prepare a professional learning plan that will enable them to be eligible for a special education license.

“There have already been a handful of educators that have completed the program and we are thrilled to see strong interest. We plan to continue providing the necessary support for this program in hopes of mitigating the shortage of special education teachers,” said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Sydnee Dickson. Special education has been consistently identified as a critical shortage area

by the U.S. Department of Education and Utah has been the only state thus far to address this concern by creating a state-sponsored and state-administered preparation program.

Additional information on the APPEL-SpEd program is available on the [USB E website](#).

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