NEWS RELEASE

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Nebraska Department of Education Awarded Nearly $4.9 Million Federal Grant to Expand and Enhance Special Education Teacher Apprenticeships

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) has been awarded a federal grant totaling approximately $4.9 million over five years to expand and strengthen registered apprenticeship pathways for special education teachers across Nebraska.

The grant, awarded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, will support the Nebraska Special Education Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Program. The project will provide nearly $885,000 in first-year funding and is expected to help address the state's ongoing shortage of special education teachers through paid, work-based learning opportunities and enhanced educator preparation programs.

"This investment will help Nebraska build a stronger pipeline of highly qualified special education teachers while reducing barriers that often prevent talented individuals from entering the profession," said Nebraska Commissioner of Education Brian Maher. "By expanding registered apprenticeships, we can support future educators as they earn credentials, gain valuable classroom experience, and meet the needs of students with disabilities across our state."

The five-year initiative will focus on expanding access to registered apprenticeship opportunities, improving preparation and support for future special education teachers, and increasing educator retention. Through partnerships with school districts, educator preparation providers, and other stakeholders, the program will allow participants to earn while they learn as they work toward full certification.

Key goals of the project include:

- Expanding enrollment in special education teacher apprenticeship programs statewide.
- Utilize apprenticeship pathways to Increase participant completion rates.
- Improving retention of special education teachers in Nebraska schools.
- Enhancing integration of evidence-based behavioral supports and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) practices into teacher preparation.
- Expanding the number of local education agencies participating in registered apprenticeship programs.

The grant aligns with NDE's ongoing efforts to strengthen Nebraska's educator workforce and create sustainable pathways into high-need teaching fields. By supporting aspiring special education teachers through paid apprenticeships and reducing financial obstacles, the program aims to increase the number of qualified professionals serving Nebraska students with disabilities.

The project period began October 1, 2026, and continues through September 30, 2031.

For more information about educator workforce initiatives at NDE, visit education.ne.gov.

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