

EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANT CAREER PATHWAY MODELS REPORT

Prepared for the Oregon State Legislature by the Oregon Education Investment Board

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Executive Summary

Oregon defines an educational assistant as “a classified school employee who does not require a license to teach, who is employed by a school district or education service district and whose assignment consists of and is limited to assisting a licensed teacher in accordance with rules established by the State Board of Education.” (ORS 342.120) Identified through many titles and job descriptions, the roles of educational assistants have evolved with the need for increased instructional supports for diverse learners. The duties of an educational assistant can include: instructional support, clerical support, student control, personal and medical care of students, translation or family involvement activities, and many other support duties. They are often the backbone of the school community. Educational assistants in Oregon are a diverse group of individuals with strong ties to their local communities who work with some of Oregon’s neediest students. Investing in intentional training and support of these educators can not only help improve the diversity of Oregon’s educator workforce, but also help achieve the Governor’s goal of a 100% graduation rate by 2025 by improving the effectiveness of educators who work with the students that struggle the most in schools.

The Oregon legislature, recognizing the value and contributions of educational assistants as essential partners in successful school programs, passed House Bill 3254 during the 2013 legislative session, charging the Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB) with developing career pathways for educational assistants (EAs) to become licensed teachers. The OEIB in partnership with the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) created a Steering Group from relevant stakeholders to develop guidelines for school districts, educational service districts, and institutions of higher education to collaborate and support educational assistants who participate in the career pathway as well as recommended requirements for an educational assistant to enter the program.

The Steering Group recognized some essential guidelines for a quality educational assistant career pathway program including a strong recruitment plan that helps target underrepresented groups in the teaching workforce. These guidelines include an ongoing communication strategy with educational assistants about career options as licensed teachers, and a streamlined college application process with a single point of contact to help candidates navigate the application process. The Steering Group recognized the need for support in preparing educational assistants to participate in the teacher preparation program not only through training in academic knowledge, but through identifying the knowledge and skills that the educational assistants bring to the program. Support services including high touch, intensive, advising and support for candidates who may struggle financially or with family obligations is called out as a critical component of a successful program. Collaboration between school districts, educational service districts, community colleges, and teacher preparation programs to provide seamless and accurate information and transitions is a necessity for removing barriers to educational assistants’ participation in the program.

There were three proposed models for Career Pathways Programs for educational assistants to earn their teaching license. These models are:

Model 1: A recommendation to provide support to replicate or expand the existing award winning Bilingual Teacher Pathway program at Portland State University. The Bilingual Teacher Pathway Program could accommodate the addition of 16 or more

educational assistants who either have a bachelor's degree or two years of college. The program is a two to three year part-time program model that leads to an initial teaching license and an ESOL endorsement.

Model 2: The creation of a Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) model career pathway for educational assistants. Capitalizing on the existing statewide work to standardize and improve the processes used by colleges in Oregon to award credit for prior learning, this model would support a workgroup to align the outcomes for paraeducator training at the community college with teacher preparation program requirements. This collaborative group would look for courses that closely align with the experiences and skills gained by educational assistants during their work and develop rubrics for evaluating this knowledge. The group would identify gaps and work to identify methods for addressing them, such as offering a portfolio course at the community college to help educational assistants demonstrate their knowledge. The model builds on existing work done between the Community College Consortium of Paraeducator Preparation and Eastern Oregon University. It would provide a pathway that allows educational assistants to use their experience to potentially accelerate their completion of an educator preparation program.

Model 3: The final proposed model is to explore the use of a competency-based program through Western Governor's University. This model most completely recognizes the knowledge and skills that educational assistants may have acquired during their time working in Oregon schools. It is also an ideal model for reaching educational assistants in rural areas. However, it does lack some of the face to face support identified as important in the recommended guidelines for successful educational assistant career pathways. An exploration of a partnership between Oregon schools and community colleges with Western Governor's University could be a way to address this concern.

Introduction

House Bill 3254, passed during the 2013 legislative session, charges the Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB) with developing model career pathways for educational assistants (EAs), as defined in ORS 342.120, to become licensed teachers. The model career pathways were directed to include identification of requirements for an educational assistant to participate in the career pathway and guidelines for school districts, educational service districts, and institutions of higher education to collaborate and support educational assistants who participate in the career pathway.

As such, the Oregon Education Investment Board and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) partnered to establish a Steering Group to help guide this important work. The goal was to solicit perspectives from ODE and OEIB staff as well as from relevant stakeholders, including:

- Currently and formerly employed educational assistants;
- Community colleges preparing educational assistants;
- Educational Service District personnel;
- Equity specialists;
- Educator preparation programs teachers;
- School districts with interest and experience in helping educational assistants become teachers;
- Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (teacher licensing agency);
- District human resource personnel. ([Appendix A: Steering Group Membership](#))

The Steering Group convened twice; once in the winter and once in spring of 2014. During the first meeting the group examined models of career pathways for educational assistants and reviewed the research, current models, and best practices that should be incorporated into any of the proposed models. The group also identified barriers facing educational assistants pursuing teacher licensure with an eye to solutions and identified the policies and resources needed to implement successful career pathways. During the second meeting in April 2014, the Steering Group reviewed the guidelines and models for the proposed career pathways and clarified recommendations for supporting the ongoing training of educational assistants. As a group of passionate and dedicated educators who value the work of educational assistants in Oregon, the Steering Group provided invaluable information and guidance in this report.

Rationale for Developing Model Career Pathways

A focus on educational assistants as a means for strengthening education is a powerful approach. Educational assistants support education under the supervision of a licensed educator. Some of their roles include: monitor and assist students during whole class instruction, engage individual and small groups of learners in instructional activities, carry out behavior management and disciplinary plans developed by teachers, assist teachers with functional and other assessment activities, document learner performance, assist teachers with organizing and maintaining supportive, safe learning environments, and assist school specialists with providing services required by learners with physical, speech, language, and sensory disabilities and chronic health care needs. As such, they have strong ties to their schools and communities, and are more

representative of Oregon’s changing student population as they work with some of Oregon’s neediest students. However, these individuals earn relatively low incomes (\$13,000- \$23,000) and often are juggling family and career responsibilities. Many of the educational assistant positions are not full time. Educational assistants require specific attention and focus to promote awareness of available career options and support to achieve their career goals. Intentional nurturing and advancing of these educators can have myriad benefits for the state.

- **Diversity:** Creating career pathways to encourage educational assistants to become licensed teachers is one way of increasing the number of culturally and linguistically diverse teachers and administrators in our schools. Overall, 91.6% of Oregon’s teaching force is White compared to only 65.3% of students, with the most notable disparity in the Hispanic student population, where 21% of students are Hispanic compared to only 3.6% of teachers. Educational assistants (paraeducators) are culturally and linguistically more diverse than licensed teachers ([Chart 1](#)). With a potential number of teacher retirements in the near future, a focus on recruiting from this diverse pool of practitioners is an important component of building a diverse educator workforce in Oregon.
- **Local Community:** The majority of educational assistants have strong ties to their local communities. They are often fluent in the language and culture of the students and families in the communities where they work and are interested in remaining in their communities. Focusing on the advancement of educational assistants is a way to encourage communities to “grow their own” teacher workforce.
- **Retention:** Educational assistants are often veteran school employees who have worked for years alongside certified teachers. They have experience managing classroom behavior and working with students in small groups. They understand the realities and demands of K-12 education and have a higher job persistence rate compared to teachers coming from traditional educator preparation pathways.
- **40/40/20:** The Steering Group strongly felt it was important to contextualize the need for creating a viable system of training and advancement for educational assistants in terms of the Governor’s 40-40-20 initiative, with the goal of all Oregon students graduating by 2025. Often it is the students who struggle the most in school who are working closely with educational assistants. For the school system to move the needle toward achieving the goal of 100% graduation, investing in the training of educational assistants is a key. Effective educational assistants are poised to help those students at the greatest risk to graduate. Incentives for training of educational assistants would not only help create a teacher pipeline that promotes diversity, but would also help provide quality educational experiences for the neediest students.

Current Context for Educational Assistants in Oregon

Preparation and qualifications for educational assistants in Oregon are locally driven by district policies. However, educational assistants providing support in programs with Title I Part A funds must meet the federal highly qualified standards. Currently, 89% of Oregon schools use Title I Part A funds. To be highly qualified, educational assistants

must have a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and additionally meet one of the following three options:

1. Complete two years of study at an institution of higher education; or
2. Obtain an associate's (or higher) degree; or
3. Meet a rigorous standard of quality and be able to demonstrate, through a formal state or local academic assessment, knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics (or, as appropriate, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness). ([Appendix B: OARs \(Oregon Administrative Rules\) related to Educational Assistants](#))

Districts in Oregon are free to define the third option. Some schools recognize the ParaPro Assessment developed by Educational Testing Service (ETS), some use the National Career Readiness Certificate by ACT, and others acknowledge completion of a paraeducator certificate offered by a community college as evidence of highly qualified educational assistants. This open flexibility for districts in the state can lead to a challenge when creating a career pathway, because the backgrounds, knowledge, and skills of educational assistants in the state vary greatly.

Currently there are 11 active educational assistant preparation programs at seven community colleges in Oregon.

- Three AAS programs
- Four Statewide certificate programs
- Four other certificates of completion

During the past three years, Oregon has had 29 AAS completions and 59 certificates of completion. Forty-two of the 88 completions were earned during the 2012-2013 academic year, showing that there are a growing number of individuals in Oregon completing educational assistant preparation programs. Now is an ideal time to ensure that the outcomes of educational assistant preparation programs are aligned with the requirements of educator preparation programs. There is urgency in doing this work to build strong accessible career pathways for educators who enter the profession by working as educational assistants.

During the 2012-2013 academic year, Oregon school districts employed 13,156 individuals classified as educational assistants. The race and ethnicity of educational assistants, particularly those who identify as Hispanic, more closely matches the racial and ethnic distribution of students in Oregon schools ([Chart 1](#)). Creating clearer pathways for Oregon's educational assistants is one viable way to increase the linguistic and cultural diversity of the state's educator workforce.

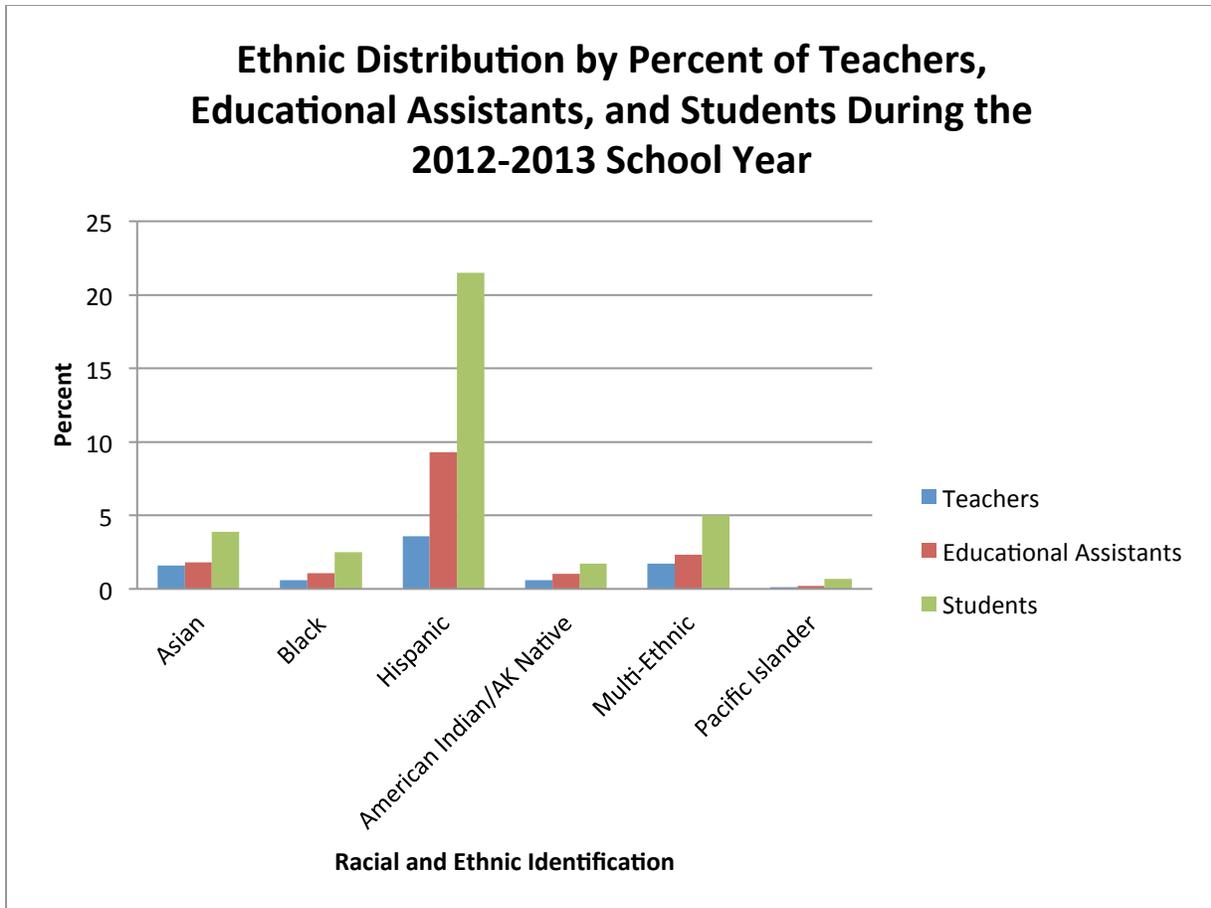


Chart 1: Ethnic Distribution by Percent of Teachers, Educational Assistants, and Students during the 2012-2013 school year.

Oregon’s Projected Supply and Demand

Teachers represent about 44% of an education workforce that also includes educational assistants, school and district administrators, school counselors, librarians and media specialists, special education specialists, and other support staff. In 2012-13 Oregon employed 28,065 teachers, a decrease from the 31,659 employed in 2008-09. According to the 2013-14 State Report Card, the average age of teachers in 2012-13 was 44.10 and the average number of years of experience was just over 13 years.

Although hiring slowed during the economic recession, there are significant indicators that support increases in Oregon’s need for more teachers. Based on projected population growth in Oregon and data from the Oregon Employment Division, EconWV projected that the state would need to hire 16,458 teachers between 2010 and 2020. This included hires due to retirements and attrition as well as 4,976 new positions.

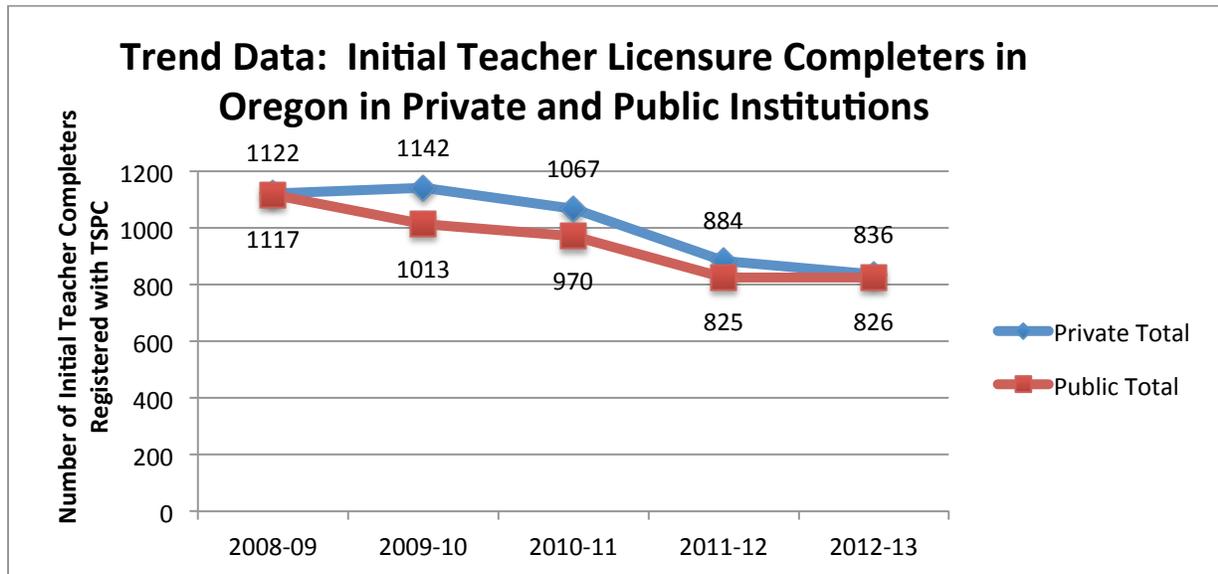
At the federal level, the U.S. Department of Education projected that two of the top five subject shortage areas for 2014-15 would include bilingual/English language learner and Spanish. In Oregon there is at least one program that targets bilingual educational assistants and helps them earn their teaching license in either Elementary Education (Multiple Subjects) or Secondary Education in an academic area and their ESOL endorsement. Portland State University (PSU) has been running the Bilingual Teacher

Pathway for the past 15 years. This model will be one of the Career Pathway models highlighted in this report.

Even though the effects of the economic recession in Oregon continue to linger, school districts are receiving more resources and an increased demand for educators is being reported. This increased demand has been precipitated by several factors. (1) Replacement of positions lost during the recession; (2) Increased retirements caused by recent changes to PERS as well as deferred retirements caused by the recession and concern for health insurance coverage; and (3) Pressures to reduce class size in an effort to improve student performance. In April 2014, 168 districts compared to 115 districts the year before participated in the annual Professional Educator Fair.

Informal poll results in 2014 from a majority of Oregon’s public school districts compiled by The Oregon School Personnel Association showed that 48 districts (55% of those responding) posted one or more teaching positions this past year but 35% were not able to find qualified educator candidates. The recurring themes that districts identified in this survey were: (1) not having an adequate pool of quality candidates for positions that are unique or require special training, and (2) not having an adequate pool of candidates due to location and size of district.

In terms of supply, the number of program completers from Oregon’s eighteen teacher preparation programs has steadily declined since 2008-09 as shown in the chart below.



Current Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC) Licensure Policy and Structure

TSPC is Oregon’s licensing agency for all educators. They establish high standards for educator preparation excellence and regularly review approved programs for delivery of adopted licensure standards. The requirements set by TSPC for receiving a license

include components for admission, field service, program completion, and licensure application. All fully licensed teachers must do the following:

Admission

- Pass a basic skills test

Field service

- Complete fingerprints and background check
- Complete of character questionnaire
- Sign a statement of professionalism

Program Completion

- Pass content knowledge test
- Pass the protecting students examination (civil rights and ethics examination)
- Complete approved educator preparation program, including performance assessment

Licensure Application

- Submit application for license and pay licensing fees

Identifiable Barriers Impacting Educational Assistant Career Pathways

Many barriers exist to creating viable career pathway models for educational assistants in Oregon.

Social/Emotional

Often educational assistants are not familiar with the possibilities of becoming a fully licensed educator. They may not have experienced encouragement to pursue a teaching career and may lack the confidence to realize that it is a viable possibility.

College Credit and Professional Development

The preparation to become an educational assistant and professional development (or lack of professional development) that they receive in the school does not always align with the requirements of a teacher preparation program. Educational assistants may be missing the theoretical framework for teaching and be lacking in advanced content-specific knowledge.

Inconsistency of Qualifications

Local districts set criteria and assessment to determine that an educational assistant is highly qualified. The variance in backgrounds, skills, and knowledge of educational assistants makes it difficult to create a statewide approach to guide educational assistants to the knowledge and skills necessary to become licensed educators.

Financial

Economic barriers are often one of the biggest obstacles to overcome for educational assistants seeking to become fully licensed teachers. The prospect of paying to attend college full-time and giving up salary and benefits is often not feasible. Programs need to be flexible to allow educational assistants to continue to work during the program and provide financial incentives to help them succeed in the program.

Family Responsibilities

Educational assistants with families can find spending time away from home in addition to the loss of income and health benefits during the student teaching portion of an educator preparation program to be a deciding factor in dropping out. Programs that take creative approaches to helping address the needs of participants with children are more successful.

Distance in Rural Communities

Programs are successful when there are successful relationships between participants, faculty, and support staff. This presents challenges in rural communities where training facilities may be located at a great distance from the schools and homes where educational assistants are located. Solutions that take advantage of technology, and train participants to successfully use the technology while addressing their social needs, will be an important component of aiding implementation of programs in rural areas.

Time Commitment

Nationwide statistics show that only 13% of educational assistants enroll in full-time programs. Due to relatively high rates of partial employment and relatively low salaries (\$10.53 to \$13.50 per hour), many educational assistants seek additional part time employment to supplement their incomes.

Basic Skills Testing

Many educational assistants are adults who have been out of school for many years. To them, the thought of taking a standardized test can be daunting. Tutoring or course options that help with test preparation, particularly in areas such as writing, math and science, are key supports that make a difference. Exploration of the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), the Smarter Balanced Assessment, or other nationally recognized demonstrations of basic skills could be considered as options by policy makers. This would provide candidates options for demonstrating their proficiency in reading, writing, and math. Currently, as part of [Oregon's Work Ready Community](#) initiative, individuals seeking employment can receive support on earning their NCRC at local WorkSource Oregon centers and some communities offer this opportunity at their local schools. This could be a cost effective way to increase the pool of potential candidates who would qualify for entering the Educational Assistant Career Pathway.

Recommended Guidelines for a Quality EA Career Pathway Program

The experiences of the Steering Group and national research directed the development of these guidelines. Recruiting New Teachers Inc.'s, [A Guide to Developing Paraeducator-to-Teacher Programs](#), was particularly useful. These recommendations align well with Federal guidance to states on practices to create high-quality career pathways. ([Appendix C: Federal Career Pathway Guidance](#))

Recruitment

- Actively seek applicants from underrepresented groups in the teaching workforce.
- Utilize a mechanism to enable ongoing communication with educational assistants about the possibilities of teaching.

- Utilize a streamlined college application process with a designated point of contact to help walk candidates through the process.
- Remove the requirement of an entrance exam prior to recruitment – exams are barriers to some students.
- Determine and communicate the base number of college credits required to enter the program.
- Include teacher cadets and unsponsored candidates in the program.
- Use a benchmark approach to guide individuals along a career pathway.

Preparation/Orientation

- For qualified candidates, provide supports and guidance to acquire any prerequisite courses/tests and any remedial or developmental education classes needed.
- Advise to encourage testing soon after completing math requirements. Describe clearly and honestly expectations of the program.
- Identify the strengths of the candidate and strategies to bolster areas of concern.
- Describe the support services available for the candidate and their family.

Curriculum

- Provide a relevant sequence of courses that builds a strong foundation in the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for achieving an educator’s license while acknowledging the experience and cultural and linguistic assets of the candidate.
- Deliver flexible curriculum at convenient times and places for candidates.
- Allow for credit for prior learning.

Support Services- bridges student services with curriculum

- Personalized supports to meet the academic, personal, and professional needs of the candidate.
- High-touch advising approach.
- Individualized planning with tutoring options, especially in math and writing.
- A cohort model that builds a community of learners and peer support during and after completing the program.
- Support with childcare, books, and transportation and mechanisms to support the candidates during student teaching.
- Family recognition programs.

Collaboration

- Strong collaboration between the school district, Educational Service District (ESD), a community college, and the teacher preparation program at a four-year institution.
- A streamlined system of credit transfer between community college and university.
- Inclusion of community resources into the program.

Assessment/Evaluation

- A continuous improvement approach to refine the program as its effectiveness is assessed.
- Follow up with the candidates and hiring districts as they move into classroom teaching to gather information about potential program improvements.
- Use of Credit for Prior Learning when appropriate.

Dissemination

- Share the successes and innovations of the pathway programs.

Induction

- Provide solid support and interface with teacher mentors during the first years of teaching.

Higher Education Institutional Support

- High-touch advising.
- Facilitating network of mentors—to meet the candidates' needs and experiences.

Criteria for Candidate Admission

There are several recommended criteria for educational assistants entering into a specialized educator preparation program. One recommendation was to look at the career pathway in a broader sense rather than entry into the teacher preparation program. There are steps and benchmarks that mark skills and knowledge development of educational assistants that aide them in working with students in more effective ways. These benchmarks of learning should be back-mapped from the requirements for teacher licensure and be developed in partnership with the already developed outcomes defined by the community college programs preparing educational assistants.

- State residency
- Employment as an educational assistant
- High school diploma or GED – **First Step/benchmark**
- 60 college credits or an associate's degree – **Second Step/benchmark**
- Recommendations from supervisor, professor, and/or employer
- Personal statement
- Commitment to teach in same school/district for a number of years
- Bilingual proficiency (if area of greatest need)
- Minority status
- Passing score on the Basic Skills Test – This was a debated criterion. Some members identified this as a problem for some educational assistants who had been out of school for some time or who were not native English speakers. Portland State University made this a criterion for entrance into their program to avoid problems with licensing candidates after completion of the program. It was encouraged that any program have support for math and writing and that the test

should be taken as closely as possible to completion of any math courses or review.

Model 1: Replication and/or Expansion of Portland State University's Bilingual Teacher Pathway

Portland State University has shown ongoing success with their career pathways program for bilingual teachers and as such, is a clear choice when considering expansion or replication. The program has successfully graduated and licensed 283 candidates since 1999 and there are currently 42 candidates in the program. While this model could be expanded in the Portland metro area, it could also be replicated in other high-density population areas such as Eugene or Salem. Expansion of this program into rural areas of the state could require more modification. PSU has proposed a satellite model for expanding their program reaching 16 new candidates in the first year and adding 16 new candidates every year.

Components of the Bilingual Teacher Pathways Program

The Bilingual Teacher Pathways program at Portland State University is a partnership with local school districts to support bilingual educational assistants and other school employees to obtain their teaching license.

Structure of the Program:

- 2-3 year part-time program (classes are evenings and weekends)
- 42 credits of core courses (24 credits coursework; 18 credit field experience) ([Appendix D](#))
- 21 credits of ESOL courses embedded in the schedule
- Prerequisite courses and content courses taken prior to admission
- Undergraduate Students complete with an Initial License and ESOL Endorsement and a Bachelor's Degree in Liberal Studies
- Graduate Students complete with an Initial License and ESOL Endorsement. With an additional 4 credits, they can obtain a master's degree in Education.

Field Experience:

Student teaching is done in the candidate's school district and can be at the school where they are employed. During student teaching a work sample is completed. Student teaching is moved to the final year of the program.

- Student Teaching 1 (3-4 weeks)
- Student Teaching 2 (11 weeks)
- Students complete: NES Elementary Education subtest 1&2, NES Content Area Test, ORELA Civil Rights, and NEW ESOL Test

Admission Requirements:

- Bilingual (speak and write in two languages)
- Current employee of a partner school district

- Minimum of 90 earned credit hours of undergraduate credit or a BA/BS
- Earned a passing score on basic skills test prior to beginning the program (CBEST, PPST, NES Essential Academic Skills)
- Prerequisite courses are strongly encouraged to be taken prior to core classes

Snapshot of current participants:

- 2/3 already have a bachelor's degree
- 2/3 are interested in earning an elementary education teaching license
- 45% of student's country of origin is the United States
- The 55% foreign born represent 34 different countries
- 40% are native Spanish speakers

Funding:

Grant funding has supplemented the program and helped in its development. Currently the Futures Grant (federal funding of \$1.92 million over five years to support STEM competencies for Bilingual Teacher Pathway student teachers) is supporting the program.

Lesson Learned:

Passing the Basic Skills Test was added as a requirement after several candidates experienced problems passing the test after completing the program. The prerequisite courses are strongly encouraged to be taken prior to core classes. Again the experience of candidates struggling to juggle the realities of family, school, and work suggested a change to the program towards students completing prerequisites before starting the core courses. Student teaching was also moved to the final year of the program.

Expansion of the Program:

The program could be expanded to a satellite center with the minimum enrollment of 16 candidates. The costs of running the program would be roughly that of a full time faculty member and a part-time administrative support staff who would act as program assistant. This could run around \$90,000/year. ([Appendix E PSU Proposed Expansion Model](#))

Support for candidates entering the program in the form of scholarships is currently \$13,000 for undergraduates and \$25,000 for graduate candidates.

Model 2:

Credit for Prior Learning

Many educational assistants have years of school-based experience during which they have learned practices and received feedback on instructional pedagogy and classroom management, worked with families, and learned the culture of schools. As such, House Bill 3254 specified that the model career pathways must take into consideration the skills and experience attained by an educational assistant.

Thus, the Steering Group examined the viability of a model career pathway that leverages candidates' experiences with how institutions of higher education are able to award credit for prior learning per new standards recently adopted by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC).

Background on HECC's CPL Efforts:

In response to the direction given in House Bill 4059 (2012), the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) appointed the Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) Advisory Committee on October 11, 2012. The first report to the Oregon Legislative Assembly was submitted by the HECC in December 2012.

Research conducted by the Advisory Committee in the fall of 2012 revealed that while Oregon's postsecondary sectors (community colleges, Oregon University System, Private Career Colleges, and the Independent Colleges and Universities) have efforts supporting CPL, the policies, practices, and implementations varied greatly both within and between the sectors.

Components of CPL:

CPL is credit obtained through evidence-based assessment of learning that occurs outside of traditional college-level coursework. HB 4059 defined credit for prior learning as "the knowledge and skills gained through work and life experience, through military training and experience and through formal and informal education and training from institutions of higher education in the United States and in other nations."

Multiple assessment strategies/opportunities are used in the evaluation of prior learning in Oregon. These include:

- Industry Certifications
- Institutional Challenge Exams and other exams
- Military Credit (ACE Credit Recommendation Service)
- Portfolios
- Professional Licensure
- Other forms of authentic assessment to award CPL credit

Developing CPL Program for Educational Assistants

Multiple areas would need to be considered when developing career pathways for educational assistants using CPL. For instance, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities limits the amount of CPL that may be applied towards a certificate or degree program to 25% of the total credits required. In addition, there are transfer and articulation barriers surrounding the current Paraeducator Certificates earned through community colleges. These certificates do not include general education courses and may not count towards pedagogy courses at four-year institutions. While Paraeducator Certificates meet the benchmarks for "highly qualified" in some school districts, it is not the case for all statewide. Each of these areas must be addressed and considered as the pathway is constructed. Lastly, this model is based on the ability of individuals seeking credit for prior learning to translate their work experiences into proficiencies that directly translate into existing courses. This pathway may not be accessible to the majority of educational assistants and for those who could qualify; it would require

significant support, e.g. a portfolio preparation class.

The development of a career pathway towards teaching degrees for educational assistants using CPL would include several tasks. These tasks include collaborative efforts regarding transfer and articulation and course outcome alignment. They include conversations with multiple stakeholders regarding the identification of barriers and the development of assessment tools. The following is an overview of the tasks that must be accomplished in order for such a pathway to be developed:

- Identification of Oregon’s four-year institutions which offer a teaching degree program
- Identify courses that are offered within each institution’s teaching degree program
 - Look for “low-hanging fruit” – courses that closely align with experiential learning
 - Rubrics must be developed for evaluation/assessment
- Identify “gaps” between 2-year and 4-year institutional course offerings and identify methods to address them.

Recommendations:

A grant would be key to support collaborative work between a teacher preparation program, a school district, and a community college offering educational assistant preparation programs to map course equivalencies, align educational assistant competencies/outcomes with teacher preparation requirements, and document how the knowledge and skills of educational assistants could translate into credit for prior learning. It is recommended that the community college modify their existing portfolio course to help educational assistants build the assessment of their prior learning. Bridge courses that bring the practical educational experiences of the educational assistant into a conceptual framework will be an important component of this model. Educational assistants come with a lot of practical knowledge but need the theoretical underpinning for why teachers do what they do in a class setting. The cost of doing this alignment work could cost from \$4,000 to \$13,000.

Model 3:

Competency-based program through Western Governor’s University

While Credit for Prior Learning allows educational assistants to earn credit for their knowledge and experience, it is limited to demonstration of competencies that align directly with an existing course. A competency-based model provides more flexibility for an educational assistant to take advantage of the full depth and range of their experiences and skills while only needing to study and focus on existing gaps. Western Governor’s University (WGU) offers several undergraduate teaching degrees that target educational assistants including a B.A. Interdisciplinary Studies and a B.A. Special Education ([Appendix F: WGU Program Description](#)). Exploring building partnerships with Western Governor’s University may be a way to more fully recognize the expertise gained by educational assistants while working in Oregon schools.

Western Governor's University Background

Nineteen U.S. governors established Western Governor's University (WGU) in 1997 as a model university offering competency-based degrees. The University targets working adult learners with options for affordable degrees based on students' learning rather than time in a course. Each degree program starts with an online readiness assessment to gauge the math and writing needs of candidates. The program assigns a mentor to each student to help guide the individual candidate through the program and recommend any necessary resources.

Contextual factors for WGU include the fact that the average age of WGU students is 37 years old and 73% of students are classified as underserved. Tuition is less than \$6,000 per year. WGU is NCATE accredited. Washington has partnered with WGU to have their own state version of the program; WGU Washington. This includes special scholarships for example to Washington teachers interested in seeking their Master's degree and students who graduated from one of the state's community colleges interested in seeking their Bachelor's degree.

Benefits:

- The competency-based program would allow educational assistants to take advantage of their knowledge and experience and potentially shorten their time to a degree.
- The model is low cost (\$6,000/year/student) and comes with an individualized learning plan and personal mentor.
- The program is ideal for reaching rural students who could access the courses from their home or school district.

Deficiencies:

- The program does not have extra support built in for those candidates who speak English as a second language.
- The face to face supports and community model are not in place.
- Educational assistants may need support with use of and access to the technology required to participate in the program.
- The model appeals to motivated candidates who are ready to assume significant time management skills.

Policies to Encourage Training of Paraeducators in Oregon

Nationally there is a scarcity in training opportunities for educational assistants despite the fact that the role of paraeducators in school systems is diverse, complex, and potentially has a direct impact on student learning. A survey in 1995 by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) showed that 70-90% of newly hired educational assistants had not received any training that related to providing instruction and direct service to students. The Steering Group suggested the creation of a registry system similar to the [Oregon Registry](#) – a pathway for professional recognition in childhood care and education – that would recognize educational assistance as they reach benchmarks in their training. The benchmarks would be defined by aligning the outcomes for educator preparation programs with the existing outcomes for the Oregon Paraeducator Certificate ([Appendix G: Oregon Paraeducator Certificate Outcomes](#)). The registry would bring focus on the added value of educational assistants as assets contributing to the culture and climate of their home schools. It would provide a clear pathway for educational assistants interested in honing their skills and potentially becoming licensed educators and it would provide consistency to the training offered to educational assistants.

The State could support educational assistant training by providing guidelines to districts on how to invest in their educational assistants, which could include:

- Identifying how educational assistants can support the work of closing achievement gaps
- Creating ways for educational assistants to access educational opportunities and meet benchmarks along a career pathway
- Guidance on using paid work as practicum for schoolwork
- Offering educational courses (e.g., math) on-site in the school district
- Recognizing educational assistants as they progress in their training. Recognition could include additional responsibilities, opportunities to expand skills, celebrations, and increased pay
- Investing funds upfront to help educational assistants access higher education
- Providing mentors to assist educational assistants in accessing training opportunities

Clearly, educational assistants play a vital role in Oregon's education system that overall can be an important element in Oregon's efforts to improve outcomes for students and support for ALL individuals who are engaged in the profession.

Appendices

The following links and resources are provided as appendix items:

Appendix Title	Appendix Link
Steering Committee Membership	Appendix A Pages 19-20
Educational Assistant OARS	Appendix B
Federal Career Pathway Guidance	Appendix C Pages 21-22
Portland State Bilingual Teacher Pathway Courses	Appendix D
Portland State Bilingual Teacher Pathway Expansion Model	Appendix E Pages 23-27
Western Governor's University Program Description	Appendix F
Oregon Paraeducator Certificate Outcomes	Appendix G Pages 28-35

Appendix A: Educational Assistant Steering Group Membership

Name	Organization	Position
Charlie Bauer	Southern Oregon ESD	Migrant Education/ELL
Jim Carlile	Oregon Department of Education	Assistant Superintendent
Victor Cato	Oregon Department of Education	Education Specialist
Victoria Chamberlain	Teacher Standards & Practices Commission	Executive Director
Dr. Esperanza De La Vega	Portland State University	Coordinator of Bilingual Teacher Pathway Program Assistant Professor, Curriculum & Instruction
Susana Ghio	Salem-Keizer School District	Recruiting Specialist
Gabe Hunter-Bernstein	Portland Community College	Director, Education Programs
Jennell Ives	Oregon Department of Education	Education Specialist
Nancy Johnson-Dorn	Oregon Department of Education	Director, Early Childhood
Mimi Khalili	Oregon School Employees Association	Government Relations Organizer
Serge Lopez	Washington Elementary, Woodburn SD	Dual Language Teacher, former Educational Assistant
David Lougee	Umatilla School District	ESL Director
Tanya Mead	Portland Community College	Education Faculty Chair
Marsha Moyer	Salem-Keizer SD, Retired	
Lisa Reynolds	Department of Community Colleges & Workforce Development	Education Specialist

Name	Organization	Position
Rudyane Rivera-Lindstrom	Oregon Department of Education	Education Specialist, Equity, former Educational Assistant
Hilda Rosselli	Oregon Education Investment Board	Deputy Director, College & Career Readiness
Cindy Ryan	Western Oregon University	Assistant Professor
Tricia Smith	Oregon School Employees Association	Government Relations Specialist

Appendix C: Federal Career Pathway Guidance

The Departments of Education, Labor and Health & Human Services are currently soliciting information and recommendations for the development and implementation of high-quality career pathway systems. This request for information (RFI) was published in yesterday's Federal Register and can be found here:

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2014-09274.pdf>

The joint letter also discusses the Departments' views on the essential components of a career pathways system. While the Departments' understanding will be further strengthened by research and experience, what we have learned to date from our investments in this area, in addition to States' efforts in career pathways, leads us to believe that essential components of a career pathways system should include the following:

- Alignment of systems: secondary, postsecondary and workforce development;
- Rigorous, sequential, connected, and efficient coursework that connects basic education and skills training and integrates education and training;
- Multiple entry and exit points;
- Comprehensive support services, such as career counseling, childcare, and transportation;
- Financial supports or flexibility to accommodate the demands of the labor market in order to allow individuals to meet their ongoing financial needs and obligations;
- Active engagement of business in targeted industry sectors that aligns with the skill needs of industries important to the local, regional, and/or State economies;
- Appropriate curriculum and instructional strategies that make work a central context for learning and work readiness skills;
- Credit for prior learning and the adoption of other strategies that accelerate the educational and career advancement of the participant;
- Organized services to meet the particular needs of adults, including accommodating work schedules with flexible and non-semester-based scheduling, alternative class times and locations, and the innovative use of technology;
- A focus on secondary and postsecondary industry recognized credentials, sector-specific employment, and advancement over time in education and employment within that sector; and
- A collaborative partnership among workforce, education, human service agencies, business and other community stakeholders to manage the system.

One of the hallmarks of a career pathways system is its potential to provide an effective strategy for integrating educational instruction, workforce development, and human services and linking them to labor market trends and employer needs. The Departments believe that the more career pathways systems are aligned at the State, local, regional, and tribal levels, the easier it is to create a level of integration necessary to develop career pathway programs and ensure an individual's success.

The joint letter was the Departments' first step to formally adopt a common definition and shared vision for career pathways systems, with the expectation that a common language would facilitate the forging of cross-agency partnerships and systems development. The joint letter was also the first time each of the Departments overseeing the major Federal funding streams for employment, training, education, and support services formally recognized their shared support for career pathways approaches. The impetus for the joint letter came from the awareness among Federal leaders of a growing convergence of strategies for promoting skills acquisition and labor market successes that fit loosely under the rubric of career pathways.

Appendix E: Extending Portland State University’s Bilingual Teacher Pathway

From: Esperanza De La Vega, Bilingual Teacher Pathway Program

Below are some considerations for extending Portland State University’s Bilingual Teacher Pathway program into a satellite office, outside the Portland metro area.

There are some differentiations to take into consideration **prior to being admitted**:

Table 1- Admission Considerations

	Elementary	Secondary
Passing Basic Skills Test (as required by TSPC)	Yes	Yes
Completed all (or almost all pre-requisite courses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSY 311 Human Development • Math 211, 212, 214 Mathematics for Educators sequence • LIB 428 Children’s Literature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSY 311 Human Development • Courses based on transcript evaluation by a content area advisor (department recommendation form)
Have a Bachelor’s degree & be admitted to the university as a Graduate student.	Yes Outcome: MEd, Initial Teaching License & ESOL Endorsement	Yes Outcome: MEd, Initial Teaching License & ESOL Endorsement
Note: if a student has a Bachelor degree from a country outside the USA.	Transcripts to be translated & evaluated TOEFL may be required	Transcripts to be translated & evaluated TOEFL may be required
Have <i>minimally</i> 90 credits* and be admitted to the university as an Undergraduate student. (*note: often a 3-year plan to completion)	Yes Outcome: Bachelor degree in Liberal Studies, Initial Teaching License & ESOL Endorsement	Yes Outcome: Bachelor degree in Liberal Studies, Initial Teaching License & ESOL Endorsement
District Partnership	Bilingual candidate should be employed either part-time or full-time by a school district that has an Intergovernmental Agreement with Portland State University OR be an independent candidate	

	supported by a partner district after the application process has been completed.
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Once Admitted: The following tables show the number of credits the candidates will be taking each term. Each of the courses in the BTP program is offered in a 400/500 level to accommodate both undergraduate and graduate students.

Table 2 - Secondary Teacher Candidates

Term	BTP Classes	ESOL Classes	Student Teaching	Total Credits
1. Fall	5	3		8
2. Winter	6	3		9
3. Spring	3	3		6
4. Summer	6	4		10
5. Fall	4	6		10
6. Winter	6		4	10
7. Spring	2		12 w/ESOL practicum	14
Total Program Credits				67

Table 3 - Elementary Teacher Candidates

Term	BTP Classes	ESOL Classes	Student Teaching	Total Credits
1. Fall	5	3		8
2. Winter	6	3		9
3. Spring	6	3		9
4. Summer	8	4		12
5. Fall	2	6		8
6. Winter	2		4	6
7. Spring	2		12 w/ESOL practicum	14
Total Program Credits				66

Format of Class Structure:

The BTP subscribes to a cohort model where the students are guided and mentored through two years (7 terms) of courses. It is during winter and spring of the second year of the program that the candidates will need to plan for student teaching in their sponsoring school districts. There may be opportunities for an internship should a district wish to explore this structural option.

During the academic school year all courses are held during the evening hours to accommodate working professionals. (*This is based on PSU campus program*)

- ESOL courses are held on **Monday** evening from approximately 6:40 – 9:20pm.
- BTP courses are taught on **Wednesday** evening – typically two classes back-to-back from 4:00pm to 6:30 and 6:40 – 9:20pm.

During the summer term, all classes are held during the day and/or during the evening.

Budget Considerations

With a minimum composition of candidates enrolled in the program, PSU could support the expansion of the Bilingual Teacher Pathway program. We would pay the instructors and their travel costs related to teaching in a satellite program outside the Portland Metro Area.

The districts would provide some financial support for other components of a successful program such as testing /tutoring support, support for tuition. Included in the district support would be in-kind support by providing a space for conducting the classes, as well as a private place for advising students and/or for the program assistant to complete tasks related to communication, outreach, retention, and support.

Instructional Personnel

Year One:

Composition of Cohort: 8 undergraduate and 8 graduate candidates

Credits: Taking a minimum of 23-26 grad & undergrad credits (fall, winter, spring)

Instructor/Advisor: Fixed Term Faculty 1.0 FTE (salary rate of \$60,000)

Year Two:

Composition of Cohort: 8 UG and 8 GR (Plus 16 Continuing)

Credits: Taking a minimum of 40-44 grad & undergrad credits (summer, fall, winter, and spring) of which 16 credits are for supervised practicum.

Instructor/Advisor/Supervisor: Fixed Term Faculty 1.0 FTE (salary rate of \$60,000)

Administrative Personnel

Year One and Year Two: It is anticipated that the 1.0 FTE instructional position could include *some* advising. However, the start-up and initial implementation of the BTP satellite program would require administrative support such as a **Program Assistant**. Duties would include tasks such as creating recruitment material, answering student questions, helping with application process, testing taking options, and resource sharing with potential applicants. As noted on Table 1, there are many considerations that potential students will need help navigating prior to be admitted, which a program assistant could facilitate. This position will still need to be envisioned and planned through negotiations between the partner districts and the university to distribute cost and provide place-based support systems.

Note: A half-time program assistant hired by PSU would need to include a benefits package. While it would increase the cost of the hire, it would also increase the security and long-term satisfaction of an employee who would stay and develop relationships needed in a partnership program.

Facilities

It is anticipated that school districts would be able to provide facilities where classes could be offered during the evening and/or weekend. This would be an example of in-kind contributions to the partnership relationship.

Other Budget Items to Consider

Tuition: The cost of tuition will for the candidate could be prohibitive. Ways to defray the cost could include scholarships, grants, district PD \$ for classified staff, and student loans.

Books/Fees:

While online features and access to library resources has helped keep the cost of reading material down, there are still textbooks that will need to be purchased. The cost of this could reach up to \$300 a term, depending on the courses.

Fees related to applications for admission to the university vary depending on the status of the student. There may be fees associated with TOEFL testing and the basic skills test fees could be hardship for some applicants.

Should the candidate need support for test-taking strategies or tutoring on a specific area of test content, these systems could cost to be established. Establishing a tutoring system that is staffed by volunteers might be an option to districts wishing to support bilingual candidates from their district.

Partnership Relationship

The BTP program has been successful, in part, because of the strong partnership agreements that have been negotiated between the university and the school districts and documented through inter-government agreements. The following shows some of the roles/responsibilities shared through this partnership.

Table 5

School District	University
1) Primary recruitment of employees for BTP 2) Commitment to support teacher: - flex hours to attend afternoon classes - job security when student teaching - leadership in establishing field experience placements within the district 3) Attend once a term consortium meetings (identify a liaison) 4) collaborate in admission process	1) Support recruitment and admission process 2) Commitment to provide an innovative teacher preparation program with Bilingual/ESOL foci 3) Provide up-to-date information and topics at Consortium meetings. 4) Work with district liaisons to secure field experience placements and collaborate in admissions process and/or other program milestones