

Transitions to teaching: Model pathways to special education licensure

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2023 OSEP LEADERSHIP AND PROJECT DIRECTORS' CONFERENCE





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Para-to-Teacher Tuition Support for Exceptional Student Educators

Are you a paraprofessional working with students with disabilities?



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Para-to-Teacher Tuition Support Program

- Today's Objectives:
 - Identify how Florida's Grow Your Own program has helped hundreds of paraprofessionals across the state become certified special education teachers
 - Distinguish how sustainable, large Grow Your Own programs impact teacher shortages



Paraprofessional GYO's Nationwide

Grow Your Own Teachers: A 50-state scan of policies and programs

(Garcia, 2020)

- GYO's operate at state and local levels across U.S.
- No universal model
- Local GYO's between IHE and districts
 - Small and limited, not sustainable
 - Producers of most GYO research
- 7 states fund GYO's
 - California, New York, and Washington specific to paraprofessionals
 - Florida not represented



Comparatively Speaking

Grow Your Own Teachers: A 50-state scan of policies and programs

(Garcia, 2020)

Grow Your Own Policies and Programs in the 50 States and District of Columbia - Updated

State	Does the State Have a GYO Policy?	Does the State Fund Any GYO Programs?	Are there GYO programs for high school students at the state/district level?	What Types of GYO Programs are Offered?	Are there GYO programs for paraeducators at the state/district level?	What Types of GYO Programs are Offered?1	Are there GYO Program for Bilingual Educators?
Florida	No	No	Yes	Future Educators Club; Teacher Academy	No	N/A	No



Para-to-Teacher Tuition Support Program

Attract, Prepare, Retain

- Address critical shortage of special education teachers statewide for more than a decade
- Provide tuition and textbook support for paraprofessionals to earn degrees in special education, deaf education, or visual disabilities
 - Paraprofessionals can attend eligible initial certification teacher preparation programs throughout Florida (undergraduate and graduate levels)



A little history and context

- Program originated in 2009
- Part of umbrella personnel professional development grant
 - Annual, renewable federal flow-through funding under IDEA
- Operated and managed within the University of West Florida
- New PI/Director 2018
- New Coordinator 2021
- Added graduate tuition support in 2022



Para-to-Teacher Tuition Support Program

Funding for both undergraduate and graduate level

- Tuition support for 2 courses per semester (fall, spring, and summer) both undergraduate and graduate level
- \$40 per course towards books for up to two courses per semester
- Attend choice of a Florida college/university program in special education, deaf education, or visual disabilities

*Online universities outside of Florida are not applicable *



Bachelor's Level Applicants Must

- Be employed as a paraprofessional assisting students with disabilities in a Florida public school or charter school
- Have earned at least an Associate of Arts degree with a minimum overall 2.5 GPA
- Have passed all portions of the General Knowledge Test prior to applying
- Be admitted to a special education teacher preparation program (includes deaf education and visual disabilities) leading to initial certification at one of the state approved colleges or universities



Master's Level Applicants Must

- Be employed as a paraprofessional assisting students with disabilities in a Florida public school or charter school
- Have earned at least a Bachelor's degree in non-education field with a minimum overall 3.0 GPA
 - No GKT under new state regulations
- Be admitted to a graduate special education teacher preparation program leading to initial certification at one of the state approved colleges or universities
 - UCF, UNF, or USF



Service Obligation

Following graduation applicants agree to:

Undergraduate:

- Teach students with disabilities in a Florida public school for a minimum of 2 years for every 1 academic year of tuition support
 - May be required to pay back funds if not teaching students with disabilities in a Florida public school

Graduate:

- Teach students with disabilities in a Florida public school for a minimum of 1 year for every 1 academic semester of tuition support

*Have up to two years to begin to fulfill service obligation after graduation



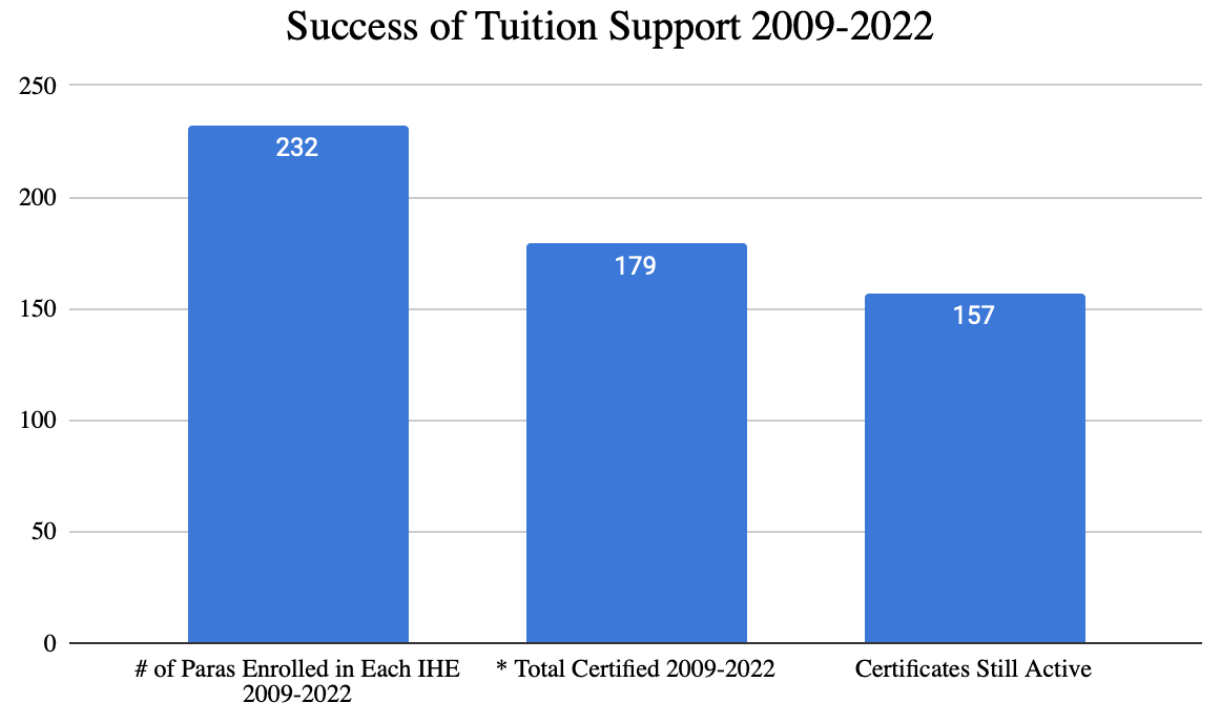
P2T Meeting the Research Need

- Data needed to grow the program among shortage discussions
- Merged tracking data across years
- New program coordinator self-audited all background records
 - IHE where attended for tuition support (active, completed, withdrew)
 - School district upon program entrance
 - Type of certification earned including expiration dates
- Cross-checked every participant in state certification lookup system
- De-identified all data for analysis (IRB #1929228-1)



Para-to-Teacher Tuition Support Program

# of Paras Enrolled in Each IHE 2009-2022	232
* Total Certified 2009-2022	179
Certificates Still Active	157
Retention Rate of Certificates	87.71%



* Not all recent graduates located in state system

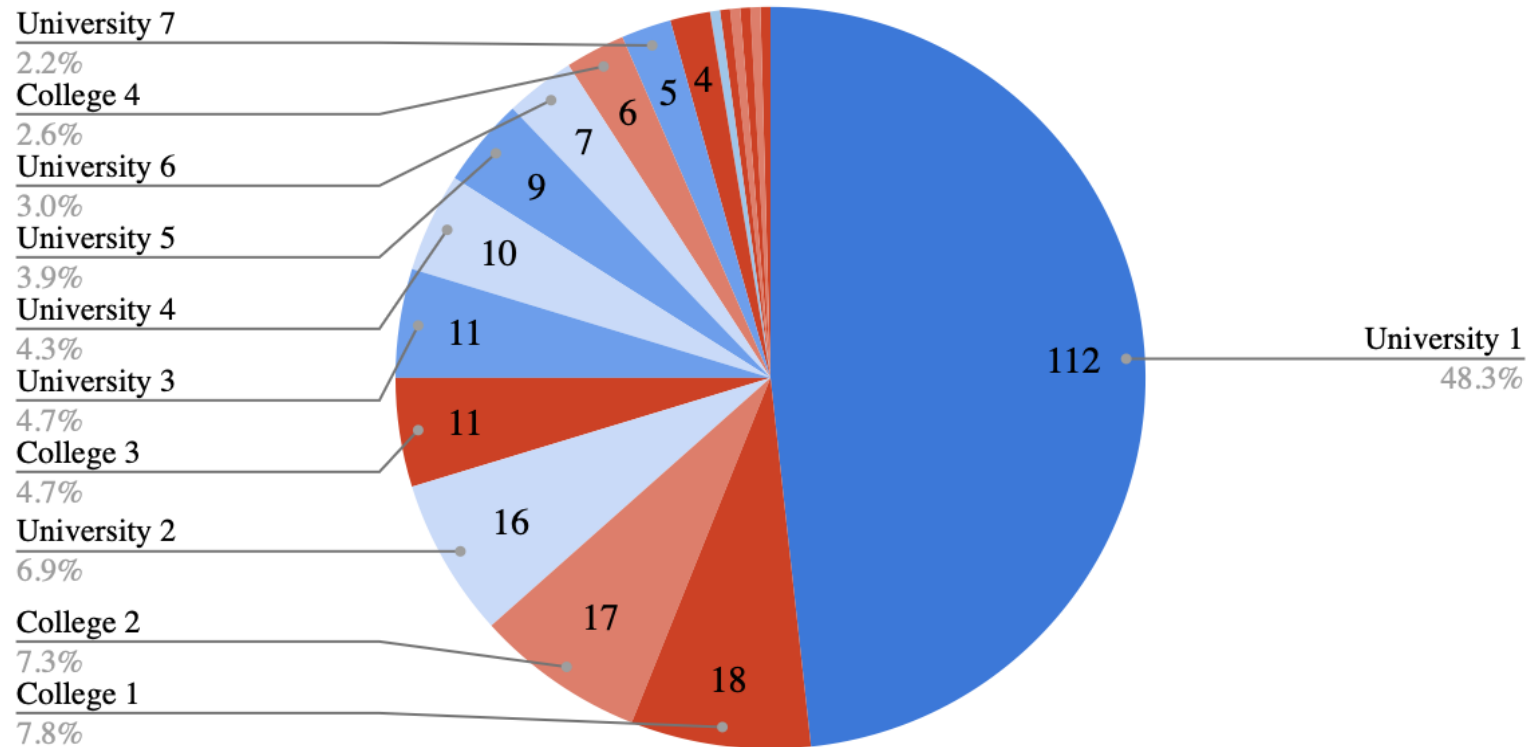
** 11 former paras earned certification in Ed. Leadership



Para-to-Teacher Tuition Support Program

of Paras Enrolled in Each IHE 2009-2022 (18 IHEs)

232 Total Paras



District Rank by Enrollment of Paras by District Size

1st place 24 paras – 28th largest district - 30,000 students

2nd place 14 paras – 22nd

5th

4th place 10 paras – 7th

13th (6 paras)

Largest district in Florida
4th largest in nation
345,000 students

49th

30th

7th place 9 paras - 3rd

8th place 8 paras - 2nd

9th

10th place 7 paras - 20th

23rd



District Rank by Enrollment of Paras by District Size & IHE

1 st place	24 paras	- 28 th ; No IHE
2 nd place	14 paras	- 22 nd ; No IHE
		5 th ; University #2
4 th place	10 paras	- 7 th ; College #3
		49 th ; No IHE
		30 th ; No IHE
7 th place	9 paras	- 3 rd ; University #3
8 th place	8 paras	- 2 nd ; College #4
		9 th ; University #5/College #6
10 th place	7 paras	- 20 th ; College #1
		23 rd ; University #8



Para-to-Teacher Tuition Support

What does this all mean?

- IHE accessibility for paraprofessionals is critical
- Statewide tuition support model allows for more options in choice of IHE program
- Sustainability is key to large-scale impact as opposed to “one-and-done” programs
- Room for growth and partnerships among IHEs and large districts
 - Would require more funding



Aspiring Statewide Special Education Teacher (ASSET)



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Aspiring Statewide SPecial Education Teacher (ASSET)

- Approved alternative licensure program
 - Non-traditional transition to teaching (T2T) program
 - Does not award an initial teaching license or college credits
 - Funded by ESSER
 - Approved by IDOE and Indiana State Board of Education (SBOE)
 - ICASE developed the program



Purpose of ASSET

- Maximize the efforts of schools and directors
- Leverage field expertise
- Provide a venue for license add-ons
- No cost to the participant



Eligibility

- Currently licensed Indiana educators
- Must participate in a three-day bootcamp
- Must hold a caseload
- Must attend monthly meetings
- Must have the assurance from either special education director or designee



Eligibility

- Participants must submit the following:
 - Copy of current teaching license
 - Most recent teacher evaluation
 - Letter of support from special education director on corporation letterhead
 - Letter of intent from participant to remain teaching for two years after completion of ASSET program
 - Complete application
 - Assurance from superintendent



Program

- 11-month intensive study program in content and pedagogy
- Aligned to Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) standards
- Submission of a portfolio after completion of the program
- Successful completion of PRAXIS-Mild or Intense Intervention endorsement is added to current license



Resource Spotlight

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) website
 - Brings together IDEA information and resources from the Department and its grantees.
 - <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>
- IDEAS That Work
 - For information from research to practice initiatives funded by OSEP that address the provisions of IDEA and ESSA. This website includes resources, links, and other important information relevant to OSEP's research to practice efforts.
 - <https://osepideasthatwork.org/>





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