



Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

Transforming Arkansas to lead the nation in student-focused education

Jacob Oliva
Secretary

November 21, 2024

Stacy Smith
Deputy
Commissioner

Prospective special educators in the most challenging-to-staff regions of Arkansas often face significant barriers to entering the teaching profession. Paraprofessionals play an essential role in supporting the learning and well-being of students with disabilities and these dedicated individuals often aspire to transition into teaching roles. However, life circumstances—such as raising a family and earning a living—may prevent them from completing the requirements necessary to fulfill their dreams of becoming licensed educators.

**State Board of
Education**

Dr. Sarah Moore
Stuttgart
Chair

To remove these barriers and address the urgent shortage of special education teachers, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), in partnership with school districts and educational cooperatives, has developed the **Arkansas K-12 Special Education Teacher Registered Apprenticeship**.

Kathy Rollins
Springdale
Vice-Chair

The Arkansas K-12 Special Education Teacher Registered Apprenticeship offers an *earn-while-you-learn* pathway to the teaching profession. The program's goal is to develop fully licensed special education teachers who are deeply integrated into their school communities. These apprentices receive years of on-the-job training, equipping them to be classroom-ready on day one.

Adrienne Woods
Rogers

Through this apprenticeship, participants benefit from robust support systems provided by their employing school districts, ADE staff, and educational cooperatives. Apprentices receive mentoring, assistance with licensure assessments, and compensation for their student-facing work through a progressively increasing wage—all while working toward degree completion and teacher licensure.

Dr. Gary Arnold
Little Rock

Randy Henderson
Blytheville

Lisa Hunter
White Hall

The K-12 Special Education Teacher Registered Apprenticeship program also provides schools with greater flexibility in staffing and serves as a powerful tool to recruit and retain highly effective special education paraprofessionals and teachers. Most importantly, as a result of the apprenticeship program, our most vulnerable students will have consistent access to well-prepared and qualified special educators.

Jeff Wood
Little Rock

Ken Bragg
Sheridan

ADE is proud to release this guidebook as part of its ongoing commitment to making the Arkansas K-12 Special Education Teacher Registered Apprenticeship program a viable and impactful pathway for aspiring educators. Together, we can ensure that all Arkansans with a passion for teaching—especially those dedicated to supporting students with disabilities—have the opportunity to *Teach Arkansas*.

Leigh Keener
Little Rock

Jacob Oliva,

Secretary Arkansas Department of Education