



PURPLE PATHWAY FOR PARAEDUCATORS ONLINE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM Bachelor of Arts

An accelerated online, practice-based program for paraprofessionals interested in furthering their education to earn a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education with a Special Education Strategist I K-8 Iowa endorsement.

- / A flexible option for placebound, paraeducators currently working in schools.
- / Courses **offered entirely online**, allowing you to maintain commitments while earning your degree.
- / Build a **lifelong network** by studying with the same group of paraeducators throughout the program.
- / **Earn Iowa endorsements** in Elementary K-6 and Strategist I K-8.
- / **Utilize support** from a trained mentor at your worksite.
- / Benefit from **exemplary support** provided throughout your journey.

Offered
entirely
online

Next cohort
begins:
Fall 2026

FAQ

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What level of support is needed from schools?

- / This program requires an elevated level of support from the student's school building and district leadership. Each student is expected to be assigned a mentor teacher, and there will be times when practicum coursework requires that students step out of their paraeducator role to implement their learning in another area of the school.

Are Purple Pathway students paid during student teaching?

- / As an apprentice-model program, it is expected that paraeducators will continue to be paid during the spring semester when student teaching takes place. During this 15-16 week period, the students will be unable to perform their paraeducator duties as typically assigned. We understand this can be a hurdle, so we have compiled ideas and models that have worked in other districts that we would be happy to share to ease the burden for the school during this time.

Will student teaching be completed in the district the paraeducator works for?

- / District personnel work with UNI to secure student teaching placements. Most Purple Pathway students do their student teaching within the district they are employed. However, student teaching placements may occasionally differ from districts that employ the Purple Pathway apprentice.

>> LEARN MORE & APPLY

online.uni.edu/paraeducators

How do students know if their district is supporting this program?

- / Potential applicants should have a conversation with, at a minimum, their building administrator before applying for the program. Building administrators will be expected to complete a letter of recommendation for each applicant, and district administrators will be expected to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which will guarantee district support for the Purple Pathway program.

Are there grants available through the school district?

- / We suggest checking with your school district to see if there is any grant funding available through your district.

If a paraeducator doesn’t have a license, but is currently employed with the school, are they eligible?

- / As long as they are employed as a paraeducator and working in a K-6 classroom on a daily basis and hold an AA, AS, or higher degree, they will be eligible.

Are paraeducators currently working in middle school buildings, preschools, or high schools eligible to enroll in this program?

- / All paraeducators will need to be employed in a K-6 classroom on a daily basis during the program.

Can anyone be a mentor?

- / The building principal will recruit and select Multi-Level Classroom Teachers (MCLs) who will serve as mentors. Criteria for selecting MCLs are described in a job description and the MOU, which the UNI Purple Pathway team members have developed and will share.

Can I regularly miss classes?

- / No – Regular and consistent attendance to online meetings via Zoom is a program expectation.

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Flexible Delivery

Courses are offered entirely online using Zoom video conferencing and Blackboard, a learning management system. Classes will meet online (via Zoom) a set day each week for three hours. There will be one 6-hour Saturday meeting per month (with options for attending in-person on the UNI campus or online). Coursework and assignments are application and practice-based, allowing you to draw on your daily experiences and roles within your current school.

In-school clinical experiences and student teaching are required. Regular and consistent attendance to online meetings via Zoom is a program expectation.

Visit online.uni.edu/paraeducators for detailed course information and sequence of courses.

Tuition & Fees

Tuition & Fees for 2025-26*	
Undergraduate credit (per unit)	\$366
Technology fee (per course)	\$46
Records & Documents fee (Covers all transcripts and other fees. Charged at graduation.)	\$115

**Tuition and fees may be adjusted by the Iowa Board of Regents.*

Grants & Scholarships

Grants and scholarships are available for qualified students with the submission of a FAFSA.

Financial Aid

Financial aid may be available for students who qualify, based on number of units per semester and financial need. Questions may be directed to the UNI Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships.

319-273-2700 / fin-aid@uni.edu / finaid.uni.edu

TAKE THE

next steps



- 1 Complete the interest form at online.uni.edu/paraeducators.
- 2 Submit your application at uni.edu/apply and attach your unofficial transcript.
To be admitted, students **must**:
 - / Be an employed paraeducator in a K-6 building with at least one year of teaching experience.
 - / Have support from building/district administrator and mentor teacher(s).
 - / Have an Associate of Arts degree, Associate of Science degree, or higher.
 - / Be able to commit to the synchronous online meetings.

* Upon admittance, students will work with their advisor on admission to the Teacher Education Program at UNI.

- 3 Fill out a FAFSA at studentaid.gov/fafsa
UNI’s School Code is 001890.
- 4 Contact us with questions:
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U.S. Department of Labor
Registered Apprenticeship Sponsor

This program equips paraeducators with essential skills and real-world teaching experience, preparing them for success in the classroom.



Recognized with top honors
as a “2025 Best Online
Bachelor’s Program”
U.S. News & World Report