

Purple Pathway for Paraeducators

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 Iowa endorsement.



Collecting interest for Fall 2025

FEATURES

- / Learn through a flexible environment designed for placebound, paraeducators currently working in schools.
- / Complete coursework in two years; apply for licensure after student teaching.
- / Benefit from exemplary support provided throughout the journey including enrollment, academic advising, technical support, and more.
- / Build a lifelong network by studying with the same group of adult learners throughout the program.
- / Earn Iowa endorsements in Elementary K-6 and Special Education Strategist I.
- / Utilize support from a trained mentor at your worksite.
- / Draw on your daily experiences and roles in schools as you complete practice-based assignments.

QUALIFICATIONS

- / Must be an employed paraeducator in a K-6 building.
- / Must have support from building/district administrator and mentor teacher(s). (See FAQs for additional information.)
- / Must have an Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, or higher degree.
- / Must be able to commit to weekly synchronous online meetings in the evenings.

LEARN MORE & EXPRESS INTEREST

Complete an interest form at online.uni.edu/paraeducators to receive additional information. Coursework begins in August 2025.

TOP 10

UNI ranks in Forbes Advisor's **Top 10 Best Online Teaching Degrees** of 2023



online.uni.edu/paraeducators

UNI

University of Northern Iowa

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.

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.

Purple Pathway for Paraeducators Elementary Education Bachelors of Arts

online.uni.edu/paraeducators

Sample Course Sequence

80 total units of credit | units in parentheses following course titles

TERM 1

ELSPED 3115 Schooling and Inclusive Education in the 21st Century (8)
ELSPED 3116 Child Development through Integrated Arts and Early Literacy (8)

TERM 2

ELSPED 3118 Learning Motivation, Behavior Support, and Reasoning Skills (8)
ELSPED 3117 Inclusive Classroom Environments and Learning Assessment (8)

TERM 3

ELSPED 4116 Engaging in Integrated Science, Methods of Teaching Science, and Math Reasoning (16)

TERM 4

ELSPED 4117 Differentiating Literacy and Social Studies for All Students (8)
ELSPED 4118 Intensive Methods Math/Social Studies (8)

TERM 5

ELSPED 4120 Transitions: Education and Post K-12 (2)
ELSPED 4129 Health and Fitness for Elementary Teachers (2)
TEACHING 3134 Special Education Teaching (6)
TEACHING 3135 Elementary Teaching (6)

Program Delivery

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

Scholarships & Financial Aid

Scholarships are available for qualified students with the submission of a FAFSA. Financial aid may be available for students who qualify. Contact the UNI Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships if you have any questions about eligibility or next steps. 319-273-2700 | fin-aid@uni.edu | finaid.uni.edu

Tuition & Fees for 2024-25*	
Undergraduate credit (per unit)	\$357
Technology fee (per course)	\$44
Records & documents fee (Charged at graduation)	\$115

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

QUESTIONS? CONTACT US.

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