

Special Education Teacher Pipeline Program

*We will add content to this document as we learn more in our implementation.

FAQ's

What is the Special Education Teacher Pipeline Program?

This program provides support and funding for school district employees to obtain Special Education Tier 3 and 4 licensing to become a Special Education Teacher without having to acquire student loans. Sourcewell was granted funding from the Minnesota Department of Education in collaboration with the school districts in our five-county service area.

What schools are in Sourcewell's service area that I could be employed with to be eligible for this grant?

The Sourcewell service area is made up of five-counties in Central MN: Cass, Todd, Wadena, Crow Wing, and Morrison. You can find all the schools listed on our website: [Teacher recruitment | Sourcewell](#).

Is it true that my tuition would be covered to pursue Special Education Tier 3 or Tier 4 licensure?

Yes! The grant will cover tuition, books, and related university fees for eligible participants to obtain their Tier 3 or Tier 4 Special Education Teacher licensure.

When is this grant active?

We were awarded a 1.2-million-dollar grant for 5 years. The term is February 5, 2024, to January 31, 2029.

What are the expectations of participants in this program?

- Demonstrate a willingness to be a Special Education teacher in the Sourcewell service area after completing the program
- Apply to selected university for licensure program
- Complete FAFSA
- Identify Sourcewell and its identified individuals on FERPA as third-party designee
- Make reasonable academic progress toward degree attainment and licensure to continue to receive scholarships
- Communicate with district leaders proactively to plan clinical experiences collaboratively
- Participate in networks and other supports offered to assist in your completion of degree and licensure attainment
- Remain employed by a school district in the Sourcewell service area while pursuing licensure

What is the process to begin my journey in participating in this program?

1. Speak with your building leader and special education lead in your district to discuss the license and programs you are considering, and keep them informed of any work assignment flexibility you may need to accommodate student teaching and other clinical experiences throughout your program
2. Complete the [SPED Teacher Pipeline Program Interest Form](#)
3. Determine which university may be a best fit for you AND meets the needs of your district and its special education students

4. Learn about the universities partnering in this grant – read and review the slides provided during the information session in Spring 2024
 - a) Explore the university options by visiting their websites, speaking with colleagues and district leaders about programs you are considering.
 - b) If you are a Tier 2 teacher currently enrolled in a program with a university that is not identified as a partner at this time, please email your current advisor and Chris Grams
5. Schedule registration meetings with your selected university; the application process is managed directly by you and the university
6. Complete a FAFSA form (tips below)
7. Watch your email for updates from Sourcewell

What is Sourcewell's role in this program?

Sourcewell is the grantee (the party who applied for the grant, along with its partner districts and universities) and the fiscal host—this means your tuition, fees, and books are paid to the University and the bookstore by Sourcewell who then submits to MDE for the reimbursement from the grant funds reserved for this purpose.

Sourcewell communicates with districts and employees to get them onboarded into this program, coordinates the billing and payment of expenses, and tracks participant progress toward completion, but does NOT assist in getting participants enrolled or registered in the selected university; participants should reach out to and work directly with the designated point of contact at their chosen university to get enrolled and registered.

What if I am already enrolled in a program? Do I need to change universities if they are not on the list?

Great! We are excited to be part of helping you complete the education you are already pursuing. If your current employment is with a school district in our service area, and you are seeking a degree in SPED, we would love to partner with your current university too, if it is a PELSB- approved teacher preparation program (TPP). **Note:** Grand Canyon University is not an approved provider, as they are not a MN TPP that has been identified in legislation as an approved partner.

Does the grant cover application fees?

This is dependent upon the University partner.

BSU: has no application fee

SCSU: fee waived for undergraduate; note Pipeline participant

SMSU: fee waived for undergraduate; note Pipeline participant

UMN Twin Cities: ([Fee Waiver Request Page](#))

Can I get reimbursed from the grant for eligible expenses I paid for on my own?

No. MDE is clear that this is NOT a reimbursement model, and our program is not designed to make payments directly to participants, but rather, to the university they are attending. If you have difficulty registering for classes or charging required books to your student account, DO NOT pay for these items personally; reach out to christine.grams@sourcewell-mn.gov to resolve the issue.

I am a Tier 1 teacher and schools are required to repost my position each year. Am I eligible to participate?

We understand the unique nature of Tier 1 positions and how your role in a district may change. Eligibility for ongoing grant funding requires you to be employed by one of our districts; it does not require you to be a classroom teacher. You could be employed as any staff member: paraprofessional, bus driver, dietary, etc. Should your role as a classroom teacher change while you are in the Pipeline, district leaders may help you navigate what options they may have to support your eligibility and employment.

Why do I need to complete a FAFSA?

Your participation in this program allows you to complete your special education degree with one of our university partners at zero cost and no loans to you for tuition, related fees, and books. Although we were awarded a large amount of grant funds, we want to be the best stewards of these dollars and maximize our impact. Completion of your FAFSA allows your university to maximize all eligible grant and scholarship funds. Eligible tuition and fees not covered by other grants and scholarships will be invoiced directly to Sourcewell by the university.

IMPORTANT Note: upon receiving your FAFSA award letter from your selected university, you should “ACCEPT” all aid EXCEPT for any loans.

I have never completed a FAFSA – what do I do?

No worries – this process takes many students less than 20 minutes!

There are a few ways you can complete this form:

1. Online at fafsa.gov, **(This is the quickest and easiest option!)**
2. Print out [FAFSA](#) via
3. Call 1-800-4-FED-AID [1-800-433-3243] to request that a paper FAFSA be mailed to you

Other optional resources:

- [Federal Student Aid website](#)
- [Better FAFSA on the U.S. Department of Education’s website](#)
- [Resources to Help You Fill Out the FAFSA | U.S. Department of Education](#)
- [Applying for Financial Aid with the FAFSA \(brief video\)](#)
- Universities have great resources to help with this process, too. Reach out to your university contact!

I have defaulted on previous student loans – will that impact my eligibility?

The program eligibility is not dependent on your past loan history.

What are the current MN requirements for tiered licensure?

MINNESOTA
PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR
LICENSING AND STANDARDS BOARD

EDUCATOR LICENSURE

Effective July 1, 2024

mn.gov/pelsb
pelsb@state.mn.us
651-539-4200

TIER 1

Bachelor's Degree
or falls under exemption from Bachelor's Degree

and

Special Education:
A teacher is limited to a total of 3 years on a Tier 1 license in any special education licensure field

1 YEAR

JOB OFFER

3 RENEWALS

TIER 2

Bachelor's Degree
or falls under exemption from Bachelor's Degree

and

ONE of the following:

- Enrolled in a teacher preparation program in Minnesota*
- Master's Degree*
- Completed a teacher preparation program* but does not yet meet requirements for a Tier 3 or Tier 4 license

2 YEARS

JOB OFFER

3 RENEWALS

TIER 3

Bachelor's Degree
or falls under exemption from Bachelor's Degree

and

Pass applicable licensure exams
or falls under exemption from licensure exams

and

ONE of the following:

- Completed a teacher preparation program in Minnesota*
- Completed a teacher preparation program in another state* and either:
(A) Equivalent student teaching or
(B) Two years of teaching experience
- Licensure via Portfolio*
- 3 years of teaching experience in licensure field with a Tier 2 license
- Professional teaching license from another state* and two years of teaching experience*

3 YEARS

TEACHER APPLIES

UNLIMITED RENEWALS

TIER 4

Bachelor's Degree
or falls under exemption from Bachelor's Degree

and

Pass applicable licensure exams
or falls under exemption from licensure exams

and

3 years of teaching experience*

and

ONE of the following:

- Completed a teacher preparation program in Minnesota*
- Completed a teacher preparation program in another state* and either:
(A) Equivalent student teaching or
(B) Two years of teaching experience
- Licensure via Portfolio*
- National Board Certification*

5 YEARS

TEACHER APPLIES

UNLIMITED RENEWALS

EXEMPTIONS FROM BACHELOR'S DEGREE:

- CTE & Career Pathways: Hold an AA degree*, professional certification*, or 5 years of relevant work experience*
- Dance, Theater, Visual Arts, & Music: 5 years of relevant work experience*
- World Language & Culture: Native speaker of language

EXEMPTIONS FROM LICENSURE EXAMS:

- Completed a teacher preparation program in Minnesota
- Completed a teacher preparation program in another state and passed applicable exams
- Recommended for licensure via portfolio
- Holds National Board Certification

Note: * indicates that experience must be aligned to licensure field sought