



Removing Barriers to Educator Preparation

HB22-1220: *Removing Barriers to Educator Preparation* was signed by the governor on May 26, 2022. Among other provisions, the law creates two innovative programs for students meeting eligibility requirements: 1) provides stipends to candidates while they complete their culminating clinical experience (such as student teaching); and 2) provides funds to cover the fees and costs of preparing for and taking the required Praxis exams.

Stipend programs reduce financial barriers and go a long way to make preparation more affordable for aspiring educators.

Saving Students Money

Educator shortages continue to affect Colorado schools, and though we have yet to see the full impact of the pandemic on the workforce, it is safe to say districts have significant hiring needs. However, education is a low-wage field for which obtaining a college degree may not seem financially feasible. The rising costs of college and increased loan debt coupled with below-median wage outcomes are a valid cause for concern and likely contribute to the decrease in the number of high school students who choose education as a profession.

Unlike the medical residency model – teacher candidates often go unpaid for their clinical practice in the field. Reducing the financial burdens of educator preparation saves aspiring educators money entering the profession, allowing them more time and energy to focus on learning the art of teaching, and completing their programs with confidence in their skills. There is also evidence that such measures attract a more diverse pool of candidates.

Stipend Programs

Funding for the stipend programs comes from the American Rescue Plan Act for the first two years and will require appropriations from the Colorado General Assembly afterward. Funds will be available beginning with the 2022-23 academic year. Funds will be sent to the institutions from the Department of Higher Education for the school's operating expenses and to disperse to eligible students. Specific program data will be required for program evaluation and that required for use of federal stimulus funds.

For both stipend programs, an “eligible student” is defined as “a student who is enrolled in an approved program of preparation and eligible for financial assistance because the student's expected family contribution does not exceed

200% of the maximum federal Pell-eligible expected family contribution” per HB 22-1220. To determine financial need and expected family contribution, candidates must demonstrate eligibility by completing the [FAFSA](#) or [CAFSA](#).

Student Educator Stipend Program

The student educator stipend program awards money to an eligible student to compensate them for their clinical experience in an academic residency position. Candidates placed in a 16-week academic residency may receive a stipend of up to \$11,000, and those in a 32-week academic residency may receive a stipend of up to \$22,000. The stipends will be disbursed to candidates using the standard methods for allocating state-based financial aid or as wages for employment in monthly instalments. Candidates are encouraged to work with their financial aid offices to determine which may be best – if either.

For reference, HB22-1220 defines an "academic residency" as "a 16-week" (such as a student teaching experience) or "a 32-week intentional clinical experience for student educators who are placed in a school- or community-based setting." It should also be noted that a resident cannot be the teacher of record in a classroom.

Student Educator Test Stipend Program

The educator test stipend program awards stipend money to approved preparation programs to reduce financial barriers for eligible students preparing for the assessment(s) of professional competencies required for licensure. The stipends will be disbursed by the preparation program to eligible students to pay the fees and costs associated with the assessment of professional competencies, which may include preparation materials or courses, and travel and lodging costs for getting to a testing site.

Candidates can get stipend support for the following endorsement areas for which Praxis exams are required for licensure:

- Elementary Education – Elementary Education bundle 5901 (or Mathematics 5903, Social Studies 5904, and Science 5905); and Teaching Reading 5205
- Early Childhood Education – Education of Young Children 5024 and Teaching Reading 5205
- Early Childhood Special Education – Education of Young Children 5024, Special Education: Preschool/Early Childhood 5691, and Teaching Reading 5205
- Special Education – Special Education: Core Knowledge and Applications 5354; Elementary Education bundle 5901 (or Mathematics 5903, Social Studies 5904, and Science 5905); and Teaching Reading 5205
- School Counselor – Professional School Counselor 5421

For More Information

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Colorado Department of Higher Education <https://highered.colorado.gov/>

Colorado Rises: Advancing Education and Talent Development <http://masterplan.highered.colorado.gov/>

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