

Spark Apprenticeship Program

This one-year program is designed to meet the needs of school districts and teacher apprentices by providing a social justice based rigorous, comprehensive and supportive path to licensure.

Spark Apprenticeship program adheres to the main tenets of the Spark teacher education institute as outlined in our handbook. There are changes to demonstration of content knowledge, tests required for admission, additional mentor support and transformation of action research project. This program would expand the number of endorsement areas offered by Spark to include any K-12 teaching endorsement area. Our goal in seeking such broad approval is to offer the endorsements necessary to meet the needs of our partnering school districts. Students may need additional course work to meet teaching standards for specialized endorsements (i.e. special education) We will evaluate the program through surveying completers at the end of the program and a year later to evaluate efficacy and teacher readiness.

- **Seminars and Institutes:** A Summer Institute, and weekly seminars (Saturdays) provide the foundation for graduate level pedagogical inquiry. The seminars are organized as thematic modules. Each semester culminates in an Exhibition, with presentations by the apprentices on curricular projects, research topics, critical reflections and completing program requirements for licensure.
- **Content Knowledge:** Teacher Apprentices (some may be employed using provisional licenses) provide evidence of their content knowledge in their subject areas through transcript review, praxis exams, content knowledge evaluation, and/or teaching experience. In addition, teacher apprentices will develop competence in teaching their subjects through the advice and feedback of their mentor teachers, by observing, reading, reflecting, writing lesson plans, and finally, by teaching.
 - Content Knowledge Evaluation: Apprentices who have taught for at least one school year and attempted the praxis exam at least once may meet content knowledge requirements through evaluation by an expert in their field (i.e. department head). The apprentice may provide evidence of content knowledge standards through teaching, professional development, and lesson/unit planning to name a few.
- **Support Teams:** The Support Team for the apprentice includes the Field Advisor and the Mentor Teacher. The Support Team assists the apprentice in the design and implementation of the Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) and evaluation of learning. Each apprentice's Support Team meets three or four times during the year (and more if needed) for planning and ongoing feedback and support. The apprentices meet on a daily basis with their mentor teachers, and weekly with the program faculty in on-campus seminars. Subject endorsed mentor teachers will provide ongoing informal and formal feedback to the teacher apprentice. This will make sure that the fundamentals of teaching and learning are in place in the field along with the field advisor.
 - Evaluation of Core Teaching Standards: Formal observations will evaluate the 10 Core Teaching Standards, as outlined in the formal evaluation form in the Handbook.
- **Individualized Learning Plans:** Each apprentice works with his or her Support Team to formulate an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) for meeting program expectations, which include developing

teaching competencies consistent with state and national standards for teacher certification. The development of the apprentice's ILP mirrors the Personalized Learning Plan process required of 7-12 students in the state of Vermont. A template for the ILP is reproduced at the back of this Handbook.

- **Action Research:** Apprentices learn to investigate questions relating to their practice, such as the economic and political context of the school and community, integrating cultural knowledge with subject matter, and assessment of teaching methods. This creative process is also essential to teacher learning as they practice reflecting on pedagogy and the world around us.
- **Adding an Endorsement:** A Spark field advisor will support the licensed teacher through the requirements of adding an endorsement. Licensed classroom teachers may add an endorsement by meeting the following requirements: content knowledge, field experience and observation.
 - **Content Knowledge:** They must meet the content knowledge requirements as described above.
 - **Field Experience and Observation:** The requirements include at least two weeks field experience if they are not currently employed in the endorsement area they are adding and two field observations.