

Dear Standards Board,

I am writing to express my deep gratitude for your support of the collaboration between Andrew Prowten and the WSESU Special Education department. When I reached out to the state in the hopes of helping experienced teachers find pathways to special education licensure, I was so excited to connect with Andrew, who saw a similar opportunity. Through our work together, one special educator has already obtained licensure, and three others are on the pathway to licensure. This might not sound significant. I want to stress that it is. Between last year and this year, this represents extremely high quality special education services that were delivered for over 70 students.

I want to share a brief story of just one of these students. As a beginning 6th grader, he was struggling to fluently and accurately decode and encode CVC words. Last year, we had an Academic Support Teacher interested in pursuing her special education license. This teacher has two decades of experience as both a classroom teacher and interventionist. She is excellent, and we were able to pair her intentionally with this 6th grade student who was not reading. She also worked incredibly closely with the special education coach who has been paired up with this group of special educators who have provisional licenses. Just one year later, after working with this special educator daily, he is reading 52 words correctly per minute at a 4th grade level. He still has a long way to go, but having access to exceptional instruction has changed the trajectory of his life. This pathway to special education made that possible.

I am writing with a sense of urgency. I guarantee that if our district did not work with Andrew to develop this pathway for special educators, we would be in a similar position as other districts across the state, sending out letters to families informing them that we simply don't have the staff required to fulfill all IEP services. I feel incredibly fortunate that between switching to a case manager model and providing a doable pathway with very intentional coaching and support, we are attracting experienced educators to the field of special education. I wholeheartedly support the work that Andrew is continuing to pursue in regards to the peer review process. I am watching the impact of having some of our most experienced, expert teachers working with our students who need the highest quality of instruction.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any additional questions regarding this work. From my perspective as a special education administrator, it is essential that it continues.

Warm regards,
Whitney Lynde
Elementary Special Education Coordinator, WSESU
whlynde@wsesdvt.org