

**UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**ALTERNATIVE TEACHER PREPARATION (ATP) PROGRAM**  
**MILD/MODERATE LICENSURE**  
*Frequently Asked Questions*

**General Information Regarding the USU Alternative Teacher Preparation Program**

**1. *How is the USU ATP Program different than a traditional university special education teacher preparation program?***

The USU ATP Program is a cooperative effort between Utah State University, participating school districts, the Utah State Office of Education, and the Utah's State Personnel Development Project. The goal of either a traditional or alternative teacher preparation program is to produce competent special educators. The primary difference between a traditional teacher preparation program and the USU ATP program is that the alternative preparation program requires academic coursework taken concurrently while the individual is working in a special education setting in a participating school district or charter schools (see #2 below).

Note: The Utah State University Mild/Moderate Alternative Teacher Preparation Program is not to be confused with other alternative teacher preparation programs (i.e. USOE ARL Alternative Route to Licensure program, BYU Public School Partnership, or SUU SEAL Program).

**2. *Which districts participate in the USU ATP Program?***

At the present time, several school districts and charter schools across the Wasatch Front participate with Utah State University. For a list of districts and charter schools that potentially hire prospective USU-ATP candidates based on their openings, refer to the separate document entitled "USU Alternative Teacher Program Participating School Districts And Charter Schools". Contact information is provided for each district and charter school. Additional information about district procedures and expectations is provided further in this document (see #12, #13, #14 below).

**Program Structure of the USU Mild/Moderate Alternative Teacher Preparation Program**

**3. *What is meant by a "mild/moderate licensure"?***

Teachers in public schools are required to be licensed. A special education teacher can receive either a mild/moderate license or a severe license. The difference is in the severity of the disabilities of the students being taught.

An individual who earns a mild/moderate teaching license teaches students who may have mild cognitive impairments, learning disabilities, emotional/behavioral disorders, or other disabilities, which are mild to moderate in nature. All of these students require special education services. The emphasis in the mild/moderate program is on identifying strategies and developing special education programs and services to address the educational demands needed for the student to meet the state core curriculum.

**4. *In a nutshell, what does the ATP program look like?***

- The program is structured to be completed over approximately 15 months (Year 1: late-July to end of June; Year 2: September to December). For the total program, students are registered for approximately 30 semester hours of coursework.
- Students begin the program with a **MANDATORY** introductory course that occurs in **late July** and then beginning in September 2015 proceed through the remaining courses as a cohort.
- Coursework is designed to meet state teacher licensure standards as well as provide a direct relationship between what is taught in classes to what is required to meet district "on the job" expectations in a special education setting.
- Students need to start the program at the beginning and are not admitted into the program at mid-year (spring or subsequent semesters).

## **Program Expectations**

### **5. *What are the basic requirements that I must meet?***

- You must have a posted bachelor's degree and provide office college transcripts once admitted;
- You must successfully complete an assessment of basic literacy and math requirements required by USU; and
- You need to be hired to teach in an approved mild/moderate special education setting by a participating school district or charter school.

*Note:* Passing the USU literacy and math requirements and submitting an application to a participating school district or charter school **does not** presume admission to the USU ATP program. Local school districts and charter schools fill vacancies on different timelines and are based on vacancies. Interested candidates are expected to follow district or charter school hiring procedures.

### **6. *What does it take to be successful in the program?***

Key personal qualities include: time management, hard work, focus, commitment, a positive attitude, and the ability to adapt and accept feedback.

Anytime an individual takes on a new and unfamiliar job **and** is registered essentially as a full-time college student, the challenges are great. In addition to assuming the responsibilities of the new job as a special education teacher (with limited background knowledge associated with being a special education teacher), there are assignments to complete, textbooks to read, tests to study for, and classes to attend.

Given the expectation of the school district and the Utah State Office of Education that you complete your special education licensure during your enrollment in this program, full attendance at classes must have priority over other responsibilities (i.e., coaching, part-time jobs, child care, etc.).

In addition, you must:

- earn a B or better grade in all graded courses in the program and a "Pass" in all non-graded courses,
- pass the field-based practicum during Fall and Spring semesters of the first year of the program,
- pass student teaching during Fall semester of the second year of the program,
- pass a state-required PRAXIS test for licensure, **AND**
- be recommended for continued employment in your respective school district or charter school at the end of years 1 and 2 of the program.

### **7. *What technology is required?***

The USU courses are a combination of face-to-face class time and internet-based coursework. Accepted ATP students must have **daily access** to a computer with a high-speed internet connection. Required computer applications for the USU coursework include: Adobe Acrobat, Excel, and Word. Students must be proficient in accessing the internet, word processing, and creating spreadsheets.

### **8. *What support am I provided during the time I am enrolled in the ATP program?***

Because this is a collaborative program between USU and participating school districts/charter schools, structured support is built into the program to help you with your first two years as a special educator.

- The course instructors are highly qualified and available to problem solve concerns and offer suggestions on how to apply the coursework to your day-to-day teaching assignment.
- Through your district or charter school, you will be assigned a cooperating teacher/instructional coach who is a master teacher. Your cooperating teacher/instructional coach will be expected to: (1) provide you with feedback on assignments prior to turning them in, (2) observe your teaching during regularly observation visits and give feedback, and (3) provide support to help you navigate through school- and district/charter-level expectations and procedures.
- Your district special education department or charter school will provide additional trainings as well as access to teacher specialists who will be available to help in your skill acquisition.
- Your principal (or assistant principal) will provide feedback to you by completing an administrative feedback form for the Alternative Teacher Preparation program in the fall and spring of Year 1.

## **Financial Expectations and Obligations**

### **9. *What are my expected out-of-pocket costs?***

Tuition costs are approximately \$8,850. You are responsible for tuition and books costs. Tuition has yet to be set by Utah State University for the 2015-16 school year. For your information, tuition costs are greater in the Fall semester of the first year because the mandatory mid-July/early August *Orientation to Teaching Student with Mild/Moderate Disabilities* course tuition is included in Fall semester.

In addition, textbooks and supplemental materials are required for all classes. Approximate textbook and supplemental materials costs are \$250-\$300. You will be given a list of textbooks for Fall Semester to order during the *Orientation to Teaching Student with Mild/Moderate Disabilities*. You will need to purchase these prior to the beginning of Fall Semester in September. In addition to textbooks, you may be expected to purchase additional supplemental materials at the beginning of each semester. The majority of costs for the first year will be incurred in the Fall semester, because the texts are used for both fall and spring semesters.

### **10. *Is there help with out-of-pocket expenses?***

School districts or charter schools **DO NOT** provide stipends or reimbursements for tuition or textbooks for students enrolled in this program.

If hired by a school district or charter school and accepted into the ATP program, you will receive information regarding state and federal financial assistance programs. You may also apply for student loans. You will be responsible for completing any applications and applying for any financial assistance.

Prior to applying for financial aid, you will need to complete necessary applications and registrations which include: (1) applying to Utah State University to become a matriculated student, (2) completing the application to the Alternative Teacher Preparation program after being hired by the participating school district or charter school, and (3) registering for Fall semester classes. Anyone applying for financial aid will not receive financial aid remuneration until after the beginning of the Fall semester.

You may also independently search and apply for scholarships and/or grants. If information becomes available regarding scholarships and/or grants that students may be eligible for, this information will be shared with you.

### **11. *When is tuition due?***

Tuition is due just prior to the first week of each semester. During the summer *Orientation to Teaching Student with Mild/Moderate Disabilities*, you will receive course numbers and registration information for courses you will need to register for fall semester. After you receive this information at the orientation, you will register and pay for classes. This can be done at the USU Extension sites (e.g., Salt Lake USU Extension is located at 2500 South State, So. Salt Lake. Location: 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the north building in the Granite Education Center). Timely payment of tuition is the responsibility of the student.

USU does offer a number of payment options including deferred fee options. Again, for further information you need to contact the USU Office (Salt Lake location) at 801-269-9422 for additional information

During the first year of the program, you will be expected to pay tuition for spring and summer semesters typically just prior to the first week of both of those semesters. For Fall semester of the second year, you will be expected to pay tuition prior to the beginning of the semester.

## **District and Charter School Procedures and Expectations**

### **12. *Do I apply for admission to the USU Alternative Teacher Preparation Program before being hired by a district?***

**NO.** It is imperative that prospective students first be hired by a participating school district in an approved mild/moderate special education setting. Prospective students need to adhere to individual district and charter school hiring procedures when applying for a position.

USU's Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation **CANNOT** admit a student who has not been hired by a participating school district or charter school. Priority is given to teachers teaching on letters of authorization. Occasionally, space permitting, paraeducators or interns who have a bachelor's degree and are working in an approved setting may be considered for admittance to this program.

**Note:** Individuals with an expired special education license or who are working in general education classrooms, private schools/programs, or correctional facilities/YIC programs are not eligible for admission to the USU Alternative Teacher Preparation Program. Students from Utah State Office of Education’s Alternative Route to Licensure program are not eligible to participate in the USU Alternative Teacher Preparation program for special education licensure.

**13. *What factors do districts and charter schools use to determine which interested candidates to interview?***

Approximately 150 - 175 inquiries about the USU Alternative Teacher Preparation Program are received each year. Openings are available for approximately 50. School districts and charter schools have an obligation to fill vacancies with qualified candidates. When vacancies in a school district or charter school are greater than the number of certified candidates, districts and charter schools then begin to hire individuals on a “letter of authorization”, which may include USU Alternative Teacher Preparation Program candidates.

Participating school districts and charter schools will expect those individuals interested in employment to have (1) read and become familiar with these Frequently Asked Questions, (2) taken and passed the basic literacy and math assessments, and (3) submitted a *USU Alternative Teacher Preparation Program Candidate Information* sheet to the identified school district special education personnel or charter school administrator (see the Admission Information for Prospective Candidates).

When a vacancy becomes available in a district or charter school, district special education personnel or charter school administrator will review submitted *USU Alternative Teacher Preparation Program Candidate Information* sheets and schedule screening interviews. If you are called for a screening interview, the following will be considered: (1) your responses to interview questions, (2) your prior experience with either teaching or working with school-age youth, (3) academic history and record, and (4) references.

**14. *What should I expect once I have had my screening interview with a district or charter school?***

After district special education personnel or charter school administrator conduct screening interviews, candidates who are being considered for open positions will be contacted. Typically a pool of candidates are interviewed before a decision on which candidate to recommend for hire is made.

Individuals who are offered employment must meet all requirements of the district or charter school for hiring. This will include a posted degree from a college or university and a required background check.

The background check must be completed by mid-September. You will be expected to pay a mandatory fee for the background check.

## **Next Steps**

**15. *What should I do if I am NOT hired by any district prior to the beginning of the August Orientation to Teaching Student with Mild/Moderate Disabilities?***

If you are not hired by any district prior to of the *Orientation to Teaching Student with Mild/Moderate Disabilities*, you **CANNOT** attend the orientation.

On occasion, participating school districts and charter schools fill vacancies AFTER the orientation. If you are hired after the orientation, you will be expected to attend a make-up Introduction to Special Education Orientation, which will occur in early September.

**16. *What should I do next?***

- Review and follow the steps provided in the Admission Information for Prospective Candidates sheet.
- If you have additional questions, contact Dr. Marilyn Likins, Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation. She is the Coordinator of the Utah State University Mild/Moderate Alternative Teacher Preparation Program. Contact information: [marilyn@nrccpara.org](mailto:marilyn@nrccpara.org)