

Special Education Teacher Pipeline Grant Program

Application Guidance Document

Tuition, fees, and book/supplies support paid directly to an approved TPP partner for students pursuing their initial Minnesota Special Education Teacher licensure. Candidates must maintain employment with a district partner and funds can only be used for approved initial licensure programs with a partner Teacher Preparation Partners (TPP).

Special Education Teacher Pipeline grant program

Southwest Minnesota Special Education Teacher Pipeline grant program have funds available to support students pursuing their **initial** teaching licensure in Minnesota in the following special education licensure areas: Academic and Behavioral Specialist (ABS), Emotional Behavior Disorder (EBD), Learning Disabilities (SLD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), Developmental Cognitive Disabilities (DCD), Oral/Aural Deaf Education (O/A), Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH), and/or Blind or Visually Impaired (BVI). The Minnesota Department of Education provided funding for this program under [Minnesota Statute 122A.77 Special Education Teacher Pipeline Program](#) to develop a pipeline of trained, licensed Tier 3 or Tier 4 SpEd teachers. SWWC has been awarded \$3,000,000 to support teacher licensure in our region until June 2028 or until funding runs out.

Intent of Tuition, Books and Fees Support

The intent of this tuition and fees direct funding opportunity is to increase the number of available teachers licensed as Tier 3 or 4 Special Education Teachers in our region. The expectation is that staff who benefit from this direct tuition/fees funding would then pursue special education licensure upon completion of course requirements, and actively pursue and/or be available for employment in this capacity in the state of Minnesota. Funding is not guaranteed for the duration of the candidate's program, but rather considered each semester.

Graduate Tuition/Fees/Books/Etc. Request Maximum

Application Fee – Up to \$50

Books/Materials – Up to \$200 per semester

Graduate Tuition/Fees – Up to \$600 per credit

Undergraduate Tuition/Fees – Up to \$450 per credit

**Tuition, fees, books, and other materials amounts are general guidelines, the grant management team reserves the right to change maximum amounts as appropriate, for*

example to provide equitable distribution, prioritize Tier I and II special educators, and as grant funds are available.

Applicant Requirements

The number of students selected for support will depend upon the number of qualified applicants for any given semester. Applicants must be current employees of a partner district, have never held or be eligible for a standard Tier III or IV teaching license in Minnesota, and have an interest in becoming a fully licensed special educator.

The **first** priority applicants each semester remains Tier 1 or 2 special education teachers. The **second** priority applicants remain paraprofessionals or other non-licensed employees. We would consider a Tier 1 or 2 teacher that is not currently in a special education position in this second group. Though this person has a license, it is not a Tier 3 license nor is it in special education. Applicants must have the signature of their Director of Special Education and/or other applicable leader (Superintendent) attached to the application. Participants in the program must be enrolled at a partner Teacher Preparation Provider (TPP) approved program licensure coursework leading to initial special education licensure. The amount of the award may vary each semester based on candidate's request, licensure need area, priority funding applicant pool, and funding available. This grant program will prioritize funding for Tier I and II special educators in each application cycle. If the candidate is receiving financial grants and/or scholarships from other sources, the SW Minnesota Special Education Teacher Pipeline grant program may provide a lower amount than requested as this grant funding is provided after all other funding sources have been expended. Award letters will be provided on the first of each month to approved candidates. To receive consideration for initial funding, candidates must complete an application by the 15th of each month to be considered for funding by the first of the next month. Candidates who meet the requirements and are accepted for funding will receive an award letter by the 1st of the following month indicating funding amount. For subsequent requests, candidates will work with the Program Success Coach to be considered for additional funding if they provide proof of enrollment/transcript, are making adequate progress towards special education teacher licensure, and funds in the grant are available. As a beneficiary of this tuition, fees, and books support, a student is obligated to have intentions to be a special education teacher in southwest Minnesota.

Course Requirements & Related Tuition Support

Course requirements for each approved initial special education licensure program are dependent upon the applicant's previous coursework and will be evaluated by the selected partner Teacher Preparation Provider (TPP) program. Candidates for this program should reach out to a partner TPP program to apply and review candidates'

transcripts to identify courses needed to meet the special education teacher licensure program requirements. Licensure courses are eligible for funding requests. Non-licensure courses, including research courses would not be eligible for funding consideration. Prior review of allowable courses must be pre-approved by Program Success Coach.

Timeline

You may apply at any time during the current school year, although it is strongly recommended that applications are submitted prior to enrollment for courses that are subject to grant support. Initial applications are due by the 15th of the month, and award letters or status will be provided to applicants by the 1st of the month. Applications are reviewed and/or accepted on a first come/first served basis with priority always given to Tier I and II special education teachers. Regional representation will also be considered. If available funds are depleted or if the team deemed it necessary, the funding requests may be minimized. Funding will be provided at minimum for fall, spring, and summer terms.

Tax Implications

Grant money paid to TPP's on behalf of accepted candidates must support tuition, fees, books, and/or other approved expenses. In September 2024, the grant may consider funding additional expenses such as licensure test preparation, technology support, lost wages, etc. Grants will be paid directly to TPP providers. Stipends will be paid to grant recipients by SWWC Service Cooperative may be taxable income to the recipient and may need to be reported to the IRS on form 1099. It is the recipient's responsibility to maintain records for these payments. SWWC bears no tax liability for providing funding to candidates or TPP providers on behalf of the candidates, please check with your tax accountant for information.

Application Directions

- ❖ To qualify, you must meet the following requirements.
 - The applicant must currently be employed with [one of the following district partners](#).
 - Currently working as a Tier I or II special education teacher or district employee.
 - Demonstrate a willingness to be a special education teacher after completing a licensure program.
 - Have never held or do not currently qualify for a Tier III or IV license.
- ❖ Complete an electronic application packet that consists of:
 - A completed electronic **application form** from the applicant.

- **Signed Letter of Commitment with a Signature** from your Director of Special Education (not a coordinator or local supervisor), Superintendent or building Principal.
 - A **statement of financial support** describing any tuition, books, fees, etc. supported from other resources.
 - Teaching license, and other demographic information
 - Agreement to all program requirements including but not limited to: willingness to sign FERPA, progress check-ins, TPP program selection, etc.
- ❖ Collect all components of the application packet and fill out application here:
- <https://www.swwc.org/Domain/208>

If you have questions, contact:
Heidi van der Hagen, Program Success Coach
heidi.vanderhagen@swwc.org 320-296-9598

To assure that your application has been received, contact Heidi van der Hagen if you have not heard back by the first of the month after applying by the 15th.

Applications will receive priority consideration based on the date of receipt for the given year, as well as geographical representation and other identified criteria outlined below.

- ❖ Only completed electronic applications will be reviewed. Candidates must meet the qualification criteria to be reviewed: employed with a district partner as a Tier I or II teacher or non-licensed staff and must demonstrate a willingness to be a special education teacher after completing the program.
- ❖ The quality of the applicant is a necessary condition for an award. As the primary judgment of quality, reviewers will consider:
 - your potential to succeed in rigorous special education coursework
 - your course grades in the specified courses, which must be a letter grade of A or B (or Pass) to qualify for continued tuition funding; and
 - your potential, upon completion, to be an effective special education teacher for students in our region of Minnesota.
- ❖ Your status or current role in your district will also be a factor in the decision. Preferences will be given to:
 - a. applicants who are currently employed with a partner district as a Tier I or II special education teacher;
 - b. applicants who are currently employed with a partner district as a special education paraprofessional;

- c. applicants who are currently employed with a partner district as a non-licensed and/or Tier I or II teacher, but have interest in becoming a special educator; and
 - d. applicants who qualify and are located in a school within Region 6 or 8, but are not employed with a partner district.
- ❖ Finally, your geographical location will also be considered in order to equitably support applicants from around the region.
 - ❖ Once a candidate applies, they will be notified of the status of their application by the 1st of the next month, given the application was submitted at least two weeks prior.
 - ❖ The process for receiving tuition and other support for the applicants who are selected will be as follows. Students will:
 - Fill out the application and receive acceptance or non-acceptance in the program by the first of the month; if accepted,
 - Apply to a TPP approved partner program and fill out FERPA;
 - Work with TPP advisor to determine program plan, and financial aid office to determine tuition and fee amount;
 - Work with Program Success Coach to request exact funding amount, review course plan, and schedule check-in meetings;
 - If approved, SWWC will send tuition and fees directly to the TPP
 - Complete the courses through the accredited TPP;
 - Provide the SWWC (Heidi van der Hagen) with electronic *proof of course completion/university grade report* **at the completion of each semester** to be considered for additional funding.
 - ❖ If an individual's application was previously approved, it is *not* necessary to complete a new application for succeeding semesters. Instead, reach out to the Program Success Coach for next steps.



Program Success Coach

Heidi van der Hagen

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320-296-9598