

Oregon Special Education Workforce Summit: Executive Summary

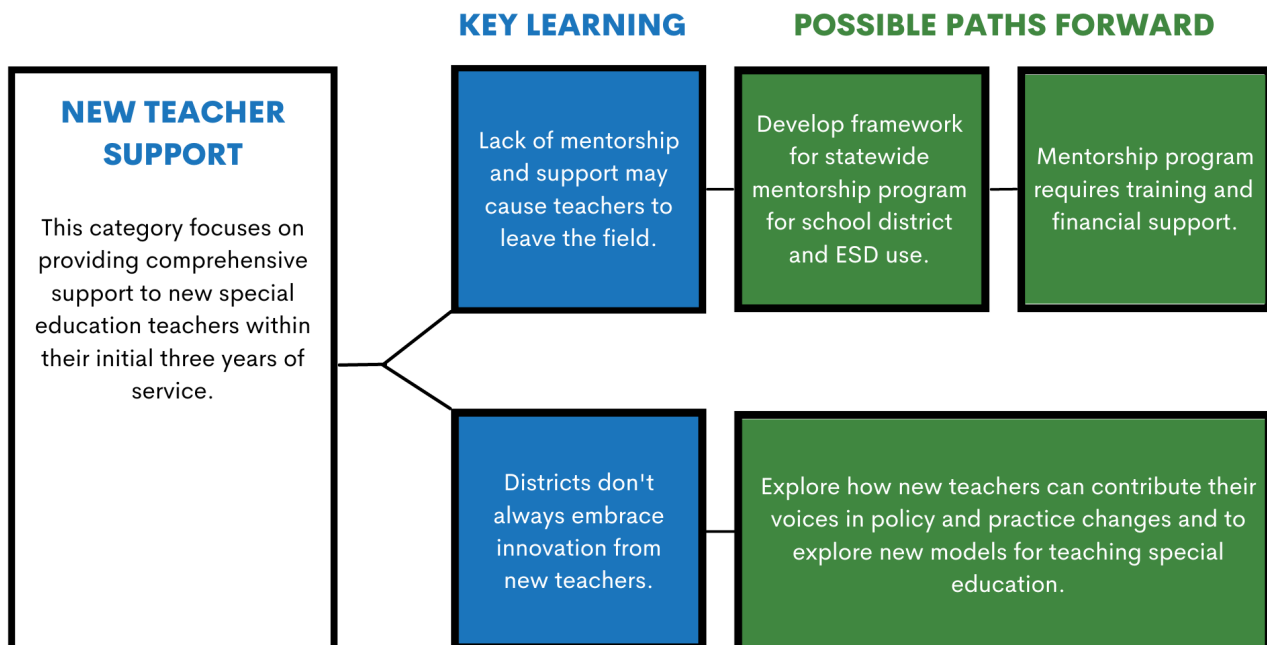
Background

As the educator workforce has continued to face unprecedented challenges in serving Oregon’s students, ODE identified a unique opportunity for state agencies supporting education to bolster joint efforts to address the pressing needs of our students and education community. This summit was built upon prior work conducted by state agencies. To that end, ODE convened Oregon’s educator preparation program (EPP) providers along with the Teachers Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC) and the Educator Advancement Council (EAC) to discuss:

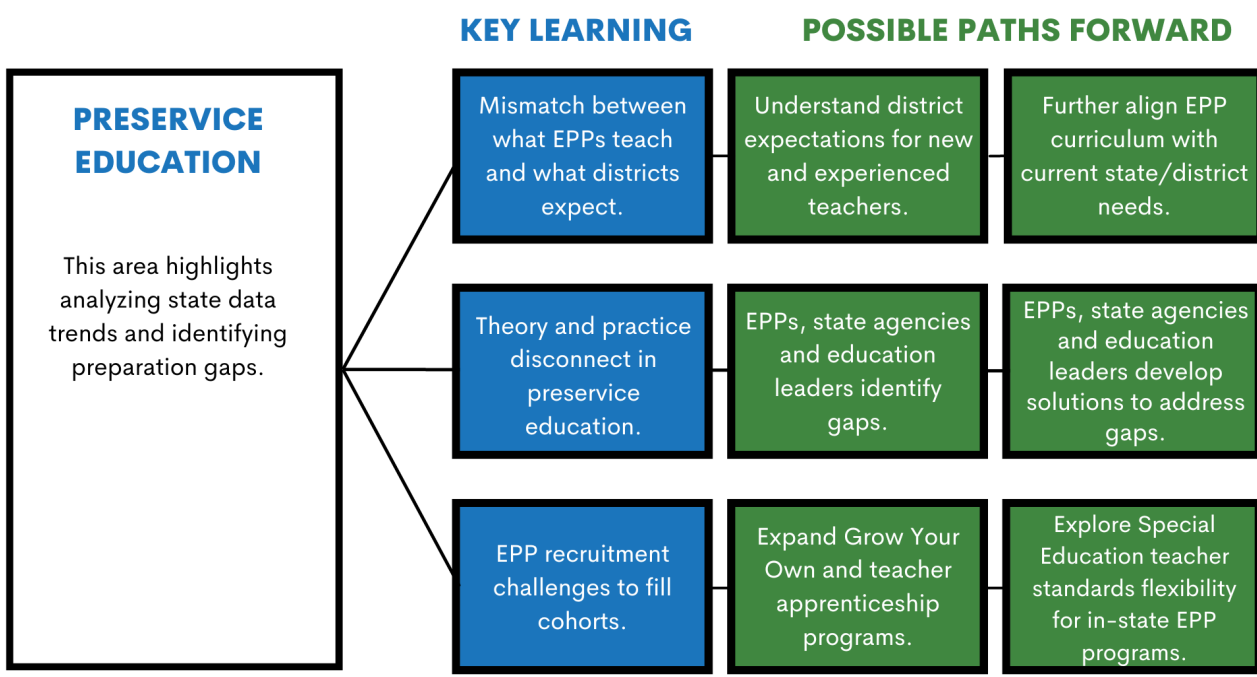
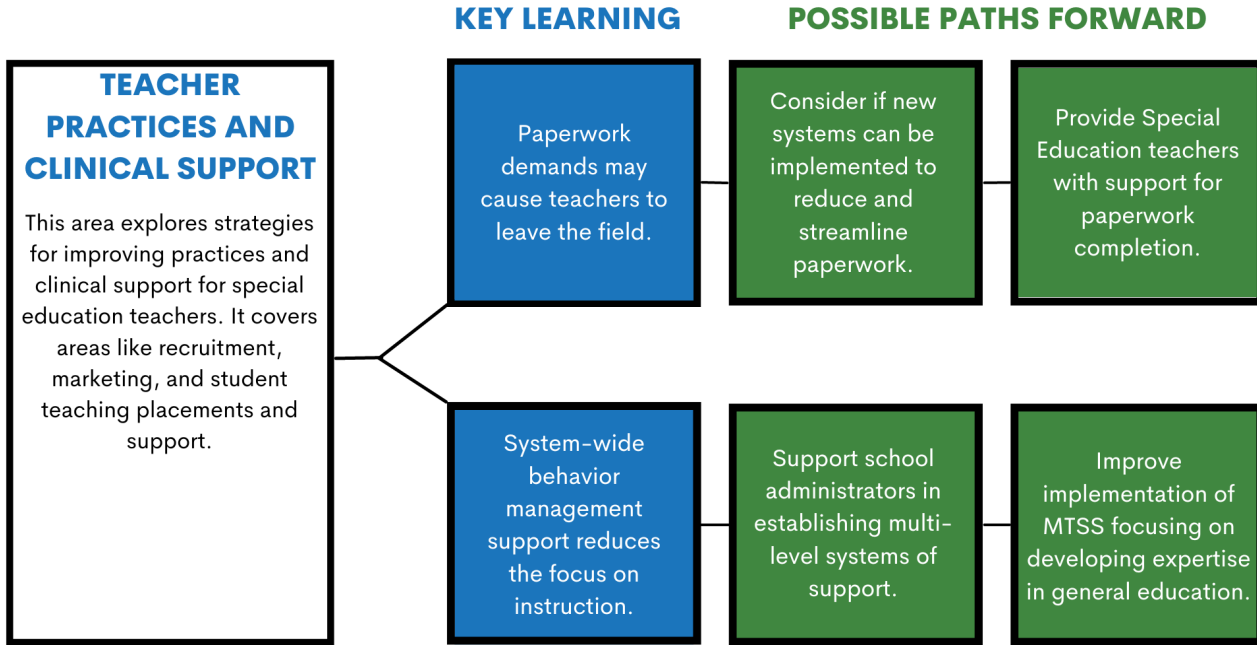
- Collective approaches to support the teacher preparation pipeline to address workplace shortages of special education staff.
- Current skills and practices that special educators need to fulfill the significant behavioral, social emotional needs of students.
- Specific topic areas that have been shown to need additional attention within the scope of teacher training, state guidance, technical assistance, and district level professional development.

Within each of these discussion areas, participants identified themes and organized them into three main categories: new teacher support, teacher practices and clinical support, and preservice education. It is important to note that any approaches to addressing educator shortages are necessarily cross-agency. Addressing teacher shortages in Oregon in a sustainable way will take the ongoing efforts of at least ODE, TSPC, EAC, Oregon’s EPPs and, Oregon’s K-12 School Districts and Education Service Districts. There are many potential paths forward to address the underlying issues resulting in staff shortages. Below, we identify key learnings brought forth from Summit participants and possible paths forward for Oregon to address the issues identified.

Key Learnings and Possible Paths Forward



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Key Commitments of Partners

Each of the partners participating in the summit agreed to continue engaging in key activities to address the workforce shortage. In addition to continuing to collaborate towards the possible paths forward noted above, each participating agency or group committed as follows:

<p style="text-align: center;">Oregon Department of Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Developing and administering a listserv to allow the department to communicate directly with EPPs. ● Developing and administering a survey of school districts to better understand what school districts expect of new and experienced special educators. ● Facilitating ongoing, regular sessions at conferences and events with EPPs to allow for meeting and conferring with district and state staff. ● Exploring the use of IDEA state set aside dollars to support an early career mentorship program for special educators. ● Exploring the potential of developing a regional entity for support and mentorship, especially given struggles of many districts in daily operations with shortages. ● Developing and providing technical assistance on a statewide IEP manual for special educators. ● Developing a request for proposals for a statewide technical assistance center to support district and educator capacity to effectively address disability-related behavior. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Teacher Standards and Practices Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identifying in-state educator preparation programs and preparing that information in an easily accessible format to help market our programs to prospective educators. ● Exploring the process for adopting the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) standards for special education generalist preparation programs.
	<p style="text-align: center;">Educator Advancement Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Connecting with the Regional Educator Networks (RENs) to determine what supports and mentorship opportunities are available regionally to special educators.
	<p style="text-align: center;">Participants from Oregon’s Educator Preparation Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Committed to continuing the conversation, providing supports when requested and bringing the conversation back to their broader departments.

Closing and Next Steps

The Oregon special education workforce summit brought together key partners to address the pressing challenges facing the special education workforce. Through collaborative discussion, participants identified key learnings and possible paths forward across three areas: new teacher support, teacher practices and clinical support, and preservice education.

Each participating group made commitments to continue working together to explore and implement the identified next steps, and have been actively working towards those commitments since the summit. These collective efforts will focus on developing mentorship programs, reducing paperwork burdens, improving alignment between EPP curriculum and district expectations, expanding Grow Your Own programs, and more.

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The summit created energy and momentum for strengthening Oregon's special education workforce. Sustaining this momentum will require ongoing partnership, communication, and innovation. By working together, Oregon's education leaders can ensure high-quality learning experiences for all students by supporting special education teachers with comprehensive systems of training, collaboration, and advocacy.

The key learnings and commitments made at the summit provide a potential roadmap for the work ahead. Through coordinated efforts, Oregon can make progress towards building a more robust pipeline and supportive infrastructure to recruit, prepare, and retain excellent special education professionals. With continued collaboration, Oregon's education partners will be able to begin to address urgent workforce shortages and create systems changes that honor the crucial contributions of special educators.