



Utah's Professional Development and Technical Assistance System

A unified, integrated, data-driven professional development system, intentionally designed and directed to enhance developmental, academic, social, behavioral, and post-school outcomes for Utah's students with disabilities and reduce stakeholders, including LEAs, in need of higher intensity supports.

Executive Summary

The Center for Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education (TAESE), the Center for Persons with Disabilities (CPD), and Utah State University (USU) proposal is designed to create a professional development system that: a) is guided by quantitative and qualitative data, the Utah State Office of Education–Special Education Section (USOE–SES) and Professional Development/Technical Assistance (PD/TA) Advisory Board, and stakeholder priorities; b) leads to use of evidence-based professional development practices; c) allows for differentiated support through universal, targeted, and intensive levels; d) is designed from implementation assessments and incorporates implementation science principles and frameworks; e) ensures quality through PD/TA provider selection, management, and evaluation; f) utilizes technology; and g) utilizes an “evaluation system” supporting continuous PD/TA system improvement.

A. Data and USOE–SES and PD/TA Advisory Board Directed PD/TA Priorities—PD/TA priorities will be directed annually by two sources: 1) State Education Agency (SEA) and Local Education Agency (LEA) annual performance review (APR) data, along with Self-Contained and Resource Attendance Management (SCRAM), Public Educator Evaluation Requirements (PEER), Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs), Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), and Utah Comprehensive Accountability System (UCAS) data; and 2) USOE–SES and PD/TA Advisory Board identified PD/TA needs. Tools and weighting systems will be developed and employed to assist participants in identifying priorities.

B. Evidence-Based Professional Development Practices—USOE–SES, in collaboration with TAESE leadership, will develop the PD/TA system for organizing, delivering, and coordinating PD/TA using practices supported by evidence to reduce the gap between what participants learn in PD/TA experiences and what they do in school settings. Final authority and direction will be provided by USOE–SES leadership. In collaboration, TAESE proposes to provide face-to-face and recorded webinars and Utah Educational Network (UEN) supported Canvas web-based professional development. Irrespective of method of delivery, all PD/TA network staff and providers will organize and deliver PD/TA with the objective of altering participants’ behaviors in school settings. They will recognize that it’s what PD/TA participants do with students with disabilities in the school setting that produces learning. TAESE staff and providers will participate in quarterly coordination and professional learning community experiences, knitting them together as a “unified” body of professional development providers and steeping them in knowledge and skills to enhance the PD/TA they deliver, and thereby support the transfer of new skills to the school setting.

C. Universal, Targeted, and Intensive Levels of PD/TA Support—Because Utah LEA’s needs and strengths in infrastructure are diverse, each system has a unique signature requiring elements of PD/TA matched to their unique needs. In collaboration with the USOE–SES, TAESE proposes that all LEAs in Utah receive priority directed PD/TA, but that the explicitness,

intensity, and duration of the support be adjusted as per each LEA's Results Driven Accountability (RDA) and APR determination levels (i.e., meets requirements, needs assistance, needs intervention, needs substantial intervention). This proposed "LEA triage" system recognizes that all LEAs require support to achieve prioritized objectives, but some require supports incrementally more explicit, intense, and continuous to achieve the same outcome. Tools and assessments will be developed to complement RDA and APR determinations and to aid the PD/TA Core Team and LEAs in co-assessing the level of support needed to achieve objectives.

D. Implementation Assessment and Implementation of PD/TA—We propose to work collaboratively with the USOE–SES, PD/TA Advisory Board and the Utah Multi-Tiered System of Supports (UMTSS) project to coordinate assessments and implementation of a consistent PD/TA system and join with LEAs in co-assessing their readiness to support systematic implementation of evidence-based practices (EBPs). The objective will be to work alongside LEAs to move from "allowing implementation to happen" to "making implementation happen." TAESE embraces the charge to "develop an implementation plan for the proposed Utah PD/TA system, in collaboration with USOE–SES leaders and the PD/TA Advisory Board." Additionally, we propose accessing national experts in implementation science. TAESE understands that lasting systemic change in schools is an evolutionary process occurring over time and not a series of single events. TAESE will continuously assess the delivery and impact of PD/TA at each stage of the PD/TA implementation process (exploration and adoption; program installation; initial implementation; full operation; innovation and sustainability) to ensure EBPs are implemented with fidelity and achieve desired results.

E. PD/TA Provider and Contractor Selection, Management, and Evaluation—TAESE will create and coordinate—in collaboration with the USOE–SES—a PD/TA system consisting of part/full-time "Core Team" members, part/full-time regional coaches/implementation specialists, and contracted professional development staff. To ensure quality PD/TA, an RFP will be issued to targeted groups in Utah and the U.S. to serve as approved providers for the USOE–SES PD/TA system. The selection process will include the following criteria: evidence of targeted content knowledge, evidence of effectiveness in delivering evidence-based PD/TA, willingness to work collaboratively with other PD/TA providers, willingness to engage and apply implementation science, and a willingness to provide PD/TA associated with practices supported by reputable evidence. TAESE proposes that all PD/TA providers be evaluated for their effectiveness in producing change in participant behavior in PD/TA and school settings.

F. USOE–SES Single Point of Entry PD/TA Website—To coordinate evidence-based PD, address state priority topics, and address the unique PD needs of LEAs, a link to the PD/TA website will be nested prominently in the USOE–SES website. We propose that this website provide a "need assistance" button to click on, where users complete a brief form and are contacted by the project coordinator, who directs them to PD/TA providers who will make contact with the school district/charter. We propose that the single point of contact website provide background

information about each provider, areas of expertise, and cumulative evaluations of their services by consumers. This website will also provide topical information on EBPs, tools, and checklists, and access points to webinars and Canvas course-managed PD/TA trainings.

G. Evaluation System Supporting Continuous Improvement—We propose a multi-level evaluation system measuring: a) the quality and effectiveness of PD/TA activities and services; and b) a separate evaluation of the PD/TA system, looking at the process, procedures, and whether the system is improving APR data and outcomes for children with disabilities.

With 34 years of PD/TA support at state, regional, and national levels, TAESE is organized to address the two overarching goals identified in the request for proposal, to “improve state data regarding students with disabilities outcomes as a whole,” and to “have fewer stakeholders, including LEAs, in need of higher intensity supports.”