



# SPARK

(Special Education Professional Advancement and Refinement of Knowledge)

## Coaching Support, Cohort 1 Application



**OKLAHOMA  
Education**

## I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON SPARK COACHING SUPPORT

SPARK, or Special Education Professional Advancement and Refinement of Knowledge, is an initiative of the Oklahoma State Personnel Development Grant (OK-SPDG). The OK-SPDG was awarded in October 2022 with a proposed initiative to support early career special education teachers in using evidence-based practices for reading, math, behavior, and functional skills; meeting compliance expectations; and delivering specially designed instruction to students with various educational needs.

OK-SPDG provides support in these areas through multiple layers of support. At the initial layer, all Oklahoma educators can access evidence-based intervention and practice protocols and asynchronous professional development courses created and maintained by the OK-SPDG. At a limited capacity, OK-SPDG provides support through synchronous/virtual workshops and professional development sessions. At the highest level of support, OK-SPDG provides in-person and virtual direct coaching support through the SPARK initiative. Interested special educators are selected for this support through an objective application process.

## II. QUALIFYING EDUCATORS

For the purposes of this initiative, OK-SPDG defines "early career special educator" as any individual who has worked as a PreK-12th grade special education teacher for 5 years or less, regardless of prior teaching experience. In order to qualify for this coaching support, the applicant must be employed for the 2023-24 school year in an Oklahoma public school as a special education teacher and providing specially designed instruction for students on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for at least 50% of their contract time.

If you have questions about whether your employment qualifies, please contact Alexa Hudak, SPDG Project Director at [Alexa.Hudak@sde.ok.gov](mailto:Alexa.Hudak@sde.ok.gov) or 405-522-4513.

## III. APPLICATION TIMELINE AND SELECTION PROCESS

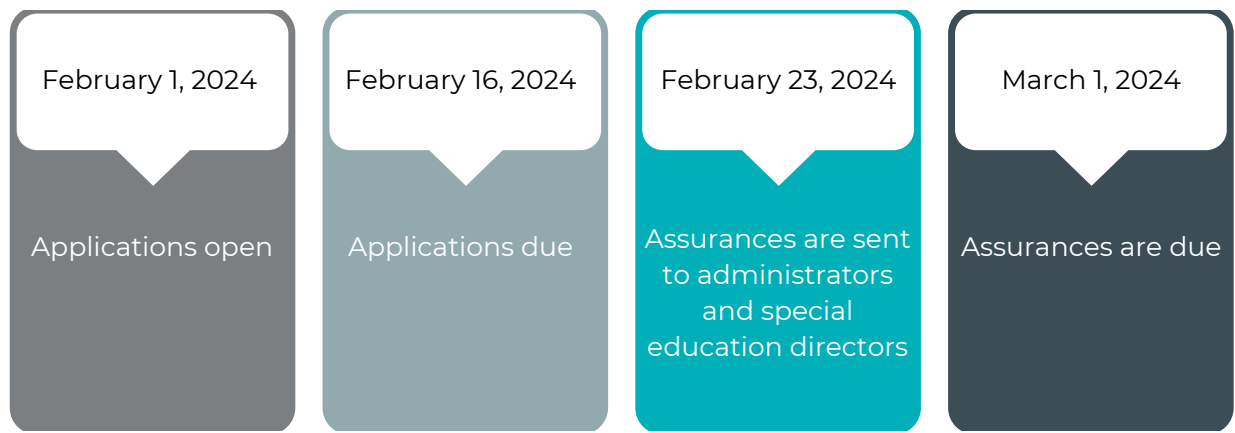
The purpose of this application process is to identify up to 100 qualifying early career special educators who could most benefit from the professional development sequence and from that 100, an additional 10 qualifying early career special educators for coaching services provided by the OK-SPDG. Selected applicants and OK-SPDG coaches will engage in several coaching cycles over the course of the year to implement at least one new evidence-based practice for behavior and for instruction. For more information on the training and resources provided through this project, please refer to **Section IV.**

## **BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION.**

## II. Application Timeline and Selection Process, cont.

Application for support is open to all Oklahoma PreK-12th grade special education teachers who have worked as a public school special educator for 5 years or less. For more information regarding qualified individuals, please refer to **Section II. QUALIFYING EDUCATORS**. To be considered for SPARK Cohort 1 Coaching Support, the application must be completed in its entirety. All applications will be reviewed using a standardized rubric.

Following application review and scoring, selected applicants will be notified via email. OK-SPDG staff will send assurance documentation to the district level special education administrator and the applicant's supervising administrator. Therefore, it is essential that all applicants speak about this opportunity with their administrator prior to submitting an application.



[The application response form can be accessed here.](#)

OK-SPDG is first soliciting applications for the SPARK initiative from employees of SPDG Cohort 1 districts and employees/students of SPDG partners. Following this first call for applications, if SPDG coaching capacity is not met, the project will solicit applications statewide with a new application timeline.

## IV. BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

The OK-SPDG has been designed to provide professionals with three layers of support. At the initial layer, SPDG-developed resources and implementation tools will be made freely available on our website at <https://sde.ok.gov/state-personnel-development-grant-spdg>. At the secondary layer, asynchronous professional development modules and synchronous Summer and Winter MTSS conferences will be provided statewide, with priority given to grant-supported sites and professionals. At the tertiary layer, up to ten early career special educators will receive direct coaching support.

#### IV. BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION, CONT.

Additionally, selected applicants will be provided a stipend to support off-contract coaching work. Participants in the professional development sequence will receive a \$500 stipend. Those participating in both the professional development and coaching will receive a \$2,000 stipend. More information regarding stipends will be provided at the time of selection.

#### V. REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION

Selected special educators will work with their SPDG-provided Coach to engage in structured coaching cycles to:

1. Collect baseline data
2. Identify areas for improvement
3. Develop a plan for improvement
4. Implement a matched evidence-based practice
5. Measure student outcomes/results and evaluate impact



SPARK participants will meet with their SPDG Coach in-person at least once per month and virtually at least once per month. In-between these face-to-face interactions, the special educator will complete activities related to the plan for improvement which may include completing lesson plans, conducting student assessments, or engaging in the evidence-based practice during instruction. The SPDG Coach and professional will collaboratively identify these activities within the coaching plan. Following completion of activities, the professional will provide this evidence or information within a coaching platform. The SPDG Coach will provide regular direct feedback and recommendations throughout the month via the coaching platform.

Because this support is provided in the context of a grant, supported professionals will provide data for SPDG staff to evaluate teacher and student-level outcomes that will be reported in an Annual Performance Report to the grant's funding body. Collected data includes:

- Teacher survey data, administered by SPDG staff pre- and post-support;
- Coaching observation data, conducted periodically by the SPDG Coach;
- De-identified Student assessment data, provided by the SPARK teacher following pre- and post-benchmarking; and
- De-identified student behavioral data related to the identified intervention, provided by the SPARK teacher.

## V. REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION, CONT.

Data collection, review, and analysis will be built into the coaching cycles to naturally support data-driven decision making for improved instruction and IEP program planning. Support for data analysis will be provided to participants by the SPDG Coach, as well as direct training in data use will be provided to participants.

SPDG Coaches are employees of the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) and adhere to all FERPA requirements. Data will be de-identified and aggregated for the purposes of any and all external reports.

## VI. POTENTIAL COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH COACHING

The Oklahoma SPDG is a technical assistance and professional development project with limitations to allowable expenses. Therefore, our funds are designed to support professional development, coaching, and stipends for participating professionals. *The OK-SPDG will also pay for limited classroom-level standardized assessments that are necessary for coaching activities and required SPDG data collection.*

Supported professionals are highly encouraged to leverage existing district curriculum resources. The SPDG Coach will do everything in their power to provide support on the implementation of evidence-based practice in classrooms using existing resources and SPDG-developed instructional and intervention protocols. *It is not anticipated that participation in the SPARK initiative will incur any costs.*

## VII. ENDING SPDG SUPPORT

The Oklahoma SPDG asks that applying early career special educators and their administrators commit to one semester of SPDG support. However, our staff understand that some professionals and schools may experience extenuating circumstances that make it difficult or impossible to continue engaging in SPDG activities. Participation in a SPARK cohort is completely voluntary, and participants can choose to end support at any time. We ask that participants work directly with their SPDG Coach to eliminate any barriers to continued participation. If these attempts are unsuccessful, the participant should email the SPDG Project Director (Alexa Hudak, [Alexa.Hudak@sde.ok.gov](mailto:Alexa.Hudak@sde.ok.gov)) and express in writing their desire to end SPDG support. The Project Director will work with the participant to determine the pay out for any outstanding stipend reimbursements.

Additionally, because SPDG support is possible through grant funding, it is important for selected professionals to continue to engage with grant activities. If a participant demonstrates difficulty in attending and fully participating in activities and data collection as outlined in Section V. REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION, the SPDG Coach will work directly with the professional to identify and remediate any barriers. In the event these

## VII. ENDING SPDG SUPPORT, CONT.

efforts are ineffective, the SPDG Project Director will notify the professional and the professional's supervisor of intent to remove the participant from SPARK support and identify what other layers of service may be appropriate for the participant.

For all participants who complete a one-semester cohort, the SPDG Coach will work with the participant to develop a plan for continued professional growth and assist in identification of ongoing resources. All outstanding stipends and services will be completed by June 30, 2024.

## VIII. ACCESSING THE APPLICATION

[The application response form can be accessed here.](#)

If you need the application in an alternate digital or print format, please contact current SPDG Project Director, Alexa Hudak at [Alexa.Hudak@sde.ok.gov](mailto:Alexa.Hudak@sde.ok.gov).

To prepare for completion of the application, please refer to **Section X. APPLICATION QUESTIONS.**

## IX. CONTACT INFORMATION

For additional questions or technical assistance, please contact:

Alexa Hudak  
SPDG Project Director  
405-521-2081  
[Alexa.Hudak@sde.ok.gov](mailto:Alexa.Hudak@sde.ok.gov)

## X. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

The application is organized into 6 sections:

1. Professional Profile
2. Post-Secondary Education
3. Professional Background in Education
4. Current Employment Setting and Practices
5. Current Perceptions of Practice and Need
6. Applicant Understanding and Signature

For your convenience, we have included the application questions here. **Please remember to respond directly on the digital form here.** If you need a print version, contact [Alexa.Hudak@sde.ok.gov](mailto:Alexa.Hudak@sde.ok.gov).

### Section 1: Professional Profile

1. Email
2. Full Name
3. School District
4. Name of School Site
5. Name of School Principal
6. Principal's Email

### Section 2: Post-Secondary Education

7. Please indicate your highest level of education.
8. Where did you earn your Bachelor's degree, and what was your major?
9. Are you currently enrolled in a graduate degree program?  
*IF APPLICABLE:*
10. Where are you enrolled for your graduate program?
11. What degree/certificate are you seeking?
12. What is your anticipated graduation date?

### Section 3: Professional Background in Education

13. In what area(s) are you currently certified?
14. What was your path to certification? (such as Traditional Degree, Boot Camp, Para Route, Troops to Teach, etc.)
15. Which certification type do you currently hold?
16. How many years have you worked in PreK-12th education in any capacity? (e.g. paraprofessional, front office, etc.)
17. How many years have you been employed as a special education teacher provided services to students on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)?

### Section 3: Professional Background in Education, cont.

18. What is your current position? (e.g. Resource teacher, high school Life Skills program, etc.)

### Section 4: Current Employment Setting and Practices

19. Is there an instructional coach at your school district?

20. If there is an instructional coach at your site? If yes, then approximately how much time does the instructional coach spend in coaching activities per coached teacher per week?

21. If there is an instructional coach at your site, do the coach and teacher establish a goal?

22. Please briefly explain what current coaching or mentoring systems are in place within your school district or school site to which you have access.

### Section 5: Professional Development Sequence

- Are you able to dedicate appropriate time to complete the professional development sequence prior to June 1st, 2024?
- Are you committed to using the practices from the professional development sequence in your instructional practice?

### Section 6: Current Perceptions of Practice and Need

23. How confident are you in your current ability to provide instruction to all of your students? (1- Not at all confident, 5- Very confident)

24. How effective is your current instruction at meeting the educational needs of your students? (1- Not at all effective, 5- Very effective)

25. How confident are you in your current ability to handle disruptions in your classroom? (1- Not at all confident, 5- Very confident)

26. How effective is your current classroom management at preventing challenging or disruptive behaviors? (1- Not at all effective, 5- Very effective)

27. In what ways do you prevent and respond to disruptions or challenging behaviors in your classroom?

28. Are you willing to allow an instructional coach into your room to observe your practice (non-evaluative)?

29. Are you willing and able to engage in some coaching activities through a virtual/online format?

30. Do you intend to remain in the classroom as a special educator for at least another 3 years?

31. Why do you want coaching support through the SPARK initiative?

32. How do you believe you will benefit from coaching support?



## Section 7: Applicant Understanding and Signature

33. Please check each box to indicate that you have read and understood/completed these items.

- I have read and understand the content of the "SPARK Coaching Support Cohort 1 Application."
- I have spoken and received verbal permission from my supervising administrator and the district level special education administrator to apply for SPARK support.
- If selected, I am committed to receiving support for one year.
- If selected for SPARK, I agree to receive coaching support on-site and virtually.
- If selected, I will collaborate with a SPDG coach to report the necessary de-identified and/or aggregate data to SPDG staff.

34. Do you still have questions regarding this support and would like the SPDG Project Director to contact you regarding these?

35. As the preparer of this application, please digitally sign your name.