



(Special Education Professional Advancement and Refinement of Knowledge)

August 2026- May 2027



SPARK APPLICATION

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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 IV). The OK-SPDG IV was awarded in October 2022 with a proposed initiative to support early career special education teachers in implementing 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 IV provides support in these areas through multiple layers of coaching and professional development.

- ❖ At the **initial** layer, educators will access evidence-based intervention, practice protocols, asynchronous professional development courses supported by the OK-SPDG IV.
- ❖ The **next** layer of OK-SPDG IV provides access to synchronous/virtual workshops and professional development sessions.
- ❖ The **highest** level of support of OK-SPDG IV provides in-person and virtual direct coaching support through the SPARK initiative.

*Interested special education teachers with **5 years or less of experience** as a special education teacher are selected for this support through an objective application process.

II. QUALIFYING EDUCATORS

For the purposes of this initiative, OK-SPDG IV defines "early career special education teacher" as any individual who has worked as a PreK-12th grade special education teacher for **5 years or less**, regardless of prior teaching experience. To qualify for this coaching support, the applicant must be employed for the 2026-2027 school year in an Oklahoma public school as a special education teacher with appropriate certifications for the position they hold and are providing specially designed instruction for students on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for at least 50% of their contract time.

Applicants must submit on district letterhead a letter of assurance stating that these qualifications are accurate.

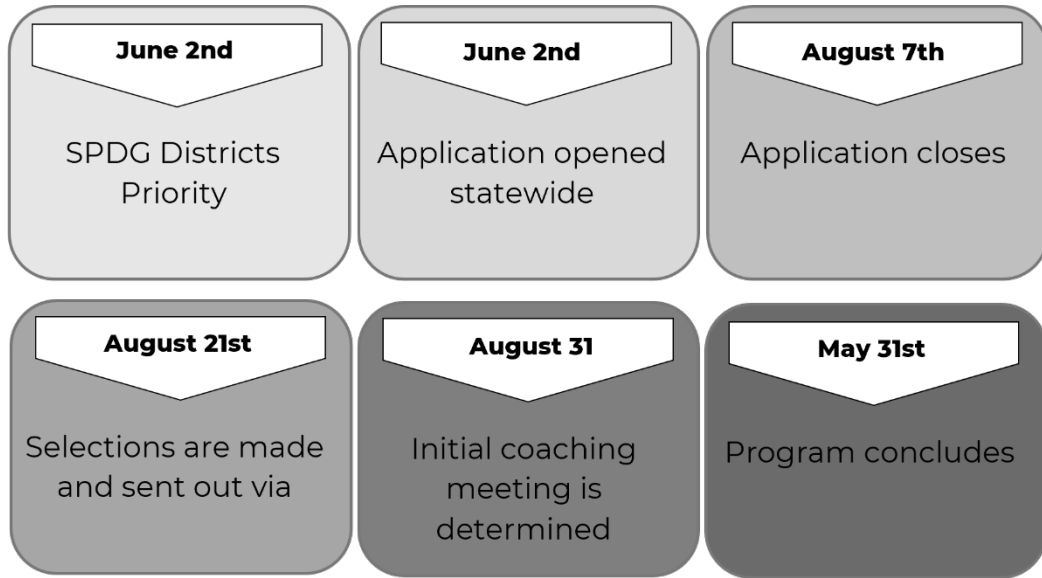
1. The letter must include a date, district name, site name, position, and years of service as a special education teacher. Failure to submit this letter will automatically disqualify the applicant. Therefore, it is essential that all applicants speak about this opportunity with their administrator prior to the submission of an application.
2. Email the assurance to either Alexa Hudak, SPDG Project Director at Alexa.Hudak@sde.ok.gov or Jasmin Brown, SPDG Project Co-Director at Jasmin.Brown@sde.ok.gov.

If you have questions about whether your employment qualifies, please contact Alexa Hudak, SPDG Project Director at Alexa.Hudak@sde.ok.gov or Jasmin Brown, SPDG Project Co-Director at Jasmin.Brown@sde.ok.gov.

III. APPLICATION TIMELINE AND SELECTION PROCESS

The purpose of this application process is to identify qualifying early career special education teachers who would most benefit from coaching services provided by the OK-SPDG IV. Selected applicants and OK-SPDG IV coaches will engage in recurring coaching cycles (2 or more) over the course of the year to implement at least one new evidence-based practice for behavior and one for academic instruction. For more information on the training and resources provided through this project, please refer to Section IV. BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION.

Application for support is open to all Oklahoma PreK-12th grade special education teachers who have worked as a public-school special education teacher for 5 years or less. For more information regarding qualified individuals, please refer to Section II. QUALIFYING EDUCATORS. To be considered for SPARK, 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. Participants selected will have two weeks to make initial contact with their coach in order to accept the service.



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

IV. BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

The OK-SPDG IV has been designed to provide professionals with three layers of support. Each layer builds upon the previous. Those that apply for the coaching opportunity, will be expected to complete approximately 20 hours of additional Professional Development as described by the program.

Initial Layer	SPDG-developed resources and implementation tools will be made freely available on our website at https://oklahoma.gov/education/services/special-education/spdg.html	No stipend provided
Next Layer	CEC Modules- Year 1 & 2 Cohorts Communities of Practice <i>*Optional SPARK Conference July 27-July 30, 2026</i>	\$500
Application Layer	Early career special education teachers will receive direct coaching support.	\$2000

More information regarding stipends will be provided at the time of selection.

V. REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION

Selected special education teachers will work with their OK-SPDG IV-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 OK-SPDG IV Coach in-person at least once per month and virtually at least once per month. In between these face-to-face interactions, the special education teacher 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 OK-SPDG IV Coach and educator will collaboratively identify these activities within the coaching plan. Following completion of activities, the coach and educator will provide this evidence or information within a coaching platform.

The OK-SPDG IV 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 OK-SPDG IV 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 OK-SPDG IV 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;
- ❖ De-identified student behavioral data related to the identified intervention, provided by the SPARK teacher; and
- ❖ The applicant will agree to complete a survey annually in May for two years following their coaching experience.

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 OK-SPDG IV Coach and direct training in data use will be provided to participants. OK-SPDG IV 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.

The estimated time to dedicate to this project is approximately one hour per week for the duration of the coaching opportunity.

VI. POTENTIAL COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH COACHING

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

VII. ENDING SPDG SUPPORT

Participant Ending Support

The Oklahoma SPDG IV asks that the applying early career special education teacher and their administrators commit to one full year of OK-SPDG IV 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 OK-SPDG IV Coach to eliminate any barriers to continued participation.

If these attempts are unsuccessful, the participant should email the SPDG Project Director or Co-Director (Alexa Hudak, Alexa.Hudak@sde.ok.gov or Jasmin Brown, Jasmin.Brown@sde.ok.gov) and express in writing their desire to end SPDG support. The Project Director will work with the participant to determine the payout for any outstanding stipend reimbursements.

OK-SPDG IV Ending Support

Additionally, because OK-SPDG IV 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, then OK-SPDG IV Coach will work directly with the professional to identify and remediate any barriers.

In the event these 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. The Project Director will work with the participant to determine the payout for any outstanding stipend reimbursements.

VIII. ACCESSING THE APPLICATION

If you need the application in an alternate digital or print format, please contact Alexa Hudak, SPDG Project Director at Alexa.Hudak@sde.ok.gov or Jasmin Brown, SPDG Project Co-Director at Jasmin.Brown@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

Jasmin Brown

SPDG Co-Project Director

405-522-0961

Jasmin.brown@sde.ok.gov

X. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

The application is organized into 7 sections:

1. Professional Profile
2. Post-Secondary Education
3. Professional Background in Education
4. Professional Development Sequence
5. Current Perceptions of Practice and Need
6. Instructional Coaching Experience
7. Applicant Understanding and Signature

For your convenience, we have included the application questions here.

[Please remember to respond directly on the digital form here.](#)

Section 1: Professional Profile

1. First Name
2. Middle Name
3. Last Name
4. Former Name (such as maiden)
5. Email (Preferred email)
6. Secondary Email
7. School District
8. Name of School Site
9. Name of School Principal
10. Principal's Email

Section 2: Post-Secondary Education

11. Please indicate your highest level of education.
12. What was the major of your bachelor's degree
13. Do you have a graduate degree? (Yes, no, in progress) |
 - a. If so, what is the major for that degree?

Section 3: Professional Background in Education

14. What was your path to certification? Did you go(Traditional Degree, Boot Camp, Para Route, Troops to Teach, etc.)
15. In what area(s) are you currently certified?
16. How many years have you worked in PreK-12th education in any capacity? (e.g. paraprofessional, front office, etc.) (drop down)
17. How many years have you been employed as a special education teacher providing services to students on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)?
18. What is your current position?

Section 4: Professional Development Sequence

19. Are you able to dedicate appropriate time to complete the professional development sequence prior to June 1st, 2026?
20. Are you committed to using the practices from the professional development sequence in your instructional practice?

Section 5: Current Perceptions of Practice and Need


21. How confident are you in your current instruction meeting the IEP goals of your students? (1- Not at all effective, 5- Very effective)
22. How effective do you feel you are in meeting the IEP goals of your students? (1- Not at all effective, 5- Very effective)
23. How confident are you in your current ability to handle disruptions in your classroom? (1- Not at all confident, 5- Very confident)
24. How effective is your current classroom management at preventing challenging or disruptive behaviors? (1- Not at all effective, 5- Very effective)
25. Do you intend to remain in the classroom as a special education teacher least another 3 years?

Section 6: Instructional Coaching Experience

26. Please describe any prior or current experience with an instructional coach. (i.e., have you worked with one, do you currently work with one, how frequently, what does the coaching look like, etc.)
27. Are you willing to allow an instructional coach into your room to observe your practice (non-evaluative)?
28. Are you willing and able to engage in some coaching activities through a virtual/online format?
29. Why do you want coaching support through the SPARK initiative?
30. How do you believe you will benefit from coaching support?

Section 7: Applicant Understanding and Signature

- ❖ 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 4 Application."
- ❖ I have spoken and received verbal permission from my supervising administrator and the district level special education administrator to apply for SPARK support.
- ❖ I have submitted a letter of assurance on a district letterhead that my qualifications are accurate.
- ❖ 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.

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- ❖ Do you still have questions regarding this support and would like the SPDG Project Director to contact you regarding these?
 - ❖ As the preparer of this application, please digitally sign your name.

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of education, H323A220017. However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Jennifer Coffey, Project Officer.