

For Immediate Release

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DCB Paraeducation Program

Dakota College at Bottineau (DCB) is in the second year of a U.S. Department of Education grant to improve the knowledge and skills of paraprofessionals serving children with special needs in kindergarten through 12th grade. The “Advancing Paraprofessional Leadership in Education” (APPLE) grant is allowing DCB to align its curriculum with state and national standards, improve the quality of instruction, and better equip graduates for work as paraeducators.

High school administrators recognize pressing need for highly qualified paraprofessionals in North Dakota. “The education of paraprofessionals is essential in making improvements in the education of students with special needs. Many Special Education teachers have 40 or more students on their caseload and depend on paraprofessionals to follow through with the direct accommodations set forth.” (North Dakota Survey Respondent, 2011). Although paraprofessionals play critical roles in the lives of children with disabilities, there has been no assurance that they are adequately prepared to work with children with disabilities.

The mission of the paraeducation program at DCB’s goal is to ensure that students with special needs are served by highly qualified paraprofessionals trained in industry standards for exceptional children. DCB offers the only associate degree program in North Dakota that prepares students for employment as paraeducators in K-12 classroom settings. The program features a revised curriculum with emphasis on special education, family involvement and cultural competence.

Students at DCB receive extensive practicum opportunities. Through fieldwork placements, DCB will provide aspiring paraeducators with experiences for honing their skills in classrooms and resource rooms before beginning employment.

DCB is excited to spread the word about the improved paraeducation program. The college hopes that through standards aligned coursework, effective instruction and fieldwork opportunities, North Dakota’s students with special needs will be better served by well-trained, highly qualified paraeducators.

For more information on the Paraeducation: K-12 program, contact Madison Junker, Program Advisor, or Melissa Fulsebakke, Program Administrative Assistant, by calling toll free 1-888-918-5623.

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