University of Colorado Denver + DSST Public Schools

ASPIRE Special Education Licensure Pathway

Teach full-time. Earn your Special Education Teaching License. We'll cover your tuition.

PATHWAYS TO TEACHING | DSST PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DSST Public Schools is hiring full-time Special Education Teachers in Mild/Moderate or Center-Based settings. Through CU Denver's ASPIRE to Teach program, you'll earn your **Colorado Special Education Generalist (K–12) teaching license** while teaching at DSST — with a $62,000–$82,000 salary (based on experience), full benefits, and 100% of your $6,750 tuition paid as part of a two-year employment commitment.

Who Can Apply

To qualify for DSST's ASPIRE to Teach Special Education Program, you must:

1. **Hold a bachelor's degree** in any discipline from an accredited university (required for Colorado licensure).
2. **Have experience working in a school** — either as a paraprofessional, interventionist, RBT, or teacher of record.

💡 *All participants work full-time as DSST Special Education Teachers while completing CU aDenver coursework online.*

Which Path Applies to You?

Your ASPIRE experience depends on whether you already hold a Colorado teaching license.

Path 1 → Adding a Special Education Endorsement	Path 2 → Initial Special Education Teaching License
For current licensed teachers who want to add a Special Education Generalist endorsement (Ages 5–21)	***For paraprofessionals or non-licensed educators ready to become a Special Education Teacher***

• Teach full-time at DSST while completing CU Denver's **ASPIRE Endorsement Program.**
• **Fully asynchronous** – all coursework is online with pre-recorded webinars and flexible pacing. Coursework focuses on special education and case management practices rather than general lesson planning.
• **Typical completion time**: ~11 months.
• **Tuition:** ~$5,050
• **You are responsible for:** required Praxis exams and CDE application fees (~$540 total split over almost two years).
• **Outcome:** Earn your *Special Education Generalist endorsement* to add to your existing teaching license.
	• Teach full time at DSST while completing CU Denver's **ASPIRE to Teach Program**.
	• **You can expect to spend about 3-5 hours per week on blended online programming** with:
	  ◦ Four self-paced online modules that are supported by learning in PLCs. You receive a syllabus but when you complete the work is up to you. ASPIRE does not contain any group work.
	  ◦ 1–3 monthly video submissions for coaching feedback
	  ◦ Monthly live virtual group sessions and 1:1 meetings (typically 2nd & 4th Wednesdays)
	• **Typical Completion Time:** ~11 months.
	• **Tuition:** $7,000
	• **You are responsible for:** required Praxis exams, fingerprints, and CDE application fees (~$540 total).
	• **Outcome:** Earn your Colorado Initial Teaching License with a Special Education Generalist endorsement (Ages 5–21).

Next Steps to Start Your SpEd Teacher Journey!

1. **Connect with TEACH Colorado** for advice and financial support.
2. **Apply** for the DSST Special Education Teacher – Alternative Licensure Program.
3. **Interview process:** 30-minute screen + ~1.5-hour final interview.
4. If offered employment, DSST will send instructions and you will then enroll with CU Denver ASPIRE. Please note: you will need to pass the Praxis 5903 test to enroll in ASPIRE.

Frequently Asked Questions

When does ASPIRE start?

Cohorts begin year round, from late July through February, and most participants complete the program within one school year (approximately 11 months). Candidates may take up to two years if needed, but depending on circumstances may need to pay $600 for additional time.

Does DSST provide structured time during the workday to complete ASPIRE coursework?

No. ASPIRE coursework is completed outside of the regular school day. DSST does not provide dedicated paid time during work hours to complete program requirements.

However, many teachers find that the average weekly time commitment of 3–5 hours is manageable alongside their teaching responsibilities. Your school leaders and the DSST Talent Team are available to help you plan for success while balancing coursework, teaching, and coaching.

Will I get a Masters Degree by completing ASPIRE?

No, but participating in ASPIRE does give you the opportunity to purchase 9 grad level hours at a discounted rate. The hours will count directly towards a Masters of Art in Curriculum and Instruction (with a critical pedagogy focus) at University of Colorado Denver. So, you would have 3 classes already towards completing a Masters. This MA is also entirely online!

What are the total costs of the ASPIRE program?

DSST Public Schools offers tuition assistance for participation in ASPIRE to Teach with a two-year commitment. However, you are responsible for the below listed fees (estimated amount). We highly recommend connecting with TEACH Colorado prior to submitting an application with ASPIRE as they can provide you with financial assistance for PRAXIS tests and 1:1 application support.

> **DSST covers the full tuition and enrollment deposit for the ASPIRE program (approximately $6,775), leaving you responsible for only required licensure and testing fees — an estimated total of about $588.**

Cost Item	Approx. Cost	When It's Taken/Paid	Who Pays
PRAXIS 5903 – Elementary Education Math Subtest	$90	Must pass to enroll in ASPIRE	Candidate
ASPIRE Enrollment Deposit	$275	During enrollment *(This is part of the full ASPIRE fee)*	DSST Public Schools
Fingerprints for CDE: $56	$56	During enrollment	Candidate
CDE Application	$90	During enrollment	Candidate

(Interim/Alternative)			
ASPIRE Tuition (24 Credits)	$6,750	During enrollment	DSST Public Schools
PRAXIS 5205 – Teaching Reading: Elementary	$146	During ASPIRE year (required for CDE licensure & READ Act)	Candidate
PRAXIS 5355 – Special Education: Foundational Knowledge	$146	Near the end of ASPIRE program (required for CDE licensure)	Candidate

Do I have to be a SpEd Teacher to be in the ASPIRE to Teach SpEd Program?

According to ASPIRE's rules, you will need to carry an IEP caseload of 3+ scholars, be at least 50% coded as a SpEd Teacher, and teach a portion of the day in a small group or co-teach setting to scholars with IEPs.

What happens after I complete ASPIRE to Teach?

If you started the program in August, you will be required to take the Special Education Praxis exam (#5355) as well as the Teaching Reading: Elementary (#5205) in the spring. You can submit the passing scores for this exam along with the Approved Verification Form from ASPIRE to Teach to apply for an initial license. You are required to obtain your initial license to be eligible to continue teaching with DSST Public Schools.

Who do I contact if I have a question about ASPIRE?

If you have specific questions about the programming with ASPIRE, please contact ASPIRE@ucdenver.edu. For questions concerning DSST Public Schools, please contact humancapital@scienceandtech.org.

