

# Preparing Educators for Inclusive Instruction



**IRONWOOD UNIVERSITY**

Midwestern U.S. | Pre-Service Teachers | One Trainer

## Background

Ironwood University prepares future educators through coursework and cycles of student teaching. The university partners with school districts in a Midwestern state serving more than 30,000 pre-K–12 students. One instructor participated in SETTT for Success. The instructor has experience teaching students with significant cognitive disabilities (SCD) and providing professional development (PD), including prior work as a SETTT for Success trainer in a regional education agency. The instructor continued using the approach at the university.

## Opportunities and Challenges

The instructor identified several challenges in preparing pre-service teachers to deliver inclusive, high-quality instruction. Data from prior cohorts showed that some pre-service teachers questioned whether all students could learn and lacked confidence in how to adjust lessons using Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Special education pre-service teachers demonstrated lower knowledge and expectations compared to peers in other content areas. In addition, the limited eight-week instructional window made it difficult to shift deeply held beliefs and measure impact on student learning during student teaching placements.

The program structure also created key opportunities. The instructor had near-daily access to pre-service teachers over the eight-week period, allowing for sustained engagement and repeated practice. With a faculty member and special education lead delivering instruction, the work remained closely aligned with coursework and field experiences.

## Trainer Accomplishments

The instructor integrated SETTT-aligned PD into coursework, providing structured opportunities for pre-service teachers to analyze student needs, plan instruction, and apply inclusive strategies during student teaching. Instruction emphasized aligning lesson planning with UDL principles and maintaining high expectations for all learners.

### Support for Trainers

- Guided use of cohort data and observations to identify PD priorities
- Supported application of the SETTT for Success cycle within coursework
- Provided feedback to refine PD design and delivery across course cycles
- Supported integration of UDL and high-expectation instructional practices into PD
- Reinforced use of field supervisor feedback to inform instructional adjustments

Throughout the courses, the instructor used observations and feedback from field supervisors to reinforce learning and adjust instruction, ensuring that PD remained responsive to pre-service teacher development.

## Results

Following two PD cycles (two eight-week courses), pre- and post-assessments and observations showed increased learning and application of skills. Field supervisors reported a clear shift in lesson planning and instructional delivery, with most pre-service teachers applying what they learned.

Pre-service teachers moved from using mostly generic strategies to more targeted, responsive differentiation. Field supervisors noted that pre-service teachers were better able to articulate the rationale behind instructional planning and decision-making compared to previous cohorts.

Pre-service teachers in extracurricular roles (e.g., physical education, music) also demonstrated growth, identifying ways to apply UDL principles, maintaining high expectations, and increasing their interest in inclusive instructional settings.