

Smith joins TAESE as co-associate director

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Steven Smith

Steven Smith has joined the Center for Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education (TAESE) as co-associate director. TAESE is a division of Utah State University's Center for Persons with Disabilities.

Before coming to TAESE, Smith spent almost eight years as the director of operations for special education at the Oregon Department of Education, where he worked with finance, data and dispute resolution.

Smith originally trained in secondary education with an emphasis in social studies and language arts. He found it difficult to get a job without coaching experience, so he trained to be a substitute teacher with a youth correctional facility in Salem, Ore. There, he worked with five students who had low cognitive functioning, following them from classroom to classroom every day. Administrators told him if he enrolled in a special ed graduate program, they would hire him full time. He did, and spent the next five years teaching at that facility.

"I enjoy working in the special education world, helping districts and working with educators," Smith said. "I like helping them figure out how to use their money in creative yet legal ways, networking with colleagues from other states to see how they're handling issues and duties. It

prepared me well for coming to TAESE and working with states directly."

Smith saw the announcement for the TAESE position on a listserv. As he was going through the list of desired qualifications, he said, "I do that now, I love that, I like to do that ... it seemed like a good fit."

As co-associate director of TAESE, Smith will work to increase the number of contracts and the number of states in which TAESE works. He also works directly with departments of education in New Mexico, Kansas and Utah.

Smith, his wife and two children are adjusting to life in the Cache Valley.

"We like it here, although there are not as many trees as I'm used to," he said. "We'll see what I say after the winter is over."