

Ending the MPRRC After Thirty-Four Years

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It is said that when one door closes, another opens, and TAESE staff will keep looking for new opportunities

The last several months have been tumultuous and bittersweet at the Center for Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education (TAESE). In March, TAESE was awarded a five-year contract to provide professional development and technical assistance to special educators in the state of Utah. In April and May, however, it was learned that a long-running project, the Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center (MPRRC), might be ending.

Staff meetings during that period of time were difficult, said John Copenhaver, TAESE director.

The emotions in the office ranged from excitement for the new Center in Utah to disappointment that the MPRRC was closing.

The MPRRC was first established in 1980 and was funded for thirty-four years by the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The MPRRC was one of six Regional Resource Centers (RRCs) across the United States

“We thought the MPRRC would always be around,” Copenhaver said. “The MPRRC provided excellent services to State special education directors, SEA staff and Part C Coordinators for those many years.”

A statement was issued in April that the RRCs would no longer be funded and a RFP would soon be created to fund one larger center—the Center for Systemic Improvement. TAESE partnered with other agencies and wrote a proposal for the new center. Ultimately, WestEd was awarded the contract. MPRRC’s operations ended as of September 30, and several of the staff members lost their jobs.

“After thirty-four years, it’s a pretty big deal,” Copenhaver said. “I’ve never had to let people go before. It’s the hardest thing I’ve ever had to do.”

On the positive side, TAESE has numerous contracts across the United States, and many MPRRC staff members were absorbed into those contracts.

When one door closes, other doors are opened. TAESE staff members are always looking out for the next opportunity—even with this setback, the future continues to be bright.